

PROTECT KAHO‘OLAWE ‘OHANA
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August 21, 2023

Appeal for Aloha ‘Āina and Pono
Reinstate Kaleo Manuel as Deputy Director for the Commission on Water Resource Management

The Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana (‘Ohana) expresses our deepest aloha to the ‘āina and people of Maui. We offer continuous and focused pule of healing and recovery for the kūpā ‘āina, kama‘āina, and ‘ohana.

A *Civil Beat* Article published August 15, 2023, entitled “A State Official Refused To Release Water For West Maui Fires Until It Was Too Late,” unfairly and inaccurately blamed then Deputy Director Kaleo Manuel of the Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM) for impeding firefighting efforts. The article gave a public platform to a massive private developer, landowner, and water company conglomerate who exploited this tragedy to fan the flames of emotion that we are all feeling, and attempted to direct our rage at one man who was simply **not** responsible for the fire nor the spread. The one-sided article became the basis for a decision to re-deploy Deputy Director Kaleo Manuel from his kuleana as Deputy Director with the Commission on Water Resource Management.

Why would they target this one man? West Maui Land Company, Inc. is a developer of multiple luxury residential projects in West Maui that has contributed to the gentrification of West Maui, raising property values, overtaxing natural resources including streams that supply reservoirs and replenish aquifers, and systemically pushing out longtime kama‘āina families. Kaleo Manuel is the Deputy Director of an agency that regulates West Maui Land Co.'s use of water which affects how many developments it can build and sustain. Unfortunately, the developer jumped at the chance to rile up a heartbroken community to remove from office someone who is doing his job to uphold and implement the legislatively enacted State Water Code. This was tantamount to a public lynching of Kaleo Manuel, a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi public servant who has always sought to protect wai as a public trust to be used sustainably by multiple users.

Facts not included in the August 15 *Civil Beat* article related to events about the August 8 fires include:

- (1) West Maui Land Co. reservoirs are not connected to the Maui County water supply and could not have helped with fire hydrant and hose water pressure.
- (2) Winds were too strong for any helicopters to fly on August 8, 2023. When helicopters did fly on August 9, 2023, they drew water to fight the fire from the much closer and vast ocean.
- (3) Deputy Manuel’s instructions for West Maui Land Co. to contact the downstream kalo farmers before diverting stream water to fill their reservoir was done so because those downstream resident farmers have no means other than the stream to fight fires and they had lost their homes to fire in 2018.
- 4) **There was no detrimental impact as a result of any of Deputy Manuel’s actions.** The article was a hurtful distraction for our entire Hawaii community in a time when every bit of energy and focus should be directed to helping Maui people and families.

An apology and a retraction of the inflammatory and untrue statements are in order. We are confident that the facts stated above will be revealed through the investigation that the Attorney General and that Kaleo Manuel will be exonerated. We urgently recommend that Kaleo Manuel be reinstated as the Deputy Directory assigned to the Commission on Water Resource Management.

Let us remain firmly rooted in aloha ‘āina to offer profound healing and the spiritual awakening of place and people. The essence of aloha is compassion and empathy. We stand united with Maui Nui. Aloha ‘Āina.

The Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana. For more information please contact Kaulupono Luuwai 808-463-1389. kp.luuwai@gmail.com