

Aloha mai kākou,

Aloha, my name is Bronson “Kainoa” Azama and I am a youth advocate and kama’āina of He’eia, Ko’olaupoko. I am a former State President of the Hawai’i Future Farmers of America Association, so the preservation of rural lifestyle and revitalization of agricultural and aquaculture practices are near and dear to my heart. I am writing to the Land Use Commission (LUC) in a request that the LUC and the City & County of Honolulu consider designating more lands in the Ko’olaupoko moku [Kualoa-Waimānalo] as Important Agriculture Lands (IAL). I request that the IAL include a majority of the ahupua’a of He’eia, lands in Hakipu’u, Waikāne, Kāne’ohe [Lūluku in particular], Kailua [Maunawili and Parts of Kawainui], and Waimānalo.

Much has changed in the past few decades and even since the recommendations were made in 2018 by the County. There has been a renewed resurgence amongst our community to return to rural lifestyle and begin the process of land reclamation and revival of traditional agricultural and aquacultural practices. Therefore the LUC and the County ought to expand their IAC recommendations in windward O’ahu.

In He’eia alone there are efforts by Kāko’o ‘Ōiwi to restore over 350 acres of traditional farmlands to their former usage as Lo’i Kalo (Taro patches) and food forests. In the uplands there are families still conducting Taro cultivation in ‘Ioleka’a, and excellent agricultural work being done in Waipao by Papahana Kuaola, with a great deal of agricultural potential on the Kahuku side of Ha’ikū Valley. All of these lands are pertinent for preserving the Ahupua’a concept in He’eia, where these organizations provide benefit to their partners in makai regions which includes Paepae ‘o He’eia who is restoring the He’eia Fishpond and the Hawai’i Institute for Marine Biology, which is conducting coral research in how the restoration of traditional agriculture is benefitting our reefs. The holistic practices occurring in He’eia make it an ecological wonder filled with biodiversity from the various practices occurring, therefore the LUC and County ought to consider getting more community input from this region to create proper IAC designations. Some organizations to consider working with in He’eia include but are not limited to: Kāko’o ‘Ōiwi, Papahana Kuaola, Ko’olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club, Ko’olau Foundation, and the NERRS.

In Hakipu’u there have been great efforts by the Fukumitsu ‘ohana and a handful of families to hold onto their lands and preserve the agricultural practices of their ‘ohana. The Fukumitsu ‘ohana in particular have been cultivating Taro for decades, and their work has been well respected amongst our community, therefore I would recommend that the Taro lands of Hakipu’u be designated as IAC as well.

Waikāne has long been home to multi-generational farmers and is still being cultivated today. These lands which are well suited to support a number of agricultural endeavors ought to be designated as IAL, as the County has recommended the neighboring ahupua’a of Waiāhole.

In the Kāne’ohe Ahupua’a the ‘ili ‘āina known as Lūluku located where the Ho’omaluhia Botanical Gardens are should also be designated as IAC. These lands like all the lands I have

mentioned previously were traditionally abundant lands for Taro production, Mai'a (banana), and so much more. Fortunately there are renewed efforts to restore these farmlands. This region has a culturally significant history that is preserved through restoration of traditional agricultural practices. With the ancestral abundance of this place returning it would be wise to designate these lands as IAL, in recognition of the historic, current, and future use.

The Kailua Ahupua'a has found itself reawakening through creating space. As visible at Ulupō Heiau and in Maunawili many of the traditional practices are being revitalized by various small farmers and nonprofits. Some organizations to consider reaching out to include: Ka'uluakalana, Ho'okua'aina, and the Kailua Hawaiian Civic Club, the LUC & County should also reach out to the small farmers in Maunawili to create proper IAL recommendations.

I am very pleased that both the County and LUC have created well thought out recommendations in Waimānalo. I would simply request that another round of outreach be done for this community as well, as in the past few years they have experienced quite the shift as well.

I would like to thank the LUC and County for considering updating the Important Agricultural Land Designations on the island of O'ahu. As an 'ōpio and former State President of the Hawai'i FFA, I would simply ask that both the LUC and the County accept my recommendations to include more lands in the Ko'olaupoko Region as IAL in collaboration with various community organizations and the community at-large, all in an effort to further expand the recommended designations. Our lands in Ko'olaupoko were known for being suitable for agriculture in the past and its potential is still great to serve such a purpose in our near future. Therefore, we must reevaluate which lands should be designated by working with the various groups in our communities.

Now more than ever when looking at a Post-COVID future, must we set the foundations toward a sustainable future and diversified economy. So please hear my recommendations and concerns and designate more lands as IAL with the collaboration of the broader community, in the Ko'olaupoko Moku.

Aloha nō,
Bronson "Kainoa" Azama