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DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES News Release

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CHAIRPERSON

For Immediate News Release April 18, 2017





HISTORIC SETTLEMENT REACHED IN WEST KAUA'I WAIMEA RIVER WATER DISPUTE

Provides Immediate Restoration of Stream Flows

(HONOLULU) – The Hawai'i State Water Commission approved a mediated settlement today that will immediately restore continuous flows in the Waimea River, as well as provide the opportunity for a renewable energy project, water for Hawaiian homesteading, and farming.

DLNR and Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM) Chair Suzanne Case said, "This is an historic agreement. During this process, the commission sought not only to resolve the claims brought by the Pō'ai Wai Ola hui, but to provide a mechanism for dealing with complex water issues holistically. Historically, Hawai'i's highly contentious water disputes have taken many years, if not decades to settle. Due to the incredible work by all parties involved, led by mediator Robbie Alm, this settlement was reached and finalized a little more than a year after mediation began." The settlement, with its focus on adequate water supply for sustainable agriculture and renewable energy, resolves claims for current users and establishes a framework for the balanced and sustainable uses of water in West Kaua'i well into the future. The settlement also includes provisions for real-time monitoring of water flows, information that will be available to the public.

"Our group's name acknowledges the life-giving power of water," explained Pō'ai Wai Ola president Galen Kaohi. "Today's agreement ensures that, for the first time in over 100 years, life-giving water will once again flow continuously in Waimea River from mauka (the mountains) to makai (the sea), which is vital for the health of the river and our community."

The Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC) was also one of the parties and is proposing a dual purpose project, including both renewable energy and delivery of water. KIUC Chief Executive Officer David Bissell said, "We are pleased that this important step has been taken and we've come to agreement with the parties on the framework for the stewardship of land and water and responsible use of the resources in West Kaua`i. Should the proposed KIUC renewable energy project come to fruition, KIUC could increase its renewable portfolio by ten percent or more with pumped storage hydro, while supporting DHHL (Department of Hawaiian Homelands) and others in expanding agricultural, residential and economic opportunities on the west side."

"On behalf of the State of Hawaii Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) and the Kekaha Agriculture Association (KAA), we are honored and proud to be part of a community that was able to resolve this critical issue through collaboration. This agreement establishes a foundation upon which farmers can build the future of agriculture on the West Side of Kauai," said James Nakatami, Executive Director of the ADC and Joshua Uyehara, KAA Board President.

Jobie Masagatani, Chair of the Hawaiian Homes Commission stated, "We are very grateful to the Water Commission for approving this mediation agreement today. The agreement lays out a process that can provide water for homesteading uses by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, provide for renewable energy for the people of Kaua'i, restore mauka to makai stream flow in the Waimea River, and reliable irrigation for farming on the Manā plain. We and the other parties are looking forward to working together to implement this agreement, most importantly with the people of Waimea and the rest of the Kaua'i Community."

Another key component of the settlement is that the Water Commission intends to use this successful approach as a model to resolve other disputes in Hawai'i. DLNR Chair Case concluded, "We are pleased that this example of multi-party environmental dispute resolution addressed complex issues in a comprehensive manner. It is the result of an effort to find creative solutions and broad commonalities through the dedication and hard work of all parties involved."

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