

January 18, 2024

Nancy Redfeather
P.O. Box 906
Kealahou, Hawaii 96750
nancyredfeather@hawaii.rr.com
808-322-2801

To: Chair Alex Kelepolo and the Commissioners of the Public Access, Open Space & Natural Resources Preservation Commission
25 Aupuni Street, Suite 101
Hilo, Hawaii 96720-4252

RE: Support for County Acquisition of the Joseph Rock Arboretum
Aloha Commissioners,

I am writing to lend my support for a Conservation Easement for the Joseph Rock Arboretum. I have known Ms. Jill Wagner for 20 years from her work in restoration, seed banking, teaching, seed collecting, and land consultation. During this long time, she has remained dedicated to expanding and improving each of those activities on the Island of Hawai'i and expanding her knowledge to interact with State, National, and Inter-national Conservation Groups. I have been directly working with Ms. Wagner for the past 5 years, as she helps Hawai'i's home gardeners and market farmers bank and distribute locally produced crop seed grown by the Hawai'i Seed Growers Network enhancing our community food sustainability systems.

On the Island of Hawai'i, a hotspot for preserving plant and animal biodiversity, we have only a few examples of public places where direct contact with the natural world can be enhanced and preserved. The Joseph Rock Arboretum would be one of those unique places. When I first saw it, I was reminded of the great African Savanna lands which describes the great makai lands on the Kona side. It was a landscape of large trees, dotting the rolling terrain with smaller grasses and shrubs underneath with an expansive view of the coastline and ocean.

This kind of "green space" can be a living example of the kinds of plantings and diversity that can be found in this type of lowland forest area, which has been disappearing from the Kona side for a long time. It would also be a space for the public to walk in the fresh air, learn more about the natural world all around them and it is here, in the heart of Kona and would remain for generations to come. As you know, it has become so important to save our open spaces now, while we can, as the world is changing so quickly. Support a Conservation Easement for the Joseph Rock Arboretum is something the County can do to insure there are always places for renewing, learning, and appreciating the beauty of our natural landscape.

Aloha,

Nancy Redfeather

Nancy Redfeather is the founder of the Hawaii Public Seed Initiative, a Statewide cooperative of farmers who grow Hawaii adapted food crops and sell them to the community. She is also responsible for creating school gardens with the Kohala Center, for Hawaii Island Schools.