



Friends of Lana'i

For Immediate Release

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Marti Townsend, The Outdoor Circle

SENATE SCHEDULES CONTROVERSIAL CONFIRMATION HEARING FOR DLNR

Joint statement of The Outdoor Circle, Hawai'i's Thousand Friends, KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance, Conservation Council of Hawai'i, Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action, Friends of Lana'i, Sierra Club, and Hawai'i Progressive Democrats

The Senate Committee on Water and Land announced today that the confirmation hearing for the controversial appointment of Carleton Ching as Director of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) will be held on Wednesday March 11th at 10 AM in room 229.

Over 20 environmental groups came out in opposition to the nomination within days of its announcement late last month. Since then, Mr. Ching's prospects have only gone from bad to worse. Well over 7,000 people have signed a petition opposing this nomination and the Honolulu Star-Advertiser deemed Ching the "Wrong Decision."

"DLNR deserves an expert at its helm," said Marti Townsend Executive Director of The Outdoor Circle. "After marathon meetings with community leaders over the last month, Mr. Ching still has not demonstrated a command of the subject matter."

In constituent meetings, Mr. Ching spoke in general of finding efficiencies and "improving the department's margins." DLNR is notoriously under-funded and under-staffed, due in part to budget decisions made by the Legislature.

"DLNR is critically important to protecting Hawai'i's natural abundance for all of its people," said Bianca Isaki, KAHEA board member. "There is no time for on-the-job training for this agency's leader."

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Environmental groups raised concerns about Ching's close ties to organizations that advocate to weaken environmental protections. Mr. Ching served as President of the pro-development lobby group "Land Use Research Foundation" in 2008, and Vice President in 2009 and 2010.

LURF touts as some of its major accomplishments:

- LURF fought hard to convince the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reduce critical habitat designations and mandated conservation areas.
- LURF successfully lobbied to reduce requirements for developer applicant reviews by the State Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR/SHPD).
- LURF successfully lobbied to require the Department of Health (DOH) to delete various protections involving native Hawaiian rights, historic preservation, coastal zone management and environmental impact reviews for storm water management permits.
- LURF actively opposed the requirement of landowners to provide lateral access along the coastline.

LURF has also been extremely active in the annual effort to weaken HRS Chapter 343 (EIS laws), they were core supporters of the Public Lands Development Corporation (PLDC), and opposed the establishment of Hawai'i's Environmental Court.

By contrast, the Department of Land and Natural Resources is responsible for managing, administering, and exercising control over public lands, water resources, ocean waters, navigable streams, coastal areas (except commercial harbors), minerals, and all interests therein. The department's jurisdiction encompasses nearly 1.3 million acres of State lands, beaches, and coastal waters as well as 750 miles of coastline (the fourth longest in the country). It includes state parks; historical sites; forests and forest reserves; aquatic life and its sanctuaries; public fishing areas; boating, ocean recreation, and coastal programs; wildlife and its sanctuaries; game management areas; public hunting areas; and natural area reserves.

The original 24 groups opposed to Carleton Ching's nomination are: Sierra Club, The Outdoor Circle, Conservation Council for Hawai'i, KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance, Hawai'i's Thousand Friends, Life of the Land, Friends of Lana'i, Progressive Democrats of Hawai'i, Earthjustice, Defend O'ahu Coalition, Surfrider Foundation, Hawai'i Wildlife Fund, Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action, Hui Ho'omalua I Ka 'Aina, Kupa'a No Lana'i, LOST FISH Coalition, MANA (Movement for Aloha No Ka 'Aina), Maui Tomorrow, Puna Pono Alliance, Wailua-Kapa'a Neighborhood Association, West Maui Preservation Association, Kanehili Coalition, O'ahu Chapter of the Aha Moku Council, and 'Ilio'ulaokalani Coalition.