



Managing the Largest Tropical Forest in the United States with Urban Decision-Makers

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I am really excited to be here. I've had some great opportunities as head of the Department of Land and Natural Resources. It's probably the most wonderful job in the entire world, and one of the reasons is because we take care of the largest tropical forest in the United States, and we take care of the eleventh largest state forest, with over 100,000 acres (actually close to 700,000 acres) of land owned by the State of Hawai'i that's managed for forest reserves and forest lands.

We have thousands of acres—depending on how you calculate it. On the Big Island, we may have 100,000 acres that can contribute to a forest industry. So here we stand, from the point of view of trying to take care of this incredible resource. And the title of my speech, which alluded to trying to manage the largest tropical forest in the United States with urban decision-makers, is one that I try to share with you because I don't necessarily equate you with the concept of urban decision-makers. In the State of Hawai'i, among the other states, we're about forty-eighth in fish and wildlife funding. We have the eleventh largest state forest, as I mentioned. We have the fourth largest coastline in the United States. We have a budget though, that if you closed your eyes and got the information and didn't know what state you were talking about, you might think that we were talking about Rhode Island or Pennsylvania or maybe even Utah, but actually if you thought we were talking about Wyoming, you'd be wrong, because Wyoming has a \$7 million budget to take care of its aquatic resources. I'm sure you're all aware that Wyoming doesn't even have a coastline. In the State of Hawai'i, compared to the \$7 million that Wyoming has, we have a \$2.9 million budget for our aquatics program.

We are in an era where it's very important for those who care about and understand natural-resource issues to have some kind of impact at the legislature, and I think that many of you can, are I hope you are going to be at the legislature this next session to talk about the importance of this new forestry initiative. The Hawai'i Tropical Forest Recovery Act has been pursued by our

congressional delegation, Senators Akaka and Inouye and our Representatives Neil Abercrombie and Patsy Mink. They've all worked very hard so that we will be getting half-a-million dollars a year for an as yet undetermined period of time from our United States Department of Agriculture under the U.S. Forestry budget.

If you imagine the kind of value added-forest industry where we're not just extracting and growing eucalyptus but we have a significant koa forest industry with associated value industry such as carpentry, and additional skills that we would like to see develop, what you're imagining is a concept that isn't here. It's not in the legislature—where it needs to be—and we're going to need help to get it there. The governor has made a commitment seeking \$500,000 from the legislature for matching funds through the Tropical Forest Recovery Act, but this is not an issue that I think is a familiar one to our legislature.

But let me go the ultimate issue, and that has to do with What does it mean to Hawai'i?, What does it mean to our forest and this magnificent resource that we have? As we are supposed to at the Department of Land and Natural Resources, I think of that in terms that aren't just present-oriented, but future-oriented. I think what's preceded us in terms of the history of the forest movement, the history of forestry and all that's gone into it, the human imaginings behind it, is in many ways a very satisfying concept, particularly given the most recent developments. But, the history that has preceded us is one in which the Forest Service was defined as not taking care of our natural resources. We had a tremendous dislocation in the northwest that attracted the President of the United States. \$200 million was invested in five years in an effort to take care of the forest economy, in the sense of it being dislocated because of what happened with the spotted owl.

The Forest Service made magnificent efforts through a process that I think was initiated through the President's forest recovery efforts and Lorraine and I, at the invitation of U.S. Forest Service, went to see what has been



the result of decades, you might even say ever since the time that the country has been settled, what has been the result of the forestry movement in the United States, and that is a recognition that we don't want to just invite big industries in to extract the forest without paying attention to the community. We don't want to ignore local talent, we don't want to ignore indigenous people, and, hopefully, we want to recognize the concept of sustainability, which is the ultimate management scheme for our department and hopefully the management scheme for the world, so that we don't continue an era of depletion without thinking of sustaining the resources.

After we went to the Forestry Initiative, we decided we wanted to make sure that Hawai'i takes the benefit of all those years and almost a century of learning about what happened when we cut down most of the forests in the United States and entered into an era of extraction that ultimately resulted in a revolt in the Pacific Northwest and economic dislocation of enormous magnitude that got the personal attention of the President of the United States. I guess we don't have to go through all that economic dislocation here, and hopefully we can move forward well to do something about it.

In that regard, just to get an idea of where we are in our view in terms of Hawai'i's history, let me speak a bit about Hawai'i as it exists today.

If we look at Hawai'i from space, it's the most remote land mass on earth. It, as I mentioned to you, has a wonderful resource, and that resource in terms of forest is the eleventh-largest state forest in the U.S. A lot of people forget that this island chain has that magnificent resource. For us to take care of it, we do need to recognize that we are the most remote land mass on earth. We can't borrow resources from other parts of the country like many other states can, and we truly should think of ourselves as a community here to take care of this miracle that's probably one of the best resources on earth.

We have a provision of the state constitution that pertains to our Department of Land and Natural Resources, and it's got some wonderful concepts in it. It is Article 11, Section 1, and it says, "For the benefit of present and future generations, the State and its political subdivisions shall conserve and protect Hawai'i's natural beauty." It's an interesting concept for a constitution, and it's not in many constitutions around the country, this idea that you elevate to the most important, powerful, legal level the concept of natural beauty. So, for present and future generations, we're supposed

to conserve and protect, not just natural beauty, but the natural resources including land, water, air, minerals, and energy sources, and we shall promote the development and utilization of these resources in a manner consistent with their conservation.

Well, now we are hopefully at the point in Hawai'i's history where we can give some meaning to that, instead of just moving headlong into exploitation and extraction. Our department is not the Department of Business and Economic Development, our department is here to protect and conserve these resources and, more appropriately, develop them. So an industry—even one that has the word forestry attached to it—that's not focused on conservation to a certain extent is not one that we can support. In furtherance of the self-sufficiency of the state, this is where we adopt the concept of sustainability as our management philosophy, that says all public natural resources are held in trust by the state for the benefit of the people. The public natural resources, the state lands, including forests and pasture lands, are to be managed for the benefit of all the people. Not just for the benefit of the individual leasees who take over the land.

Many of you have been helpful in prodding us to pay attention to pasture leases, and now we are in the process of divising those areas that we want to return to forests, with the help of you folks and also the governor. Hopefully, we'll be able to move culturally to a point where harvesting koa is not considered to be an intrusion on the culture and in fact can contribute to the culture and contribute to a stable economy in a sustainable forestry effort.

"Hawai'i: Earth's Best." We remind ourselves at the Department of Land and Natural Resources that we take care of the best resources on earth; that's our job. Unfortunately, if you're forty-eighth in the United States in fish and wildlife funding, given the size of our resource, it doesn't reflect that our urban decision-makers in the legislature are acquainted with what the size of our resource is and the challenges we face, because we don't have a program in the Department of Land and Natural Resources that is "Earth's Best."

This is an exciting symposium for us because people are being brought together. I know I'm speaking to the converted, that are willing to go to the legislature and say, "You know, Hawai'i does have a meaningful forestry industry; we can make it even better, and we can make it one of the models for the country in terms of



being a sustainable industry where we're not just again bringing in large industries, extracting trees, and forgetting about the local folks that live here."

"Sustainability" is a word that can cause feelings of inspiration, and it can also be overused. But it is a word that helps us get focused, because with our small amount of resources, we need to have a teamwork strategy, so we that can beat the odds and actually take care of this incredible resource and this amazing state.

One of the things that we have to consider is that we, as a group, have to be aware and have to let the legislature know that we are concerned about exotic species, alien species coming to our forestland. Awareness of miconia has increased in Hawai'i. In Tahiti, this green cancer has covered 70 percent of their forest area, producing a forest monoculture. The root system of the miconia is much more shallow than most of our native forest trees. It holds less water, so it compromises the water system and it contributes to landslides, and it would be a national emergency of epic proportions were it to get here.

When we think of the forest industry, again I think we need to think of ourselves as part of the culture that's advocating for forests in general. And when we talk about the need to harvest koa when we're talking about it in the next or maybe a prior breath, we're not talking just about the idea of harvesting koa, but taking care of that forest and paying attention to things like alien species and making sure we have budget to take care of things like miconia, it makes a point that we're a community that's looking at this forest, not just in a single-minded way. I don't say this because I'm suggesting this isn't a perspective of the forest industry, because I know it is, but it's just something we need to remind ourselves about when we present a balanced view about our forestry program.

I want to conclude by citing a very interesting passage in a book by David Brower, an often-quoted reference to the changes here on earth during the time people have been here in a way that helps us get a perspective that is interesting and historical.

This proposition starts from the assumption that the earth was created in six days, into which period we can put all the geologic, biological, and cultural changes that have occurred. If you start on Sunday at midnight, when the earth is created, there's no life until Tuesday. Millions upon millions of species come during the week and millions of species go during that week. By Satur-

day morning at 7:00, there has been enough chlorophyll manufactured by plants, and the fossil fuels to begin to form. Around 4:00 in the afternoon, the great reptiles appear. They hang around for a long time, as species go, until 9:30, a five-hour run. The Grand Canyon begins taking shape 18 minutes before midnight, and nothing like us shows up for another 15 minutes—this is of course at the end of the week. No *Homo sapiens* until thirty seconds ago. A second-and-a-half back, we threw the habits of hunting and gathering to the winds and learned to change the environment to suit our appetites. We get rid of everything we can't eat as fast as we can, and that's the beginning of agriculture. A third-of-a-second before midnight (again this is on the last day) Buddha arrives, a-quarter-of-a-second, Jesus Christ, a-fortieth-of-a-second, the Industrial Revolution, an-eightieth-of-a-second, we discover oil, a-two-hundredth-of-a-second, we discover how to split atoms, and that brings us just about to where we are, and—maybe—we've got four million years left.

Well, Hawai'i is above the surface of the ocean and we're at a watershed point right now because we are looking at an industry that will define us as to whether we continue to move headlong without learning from the past and move into an extraction industry that forgets sustainability or whether we really take advantage of what efforts have gotten the attention of the President of the United States and—now—that have gotten the attention of the Governor. I'm really excited about it. I look forward to the Forestry Summit, and I thank all of you for taking the time to come here. It really means a lot to Hawai'i. Every one of you makes a difference. The leadership in Hawai'i is what takes the theory and turns it into something. We have incredible potential in leadership in this state, and the Forest Service is willing to help us and bring in additional talent. I'm really excited about where we're going to go from here, and I look forward to working with all of you. Let's hope that our urban decision-makers in the legislature will make the right decisions and help us with our forestry initiative, with all of you there testifying. Mahalo.