



June 13, 2017

Kauai Planning Commission
c/o County Planning Department
4444 Rice Street, Suite 473
Lihue, HI 96766

Re: Testimony on Draft Kauai General Plan

Aloha Commissioners:

The Kauai Group of the Sierra Club has long advocated for sensible development and growth on Kauai. So we are very disappointed with the head-in-the-sand approach the Draft General Plan takes towards managing the tourism growth crisis that is threatening our island.

When it comes to tourism growth, the Draft General Plan (“Draft”) and reality do not align.

- It is a fact that the Draft assumes an increase in the average daily tourist count of just 7% for the 19 years between now and 2035¹, even though the actual tourist count increased by 27% over just the 6 years between 2010 and 2016.²
- It is a fact that the Draft forecasts that the tourist count that Kauai actually experienced in 2016 will not occur until mid-2024.³
- It is a fact that if the growth trend that Kauai experienced for the first third of this year continues for the rest of the year, Kauai will reach the Draft’s forecasted 2035 Average Daily Visitor Census by next year.⁴

All of this has been documented in past public testimony. But the Draft continues to stubbornly and deceitfully assume ridiculously low tourism growth forecasts.

Why does this matter? Because by refusing to publicly acknowledge the magnitude of the problem that engulfs Kauai, the Draft both misdirects the Planning Commission and

¹ 2035 ADVC = 26,589 (General Plan Socio-Economic Analysis & Forecasts, page 37); actual 2016 ADVC = 24,797 (General Plan, June 13, 2017 Draft, page 3-84); $26,589/24,797 = 1.07$.

² 2010 ADVC = 19,548 (General Plan Socio-Economic Analysis & Forecasts, page 37); 2016 ADVC = 24,797 (General Plan, June 13, 2017 Draft, page 3-84); $24,797/19,548 = 1.27$.

³ 2016 ADVC = 24,797 (General Plan, June 13, 2017 Draft, page 3-84); Graph of ADVC for 1990-2035 (General Plan, Appendix D, January 2017, Figure 11).

⁴ “For the first four months of [2017], Kauai has had 397,398 visitors, a 6.5 percent increase from the same time frame last year.” (*The Garden Island*, May 26, 2017). At this rate, estimated 2017 ADVC = $1.065 * 2016 \text{ ADVC of } 24,797$ (General Plan, June 13, 2017 Draft, page 3-84) = 26,409. Additional growth by mid-February 2018 would push this number beyond 2035 forecasted ADVC of 26,589.

the public, and condones the Draft's lack of substantive measures to truly tackle the problem.

- If growth continues at the pace that Kaua'i has experienced since 2010, the number of tourists on island will increase by another 112% by 2035!⁵
- Even if future growth were to slow to the 2% per year pace that Kaua'i experienced between 2000 and 2016 (the diminished growth rate that resulted from the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the 2008 global depression), by 2035 the tourism count would still increase by 46% (to more than 36,000 tourists per day),⁶ not the 7% forecasted in the Draft's underlying Socio-Economic Forecasts.

Regardless of whether the increase in the average daily tourism count will be 112%, or 46%, or something in-between, the General Plan should clearly acknowledge that decisive policies and actions are needed to reduce the magnitude of this increase and its negative impacts. But the Draft proposes nothing to substantively deal with the impacts of this looming tidal wave of growth on Kaua'i's roads and traffic, on housing affordability, on parking and crowding at beach parks, or on Kaua'i's rural character and quality of life.

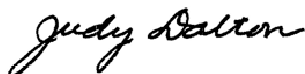
- Had the Draft made the Planning Commission aware of this, perhaps the Commission would not have voted at its most-recent meeting to facilitate more tourism growth by supporting the outdated 1980s vision of increasing the size of the Princeville VDA by redesignating Agricultural lands to Resort.

We are already, today, drowning in a sea of tourists. Residents know it. They also knew it in 2008 when they voted by an overwhelming 64%-to-36% (and with a majority in every precinct on the island) for the citizen-sponsored ballot measure to manage tourism growth. And yet, the Draft still proposes nothing to try to slow the tourism tsunami.

The Draft General Plan needs major revisions. It needs to be made honest about the enormity of the tourism growth problem that threatens Kaua'i. It needs to ask how much is too much; and it needs to include policies and actions to make sure this level is not exceeded.

Kaua'i is at a crossroad. What remains of its rural character and quality of life is at stake. The General Plan should sound the alarm; it should not sweep the problem under the rug and advocate "business as usual." We do not believe that Kaua'i's residents will accept the latter course of deception and inaction much longer.

Mahalo,



Judy Dalton, Executive Committee Co-Chair
on behalf of the Kaua'i Group of the Sierra Club

⁵ 27% growth from 2010-2016 (see footnote 2) = 4.0% annually compounded growth rate. 4.0% compounded growth for 19 years (2016-2035) = 112%.

⁶ 2.0% annually compounded growth for 19 years (2016-2035) = 46%. 2016 ADVC of 24,797 * 1.46 = 36,204.