

# WEST MAUI LAND COMPANY, INC.

305 E. Wakea, Suite 100  
Kahului, Maui, Hawaii 96732

Phone: (808) 877-4202  
Fax: (808) 877-9409

August 10, 2023

M. Kaleo Manuel  
Deputy Director  
Commission on Water Resource Management  
1151 Punchbowl Street, Suite 227  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Lahaina Fires

Deputy Director Manuel,

I write on behalf of West Maui Land Company, the management company for three of West Maui's water purveyors: Launiupoko Irrigation Company, Launiupoko Water Company, and Olowalu Water Company.

Many people we know lost everything to the fires that ripped through West Maui. Lives were lost. Our employees and friends lost their homes, their business, and their lands. Our lives will never be the same.

As fires continue to burn across what remains of Lahaina and West Maui, we are doing what we can to provide water to the Maui Fire Department (MFD), the Hawaii National Guard, and federal responders, including the U.S. Coast Guard, Navy, and Marines. MFD has already taken what little water we had in our reservoirs and tanks. Because there is no electricity, we have moved generators to our wells and pumping as much as possible. We have generators on LWC Well 3 and Olowalu Well, which are providing both fire protection and potable water to those families who still have homes and who are sheltering those who have lost homes.

While we are doing what we can to help, we also reflect on what should have been done before the flames relentlessly marched through West Maui and what needs to be done to help our community recover and rebuild.

Yesterday, at around 9:00 a.m., the initial fire was declared to be contained. Despite this declaration, we remained concerned about the risk of fire due to downed power lines, exceptionally high winds, and low reservoir levels. We had also began receiving AC power fault alarms from the wells on the HECO grid at around 5:00 a.m. We reached out to CWRM at around 1:00 p.m. to express these concerns and request approval to divert more water from the streams so we could store as much water as possible for fire control.

In response, CWRM asked us whether MFD had requested permission to dip into our reservoirs and directed us first to inquire with the one downstream user to ensure that his lo'i and other uses would not be impacted by a temporary reduction (not elimination) of water supply. Communications were spotty, and we had already made a concerted effort to contact the one downstream user. He had not responded. By around 3:30 p.m., a flare up had shut down the Lahaina Bypass.

At around 6:00 p.m., we received CWRM's approval to divert more water. By then, we were unable to reach the siphon release to make the adjustments that would have allowed more water to fill our reservoirs. We watched the devastation unfold around us without the ability to help. We anxiously awaited the morning knowing that we could have made more water available to MFD if our request had been immediately approved.

Fires are frequent in West Maui. As we experienced, a request to use water from our reservoirs to fight a fire must go unmet if we do not have water in our reservoirs. In an emergency situation, or when an emergency is anticipated, a temporary reduction (not elimination) of water to one individual's farm should not be prioritized over and delay efforts to save an entire community.

We cannot know whether filling our reservoirs at 1:00 p.m. (as opposed to not at all) would have changed the headlines when dawn broke on our weary first responders and heartbroken community. We know that fires spread quickly. We know that we need to act faster during an emergency. We know that the community we serve relies on the water as a defense from spreading fire. We know that we must have water available for MFD before MFD needs it. We know we can do better. We're all in this together.

As a first step, we respectfully request that CWRM immediately grant ongoing authorization to fill the reservoirs when a fire has been reported in the area from Ukumehame to Kahoma. As we are filling the reservoirs, we will advise MFD and CWRM of our actions and that water is available if needed.

As a second step, we respectfully request that CWRM immediately suspend the various interim instream flow standards and other regulations in the area from Ukumehame to Kahoma until the emergency period has ended, to ensure maximum support for fire suppression, clean-up efforts and our community as we recover.

As a third step, we respectfully request that CWRM immediately initiate proceedings to amend the various interim instream flow standards from Ukumehame to Honokowai to provide more water for fire suppression and our community as we face dry months in the years to come and as our community

rebuilds. I know you love this community, too. We are all devastated. No one is happy there was water in the streams while our homes, our businesses, our lands, and our lives were reduced to ash. We cannot suffer the risk that it will happen again.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Glenn Tremble', written over the printed name. The signature is stylized with a large 'G' and a long horizontal stroke.

CC: Josh Green, Governor  
Dawn N. S. Chang, Chair  
Nani Medeiros, Chief Housing Officer