

## Community coalition seeks way to block Honolua plan

By LEHIA APANA, Staff Writer

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LAHAINA – A grass-roots organization is taking aim at Maui Land & Pineapple Co.'s proposed development of its land around Lipoa Point and Honolua Bay.

In January, ML&P submitted a request to the Planning Department to have the development included in the General Plan for Maui, to provide an 18-hole golf course, 40 homes, a cultural park, coastal trail and a surf park.

Members of the Save Honolua Coalition spoke out against the proposed plans at their weekly meeting Tuesday night at the Lahaina Civic Center, seeking to preserve the natural areas around the bay considered one of the prime surfing sites on Maui.

“This place is worth saving,” said Lance Holter, Maui County Democratic Party chairman and a Sierra Club member who was a guest speaker at the meeting. “It’s one of the most tremendous places left on Maui.”

Coalition President Elle Cochran said the group is talking to community members to find out what they would hope to see at Honolua Bay and Lipoa Point in the future.

“Right now, we’re feeding off the community and seeing what they want. We want to incorporate everyone’s values in whatever the vision will be at the end,” Cochran said.

ML&P spokeswoman Teri Freitas Gorman said her company agrees that the area should be protected. She said people have been leaving behind junk cars, garbage bags filled with trash, old appliances and human waste on Lipoa Point, and that the land is being damaged by people riding dirt bikes and all-terrain vehicles through the old pineapple fields and dirt roadways.

She added that providing proper facilities such as restrooms and infrastructure is one way to mitigate the damage.

“Our intention has always been to do the right thing. Leaving it the way it is now is really not the right thing,” said Freitas Gorman. “It was manageable back in the day when Maui was a smaller place. Now with the increase in residents and visitor traffic it has become a destination that a lot of people are using, so we have to come up with a comprehensive plan to manage the area properly.”

She maintained that the company’s goal has always been to “save the bay.”

Freitas Gorman said that the 40 homes will be built mauka of Honoapiilani Highway, with a golf course on the coastal cliffs around Lipoa Point makai of the highway.

“The reason for a golf course there is because we wanted to maintain an open green space there,” she said.

Still coalition members say they are worried that the proposed development will do more harm than good.

“Development is the last thing we need in that area. It’s such a peaceful area and to create more urban sprawl would take that away,” said Cochran, who has lived in Honolua Valley for the past 11 years.

Holter said he is “blown away” by the pace of development on Maui.

“I’m astounded by the level of progress they’re putting us through here,” he said.

Holter said one way to stop development is to elect officials who will support the efforts of organizations like the Save Honolua Coalition.

“If we’re going to be an effective force, we have to impact an election with thousands of votes,” he told the crowd of more than 100 people.

Lahaina resident and lifeguard Freddy Vermey said he was offended by comments made by ML&P Chairman and Chief Executive Officer David Cole in a Viewpoint in The Maui News Opinion section on Sunday.

“It was very insulting to me, calling us drug dealers and drinkers. We’re just regular people with regular families who want to use the beach without having all that development right there,” Vermey said.

Sierra Club member Brittney McKee, who successfully opposed development at the world-famous Trestles Beach in California, encouraged the audience to keep “fighting the good fight.”

“Honolua is one of those beaches you can’t lose,” she said.

Under current county land-use processes, the proposed development must be designated in the West Maui Community Plan before the land can be classified by the state Land Use Commission and seek appropriate county zoning.

The new General Plan will establish “urban boundaries” for all regions that will strictly restrict urban-type developments to areas within the boundaries.

The proposals for house sites and a golf course would require the Honolua project to be included within urban boundaries of the West Maui Community Plan.

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