



## HAWAII FOREST INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (HFIA)

P. O. Box 66 ❖ 'O'ōkala, HI 96774

Phone: 808-933-9411

Email: [hfia@hawaiiiforest.org](mailto:hfia@hawaiiiforest.org)

Website: [www.hawaiiiforest.org](http://www.hawaiiiforest.org)

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To the Members of Hawaii Forest Industry Association:

In James Michener's book "Hawaii", protagonist Shig Sakagawa returns to Hawaii from World War II after serving in Italy with the famed 442<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment. He re-enlists to serve under General McArthur in occupied Japan. The task is to assist in reforming Japanese society in a way that the people will prosper and will not initiate another war. Shig serves with a Dr. Abernethy, an international expert in land reform. Abernethy tells Shig that the trouble begins when too few people, in a classic medieval situation, control too much land and act in their own interests rather than the interests of all. The issues with these few large owners included not utilizing the land for the good of the people and in cases simply withdrawing it from any use at all. Shig says "Here we are, you and I, doing all this work in redistributing land in defeated Japan, while actually the situation in my own home, Hawaii, is far worse." Shig notes that it is not just that there are few owners, but that often the daimyos had not allowed any productive activity on portions of their land but simply land bank it.

When Hawaii achieved Statehood only 15 years later, the situation in Japan may well have been on the legislators' minds. They seem to have seen the need for self-sufficiency and ample accessible lands in these isolated islands when they designated large segments of the State for agriculture and forestry.

With the demise of the sugar industry, the land ownership situation is now somewhat better than it was in 1946. Yet, on Hawaii Island as an example, four entities control 74% of land. State and federal government own 57% of the island. The impact of the States actions, and lack of actions, on its 41% of the island is magnified by its role in controlling and enforcing zoning rules across vast swaths of private land which are not in accord with original legislative intent. Nor are they consistent with those intentions having been reinforced by the 1978 constitutional convention.

Kamehameha Schools and Parker Ranch together hold 17% of Hawaii Island land ownership. Both are Charitable Trusts, giving them each some of the characteristics of private ownership and some characteristics of public ownership. Both of these entities appear to be driven by an ethos of caring for the land, and to varying degrees, utilizing the land.

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Most public land, is managed with a “lock it up” mentality. Although current motivations seem to be different, the result is the same as that with the daimyos of feudal Japan. Land which was intended and needed for the wellbeing of the people is not actually available for use. Much of this land is held under a preservationist notion of benign neglect. Which is that so long as man never goes on the land, indigenous species will thrive, and all will be well. In fact, all is not well. The notion that nature can take care of itself simply does not work when tropical landscapes face a veritable army of invasives.

Partially overlapping the land held by the biggest landowners is 1.2 million acres, a quarter of the entire state, designated by the legislature as Conservation Resource. The primary purpose of the Conservation Resource land was to manage it for recreation, hunting and commercial forestry, while protecting it as an environmental resource. However, in fact, it is almost all managed as though it were designated “Protection” lands.

The outcome, sixty years later, is that these lands serve virtually none of the needs of people. Meanwhile, aggressive invasives have covered substantial acreage and continue to claim more. Commercial forestry could provide jobs, raw material for local use, access, and income for dealing with the invasives. It is past time for the DLNR to comply with the intent of the legislature in the utilization and protection of the land with which it is entrusted.

Best Regards,  
Don Bryan, President  
Hawai‘i Forest Industry Association ‘