



April 20, 2014

To: Gladys Baisa, Council Chair
Robert Carroll, Vice-Chair
Members of the Maui County Council

Re: Support Tobacco-Free Parks Bill 24, Public Hearing

Dear Maui County Council,

Pacific Whale Foundation, on behalf of its 150 employees and thousands of members worldwide, urges you to support the proposed bill Prohibiting Tobacco Use and Tobacco Products in County Parks.

Cigarette butts are the most abundant type of litter found in the environment. They are pervasive, extremely toxic and pose both human and environmental health risks.

For the past decade, Pacific Whale Foundation has been actively campaigning to reduce the cigarette butts litter in Maui County. Through our annual Ma'alaea Harbor cleanup, quarterly Adopt-A-Highway events and monthly marine debris monitoring, we have continually worked to remove cigarette butts from our beaches and parks, while raising awareness about the environmental impacts of cigarette butt litter.

Despite our best efforts, the problem of cigarette butt litter continues to plague our roadsides, parks, beaches, streams and oceans.

Many people remain unaware of the extensiveness to which cigarette butts are present in Maui's environment. An island-wide cigarette butt cleanup held in January, for example, netted over 14,000 cigarette butts in just two hours. In addition, a Pacific Whale Foundation cleanup of Ma'alaea Harbor in September recorded over 2,000 cigarette butts, and a cleanup at Olowalu only a few weeks later collected over 1,000 butts. The numbers from these recent cleanups alone attest to the severity and significance of cigarette butt litter.

Cigarette butts can begin leaching over 165 toxins into Maui's ocean and streams within 1 hour of contact with water. In addition to poisoning the environment, cigarette butts are also commonly mistaken for food by animals, and have been found in the stomachs of birds, turtles, fish and marine mammals. Furthermore, cigarette butt litter is costly. A cost analysis conducted by the city of San Francisco, for example, concluded that cigarette butt litter costs the city over seven million (\$7,000,000) annually. It should be noted that this cost did not include *indirect* costs to the city incurred by cigarette butt litter, such as impacts to tourism.



O'ahu just recently passed a smoke-free beaches policy, which followed Hawai'i Island's similar policy in 2008. Cities as large as New York, Seattle, Los Angeles and San Diego have all passed smoke-free beaches and parks policies. The currently proposed Bill 24, therefore, will follow in the footsteps of these other municipalities that are already realizing the benefits of tobacco- and smoke-free legislation.

Maui County is well poised to implement Bill 24. Along with the Department of Health, there is a strong, unified coalition of organizations, including Pacific Whale Foundation, that is prepared to educate the public about the implications of the bill's passage. We are confident that this coalition will be able to work with key County departments (e.g. police, parks, lifeguards), hotels, resorts and community groups to conduct trainings and provide the necessary outreach.

Policies that directly enhance Maui's beaches, oceans, forests and streams are necessary and vital to sustaining not only our way of life, but also the many natural resources that these environments provide. Pacific Whale Foundation thus urges you to support Bill 24, and in doing so, providing Maui with cleaner oceans, waves and beaches.

Sincerely,

Lauren Campbell

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