This research proposal is meant to encourage an environmental, historical study of wai (fresh water) in Hawai‘i from the perspective of traditional knowledge, use, and cultural appreciation, with the intent of providing a broader context and meaning for the data collection efforts that will be engaged in as part of the larger EPSCoR ‘Ike Wai project.

The project name itself, ‘Ike Wai, denotes knowledge of water – and presumably from a Hawaiian perspective. Native Hawaiians understood (and many continue to understand) the role of fresh water in the sustainability of island-living; as a community they/we have also observed how introduced changes and development have altered those understandings. In other words, an environmental history, with emphasis on water and water usage, may provide useful information and context to data collection efforts and analysis, as part of this larger study.

A sample of important research questions that may help us provide that context include:

- How did early Kānaka Maoli relate to and regulate their water sources?
- How did Kānaka Maoli adapt to changes in their environment, and changes in water use/access, to provide for their communities?
- What can Kānaka Maoli understandings about wai (fresh water) teach us about our islands and living a sustainable life-style?

‘Hahai nō ka ua i ka ululā‘au “the rain follows the forest” (‘Ōlelo No‘eau #405) is often evoked when discussing fresh water, development, and sustainability in Hawai‘i; it is but one of many insights available in the annals of our indigenous community.

I am proposing a four-phase approach to the study of the cultural and indigenous knowledge of wai in Hawai‘i – to be carried out by an undergraduate researcher under my direction, with ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) skills, over the next two years.

Each phase has the potential for a full semester of study, though if any one phase is accomplished more quickly than expected, the student researcher could easily move on to the next.

While some of the research would lend itself toward inclusion of materials relevant to all of ka pae ‘āina o Hawai‘i (the Hawaiian archipelago) emphasis and focus will be placed on research that pertains specifically to Hawai‘i Island.
Each phase will also include some form of community discussion/oral history interviews. [It would also be very helpful to incorporate discussions among the research community who are involved in this project at UH-Hilo.]

**Phase I: literature review (including place names & proverbs)**
- outcomes:
  a. annotated bibliography
  b. short paper on significant findings

**Phase II: Hawaiian language newspaper research**
- outcomes:
  a. citation database on water
  b. short paper on significant findings

**Phase III: 19th C. laws & policies on water**
- outcomes:
  a. annotated bibliography/citation database
  b. short paper on significant findings

**Phase IV: analysis & conclusions**
- outcomes:
  a. final report that includes the work of all previous phases
  b. ready for submission, academic journal paper