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AMERICAN NEWS Aug 20, 2023

Equity-obsessed Hawaiian official leaves director position after waiting 5 hours to release water during Maui wildfires

More than 1,000 people are still reported missing.

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Katie Daviscourt
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Aug 20, 2023
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The equity-obsessed Hawaii official that came under mass scrutiny for delaying the release of water during the [deadly Maui wildfires](#) has been reassigned positions, [according](#) to Honolulu Civil Beat.

M. Kaleo Manuel, former deputy director of the Hawaii Commission on Water Resource Management, reportedly declined requests to release water to fill Lahaina area reservoirs until after the [fires](#) had ravaged the town. Manuel waited for more than five hours to allow the water to be made available to Maui firefighters at the request of West Maui Land Company, the outlet reports.

As a result, Manuel has been transferred to a different unspecified position within the Department of Land and Natural Resources, per the Honolulu Civil Beat.

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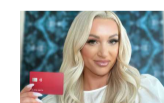
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company wrote. "We anxiously awaited the morning knowing that we could have made more water available to MFD [Maui Fire Department] if our request had been immediately approved."

Manuel reportedly had asked the company to consult with a local farmer about the impact of water diversion before approving their request. The hesitancy stemmed from whether agricultural water supplies should be used for battling wildfires, which was noted by Democrat Gov. Josh Green, according to the outlet.

It has been revealed that Manuel, who was a former Obama Foundation leader, said in past statements that he believes water to be an important tool for social justice and that access to water should be determined by "equity."

"Let water connect us and not divide us," Manuel [said](#) during a debate hosted by the University of Hawaii last year, referring to water as a sacred god. "We can share it, but it requires true conversations about equity...How do we coexist with the resources we have?"

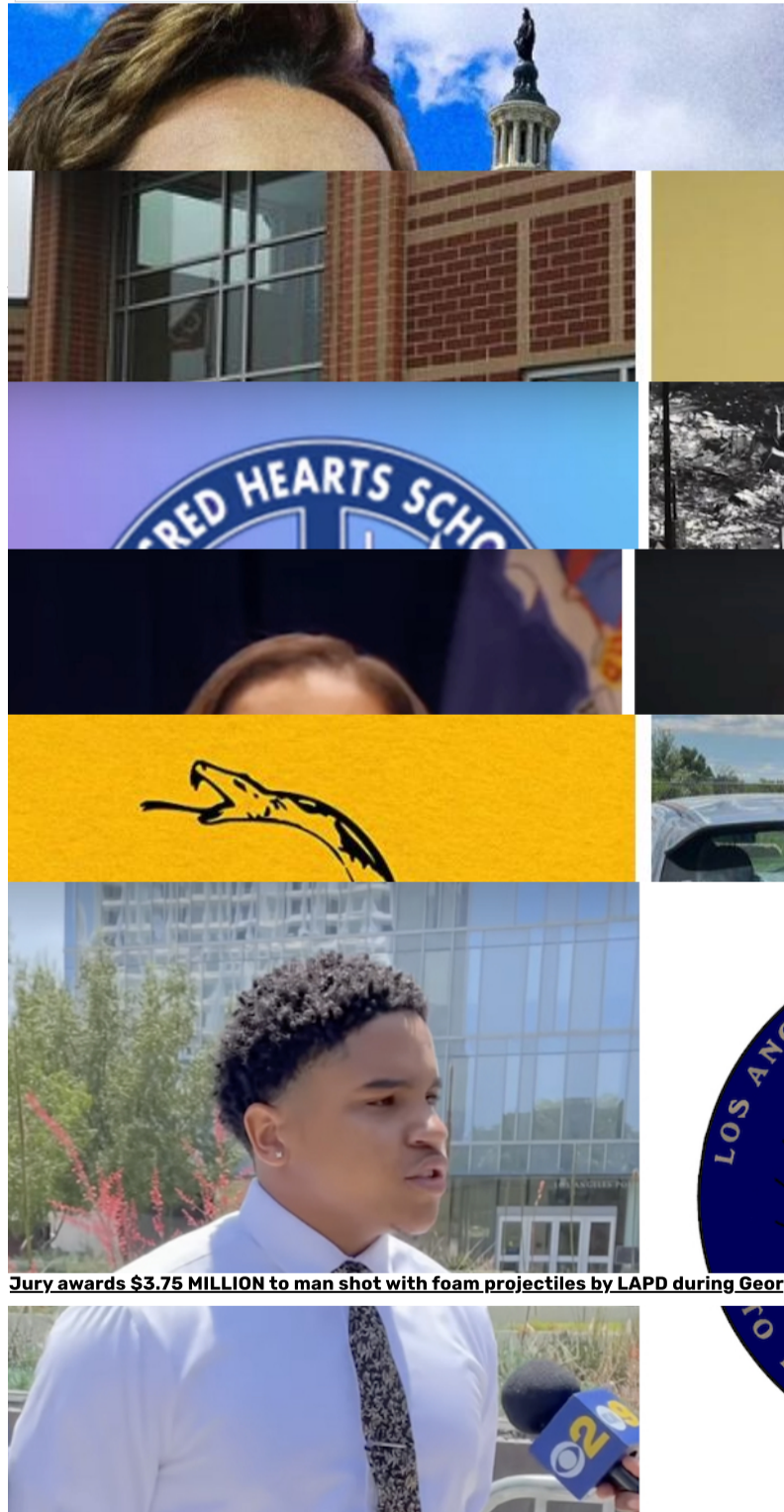
In addition to Manuel delaying the release of water, more than 80 emergency sirens failed to go off which would have alerted Maui residents and tourists that they were in danger. The chief of the Maui Emergency Management Agency, Herman Andaya, [resigned](#) on Thursday after he defended not using the outdoor emergency sirens.

More than 100 people have been reported dead, but that number is expected to rise as more than 1,000 people are reported missing, including children, [according](#) to the Independent.

President Biden is [expected](#) to visit Maui on Monday but has been [slammed](#) by residents for prioritizing personal vacations over the visit, while the island remains in peril.

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