

STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF STATE PARKS

March 28, 2014

Board of Land and Natural Resources
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Members of the Land Board:

SUBJECT: REQUEST APPROVAL OF THE KĪHOLO STATE PARK MASTER PLAN, ACCEPTANCE OF THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, AND ISSUANCE OF A FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT, TMK'S: 7-1-02: 02, 08; 7-1-03: 02, 07, KĪHOLO, NORTH KONA, HAWAI'I

LOCATION:

Portion of Government lands of Pu'u Wa'awa'a situated at North Kona, Hawai'i, identified by Tax Map Keys: 3rd/7-1-02: 02, 08 and 7-1-03: 02, 07 (See **Exhibit 1**).

LAND TITLE STATUS:

Section 5(b) of the Hawai'i Admission Act

DHHL 30% entitlement lands pursuant to the Hawai'i State Constitution: NO

CURRENT USE STATUS:

Executive Order #3890 set aside 3 acres of 7-1-02: 02, access and utility easement 2-A of 2.3 acres and 2-C of 1.1 acres and easement 1 of 1.2 acres. Executive Order # 4161 set aside parcel 08 of 7-1-02 comprised of 3,523 acres, parcel 02 of 3.0 acres, and 7-1-03: 02 of 825.1 acres for a total of 4,358.7 acres.

ENVIRONMENTAL, ZONING AND PERMIT ISSUES:

Chapter 343, HRS Compliance - A draft EA was prepared and published in The Environmental Notice on September 8, 2013 along with an anticipated Finding of No Significant Impact (AFONSI).

ITEM E-1

as a State Wilderness Park. Subsequent to 2006, the Department has moved forward with the preparation of a master plan that would guide development of Kīholo as a Wilderness Park and established a partnership with the nonprofit organization, Hui Aloha Kīholo.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Kīholo State Park Reserve is approximately 4,359 acres, along 8 miles of wild coastline in North Kona that stretches from Pu‘u Wa‘awa‘a northward to Pu‘u Anahulu to the southern end of ‘Anaeho‘omalū Bay. Kīholo Bay and the surrounding land uses contain outstanding natural, cultural, and scenic resources within the extensive wildland environment that contains beaches at Keawaiki Bay, Kīholo Bay, anchialine ponds, the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail, lava tubes and flows and numerous archaeological features. Kīholo is also noted for the Honu, Green sea turtles that can be found foraging and nesting in the warm waters off the coastline.

In 2010, State Parks determined that the master planning process for the state park reserve would consider only those recreational activities that are consistent with a wilderness park designation. A Wilderness Park is defined as: “Areas possessing a natural, primitive character without human habitation and offering passive wildland recreation, such as hiking and primitive camping. Wilderness parks should be of a large size so as to provide solitude in a natural setting and a sense of unconfined space. Wilderness parks tend to be remote with limited access and minimal park facilities for public health and safety, such as self-composting toilets.” This designation set the direction for ensuring that the natural beauty of the area and its significant historical and cultural features are preserved and maintained for future generations to experience and enjoy. Minimal facility development, low-intensity uses, and sustainable resource management drove the development of alternatives that includes minimal modification of park conditions, allows for sustainable management of the park resources and does not require a high level of security and facility maintenance.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Three alternatives for management of the park resources were considered, Continuation as Park Reserve or No Action Alternative, Multi-Node Camping/Access, and Focused Camping/Access. In this submittal details are provided primarily for the Preferred Alternative called Focused Camping/Access.

Continuation as a park reserve provides that minimal management efforts will be made along with passive measures that include limiting all access or prohibiting all public camping and vehicular access with only having pedestrian access makai of Queen Ka‘ahumanu Highway. There would be few or no new interpretive programs, infrastructure or other facility development.

The Multi-Node Camping/Access alternative calls for previously disturbed areas to be returned to its natural state, rules limiting access and entry to all caves and archaeological sites curtailed by the use of signage and enforcement patrols. It also includes camping at Keawaiki Bay with access either by vehicle or limited to walk-in users only.

The Focused Camping/Access alternative, the Preferred Alternative proposes:

- A vehicular parking area for day users in the existing cleared area behind the southern side of Kīholo Bay.

taking advantage of this improvement, the plan limits construction to the grading of a new, 2,000' long/18' wide road bed along the alignment shown in **Exhibit 2**. Small amounts of cut and fill would be needed and grading would not substantially alter the terrain, affect any important geological features, such as lava tubes, or adversely affect soils that are suitable for agricultural use. This option was coordinated with DOT – Highways Division and they indicated they would be open to review and comment on a design based on its concept.

Although the exact alignment of this road has not been determined, the majority of it would be within State Parks property. The remainder is within the highway right-of-way but it is only the first stretch of road as it leaves the scenic overlook. Based on a conservative cost estimate of \$75-\$100 per lineal foot for grading and base course, the cost is unlikely to exceed \$200,000, and could be considerably less. A preliminary field check of the area along the route indicates that it will not affect any identified historic or archaeological features and will not pass over any important lava tubes. During the final design of the road, a more detailed survey will be conducted. Should anything unexpected come up, there is sufficient space for re-routing the road.

Additionally, the Preferred Alternative also entails the development of a new point of ingress/egress from Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway with an unpaved parking area just makai of the park boundary where people could safely turn off the highway, park their cars, and hike down to Keawaiki Bay. Pursuit of this plan will occur simultaneously with DOT – Highways planned widening of Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway, with most of the work, to create safe turning lanes, being conducted in the highway right-of-way and not affecting parklands.

Both the new access road and the new entrance and parking area at Keawaiki Bay would be paved and constructed by crushing and compacting the native lava rock to create a base course for a strong and stable roadway using heavy diesel-powered construction equipment like backhoes and bulldozers. To level and demarcate the roadway, gravel topping will be placed over the base course.

Other Internal Park Roadways:

Other than the Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway access road shift outlined above, no new vehicular roads would be created under this alternative. However, all major existing roadways in the park would be maintained in their present form for use by park users, inholders, service vehicles, and emergency services access. Generally, for these roadways, the continued use of gravel surfaces is appropriate within the park and will be the preferred method for creation and upkeep of internal park roadways. In places where grades are sufficiently steep or the turning radius is sharp, an asphalt surface may be used to prevent undue slipping during startup or turning.

MANAGEMENT PROGRAM MODULES

To maintain and improve the quality of the park resources, management modules are included in the plan that are independent of the specific park alternatives and can be implemented independent of one another, although in some cases, a combination of modules may be used for better results. These modules are:

Vegetation Management and Measures for Ungulate Control that can Stabilize and/or Restore the Ecosystem.

Fisheries Resources Management.

Kīholo Bay is designated a Marine Fisheries Management Area by the Division of Aquatic Resources, making it unlawful for any person to possess gillnets within the waters between Hou Point in the north and Nāwaikulua Point in the south. This special regulatory framework can be expanded to increase restrictions on fishing within all or part of the bay and educate the fishermen and general public about the ecological values and traditional fishing practices native to Kīholo. By converting the fisheries management area into a Marine Life Conservation District, the taking of marine life, coral, sand or rock will be prohibited, except for pole and line fishing (by permit) and netting over sandy bottom areas.

Opportunity to Create a Starlight Reserve.

In April 2004, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) first called for starlight reserves as a part of the *Declaration in Defense of the Night Sky and the Right to Starlight*. A Starlight Reserve is defined as:

“...a site where a commitment to defend the night sky quality and the access to starlight has been established. Its main function will be to preserve the quality of the night sky and its associate values, whether they are cultural, scientific, astronomical, natural, or landscape-related.

A Starlight Reserve will have a core or dark zone. This is an unpolluted area where natural night sky conditions are kept intact. This core zone will be protected by a buffer or protection zone, there may be an external zone where criteria for intelligent and responsible lighting will be enforced along with protection of the night sky from other harmful factors such as light pollution.

Each Starlight Reserve’s requirements will be specified based on the characteristics, unique features, and functions of the site. These should be related to the preservation of the quality of astronomical observations, wildlife conservation, nighttime landscapes, or the cultural heritage.”

In consideration of the Hawaiian culture’s tradition of celestial navigation and mythology such a designation for Kīholo State Park lends greater meaning and value to the pursuit of these efforts.

DISCUSSION

The Preferred Alternative involves very limited construction and would have minor impacts on the topography, geology, and soils within the park. These impacts would primarily be the result of the construction of the new park entrance above Kīholo Bay, and the new entrance and parking area above Keawaiki Bay which is intended to dovetail with DOT-Highways planned Queen Ka’ahumanu Highway widening project. The new campsites and trails will create slight disturbances to these resources as well.

The Master Plan for Kiholo State Park is designed to preserve and maintain most of the eight-mile long coastline in an undisturbed state. The presence of a number of inholdings and the coastal highway prevents it from truly being a “wilderness park”. However, the intensified management that is proposed in the plan will help to ensure that some of the negative effects to the natural and cultural resources are mitigated.

families with generations of residency upon the lands and possess direct knowledge of the coastal lands that are Kīholo State Wilderness Park. The study is presented in the context of the entire ahupua‘a extending from the fisheries and coastal lands to the mountains, and is in accordance with the wishes of the ‘ohana/Hui Aloha Kīholo, who share generational attachment to Nāpu‘u and maintain that in order to understand the makai lands and to develop long range management programs that are relevant to the lands, one must also understand the *mauka* lands. It is through those traditions that one learns of the connections between the people and the land and how they learned to live sustainably.

The study seeks to provide the State, community members, and the families of Nāpu‘u with access to documentation pertaining to the area’s cultural and historical resources. This information will help interested parties appreciate and value the traditions and practices of the Hawaiian people, recognizing that their culture is an integral part of any program that may be considered in the long-term management of the resources; and will serve as the foundation of educational/interpretive programs that may be implemented in the park’s programs.

In consideration of the Master Plan’s proposed minimal park improvements and focus on sustainable resource management, the Division of State Parks reviewed the DEA for the subject project and the comments received at public meetings, from organizations and government agencies having an interest in the project as well as during the 30-day public comment period for the DEA and anticipates a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) determination.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board of Land and Natural Resources:

1. Approve the Master Plan for Kīholo State Park to serve as a guiding document for the management of the park.
2. Accept the final Environmental Assessment for the Kīholo State Park Master Plan.
3. Find that the project will not have a significant effect on the environmental, natural and/or cultural features of the area and approve the issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact for the proposed project.
4. Authorize the Chairperson to publish a Finding of No Significant Impact for the proposed project in The Environmental Notice of the Office of Environmental Quality Control.

Respectfully submitted,



Daniel S. Quinn



State Parks Administrator

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL:



William J. Aila, Chairperson