

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

April 11, 2014

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

Members of the Land Board:

**SUBJECT:** RESUBMITTAL: 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: (3)7-1-02: 02, 08; 7-1-03: 02, 07, KĪHOLO, NORTH KONA, HAWAI'I

**LOCATION:**

Portion of Government lands of P'u Wa'awa'a situated at North Kona, Hawai'i, identified by Tax Map Keys: 3<sup>rd</sup>/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

Conservation District – Due to portions of the area being in the Conservation District, Chapter 183C, HRS approvals may be required.

County Zoning – The properties are zoned both Conservation and Agricultural.

## **SUMMARY**

This submittal requests the Board's approval of the Master Plan for Kīholo State Park Reserve, acceptance of the final environmental assessment (FEA), and approval of the issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the project.

The Division of State Parks (State Parks), in collaboration with many members of the community and public at large, Hui Aloha Kīholo, the Pu'u Wa'awa'a Advisory Council, the Hawai'i Experimental Tropical Forest, and The Nature Conservancy have developed a twenty-year plan for the Reserve. The plan is based on the concept of sustainable resource management, minimal facility development, and the promotion of low intensity uses such as hiking, swimming, and camping, and includes management plans for the enhancement, preservation, and interpretation of the natural and cultural, and scenic resources.

In conjunction with this project, a Cultural Impact Assessment was prepared along with an archaeological inventory survey, a terrestrial invertebrate resources survey, and a biological survey, and included public meetings, interviews with interested stakeholders and other government agencies having an interest in the project. To lay the foundation for the plan's recommendations, a background research and inventory report, draft framework report, a pre-final Master Plan and a draft EA were completed. A copy of the FEA, the final Master Plan and its Executive Summary was provided under separate cover to the Board members.

## **BACKGROUND**

In January 2002, the Board approved and recommended to the Governor, the issuance of an Executive Order setting aside the coastal lands of Pu'u Wa'awa'a and Pu'u Anahulu that are *makai* of Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway to State Parks for a state park reserve and the *mauka* lands to DOFAW. By taking this action, the Board recognized that the coastal wildland environment with its extensive natural, cultural, and recreational resources should be enhanced, maintained, and preserved along with the natural open space and open coastal views from the highway.

In July 2003, DOFAW and State Parks, in collaboration with the Pu'u Wa'awa'a Advisory Council (PAC), prepared a management plan for the area to provide the basis and guidelines to steward the area based on the traditional Hawaiian concept of ahupua'a management. Five interim management options were identified in the *Management Plan for the Ahupua'a of Pu'uwa'awa'a and the Makai Lands of Pu'u'anahulu*. They were: (i) continued public use with the then-existing low level of DLNR management; (ii) increased DLNR management presence through additional monitoring and enforcement of applicable regulations and the installation of new interpretive and educational signage; (iii) increasing the Department's presence by converting the former Loretta Lynn house into a DLNR interpretive center/office/field station, thereby allowing division staff to periodically work in the area, interpret and educate the public, monitor resources and public use, and provide assistance to the public when needed; (iv) increasing the level of management by establishing a partnership with a nonprofit group that could provide interpretation, education, and other park-related services; and (v) full development

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 of the park in the existing cleared area behind the southern side of Kīholo Bay.

- Up to a dozen formal campsites at selected locations along the southern portion of Kīholo Bay with individualized parking located adjacent to the campsites. Users would no longer be allowed to access the campsites from the beach side, but would instead reach them using short walkways from defined parking spaces off of the existing access road. Under the interim management plan eight campsites were constructed utilizing this concept. At the time, it was determined that the camping was an existing use, therefore, no Conservation District use permit was required.
- A group campsite available for use by organizations involved in service trips or educational visits to the area will be built south of the former Loretta Lynn residence.
- A small base yard area, a portion of which will enclose a covered space, would provide secure storage for equipment and supplies needed to operate and maintain the park.
- At both the day-use area and the Loretta Lynn house cul-de-sacs, waterless portable chemical, self-composting, or vault toilets, are to be provided primarily for day-use with an enclosed dumpster.
- For the safety of visitors and park resources, all sensitive caves are to be sealed or otherwise closed off, preventing unauthorized access. Visitors will be allowed to see historical and archaeological features of interest that will be identified by footpaths, signs, and brochures. However, no infrastructure will be created to improve and encourage access to these sites.
- The Ala Kahakai Trail that traverses through the park will be acknowledged.
- The existing rough shoreline trail to the north and south will be maintained regularly to ensure that the route remains visible to users. No trail upgrades (e.g., smoothing or widening surfaces) that are likely to substantially increase trail usage are included in this alternative, but improved signage would be provided that could encourage some additional focused activity.
- To allow for enforcement by DOCARE, signs will be posted with citations of the appropriate Hawai‘i Revised Statutes and administrative rules. Sufficient managerial presence is also necessary to assist in the enforcement of the rules limiting access.

#### **INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE:**

The existing vehicular access to the Kīholo Bay portion of the park consists of roads constructed many years ago when only a few, very low density uses were present along the shoreline. In order to accommodate the increased usage, roadway improvements are recommended. Three fundamental Queen Ka‘ahumanu Highway/Kīholo Bay Access alternatives were considered, No Action, Improve Existing Access Road, and Connect with Scenic Lookout Access Road. Upon evaluation of the components and each of the impacts, the third option was selected, taking advantage of the existing highway improvements north of the existing entrance.

The *mauka* portion of the Kīholo Bay access road will be rerouted in order to create access through the improved intersection that DOT has constructed at the nearby scenic lookout with adequate turning lanes. Approximately 300 feet *makai* of the highway, a new section of unpaved road would be constructed from the scenic lookout southwest across a section of *pāhoehoe* lava and joined to the existing park access road in the vicinity of the existing upper parking area. By 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.*

Exotic species are the dominant vegetation at the park making restoration of the native and Polynesian-introduced vegetation nearly impossible. However, a relatively high degree of

ungulate control can be established with defined areas goat-free and having plantings of native and Polynesian-introduced species. Successful methods for the removal of goats from the fenced areas and prevention from re-population by animals outside the fences have been identified by the Hawai'i Conservation Alliance that combine professional trappers/shooters with the use of "Judas" animals (trained goats that can lead hunters to the feral goats).

#### *Opportunities for Development of Archaeological, Historical, and Cultural Interpretive Programs.*

Nearly 200 archaeological and historic properties have been identified in the park, including petroglyphs, abrading pits, *hōlua*, anchialine ponds, and lava tubes containing cultural deposits. Some of these sites are highly sensitive and require protection and are therefore not appropriate for visitation, but there are others that can be made accessible to visitors by way of both active and passive interpretive programs. The plan discusses specific physical features that can be made accessible. However, the development of detailed interpretive programs is not part of this plan. It is noted that creating and operating such programs requires a level of staffing and financial support that is not likely to be available to State Parks in the foreseeable future. A commitment from State Parks to facilitate the use of those resources in interpretive programs designed and operated by others can be made, provided it does not conflict with any of their own objectives.

#### *Anchialine Pond Restoration.*

The Kona Coast and particularly Kīholo State Park contain many anchialine ponds that represent a nexus of ecological and cultural significance and are sources of fresh water, *wahi pana* or "storied places", as well as being habitats for rare native species. Moreover, these resources are found nowhere else in the nation. An anchialine pond restoration program that combined vegetation management, trash removal, elimination of invasive aquatic species, such as tilapia and mosquito fish, and the reintroduction of native anchialine species would help improve their quality and appearance. All of the anchialine resources within the park were evaluated by Dr. Richard Brock who concluded that while the efforts performed by organizations to help restore the ponds improve their appearance and restores some of the ecosystem functions, removal of the alien fishes that have decimated the native fauna is not likely. Expending valuable resources for pond restoration may not be prudent for State Parks, but partnerships with organizations interested in restoring specific areas are desirable.

#### *Fish Ponds Restoration.*

A 7 acre inholding that contains major portions of the historic *ka loko o Kīholo* fishpond was recently given to The Nature Conservancy (TNC). In collaboration with State Parks, Hui Aloha Kīholo, Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail, and Conservation International, a conservation action plan for the fishpond restoration was developed. Given top priority, activities are planned that include invasive vegetation removal, creation of ungulate exclosures and removal of ungulates, plantings of native vegetation, removal of sediment and the reconstruction of fishpond walls.

#### *Renovation of the Former Loretta Lynn Residence.*

Details of the proposed renovation will be discussed in the next item on the Board's agenda.

### *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 Reserves 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.



The botanical survey identified 43 different plant species, of which a little more than one-third are common endemic and indigenous plants with several early Polynesian introductions (*niu, noni, milo, and kamani*). The most environmentally sensitive plant assemblages are the coastal strand and coastal pond/anchialine pond environments and they are easily damaged by human traffic, off-road vehicles, and invasive species.

No plants listed as threatened or endangered were found within the park and there is no federally designated Critical Habitat present.

No candidate, threatened, or endangered avian species protected by federal or state statutes have been observed in the park, but it is likely that several species of threatened or endangered birds do overfly the area and birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act are known to be present in the park. Collisions with tall artificial structures such as utility poles and lines, disorienting artificial light sources leading to “fallout” and predation by invasive alien mammals, in particular dogs, cats, and rats are the principal threats to these birds.

The only terrestrial mammals present within the park are invasive and disruptive species and include feral goats, pigs, dogs, cats, rats, and mice. Implementation of the park alternative would substantially affect mammals that are the targets of the ungulate control programs. However, unless these animals are reduced, further decimation of the native vegetation will continue unchecked. The only means of avoiding the need for large scale recurrent hunting is the erection of ungulate-proof fences that would protect small defined areas.

The Orangeblack Hawaiian Damsel fly (*Megalagrion xanthomelas*) is the only invertebrate candidate for federal protection that was observed within the park. No invertebrate listed as threatened or endangered under either federal or state statutes was observed.

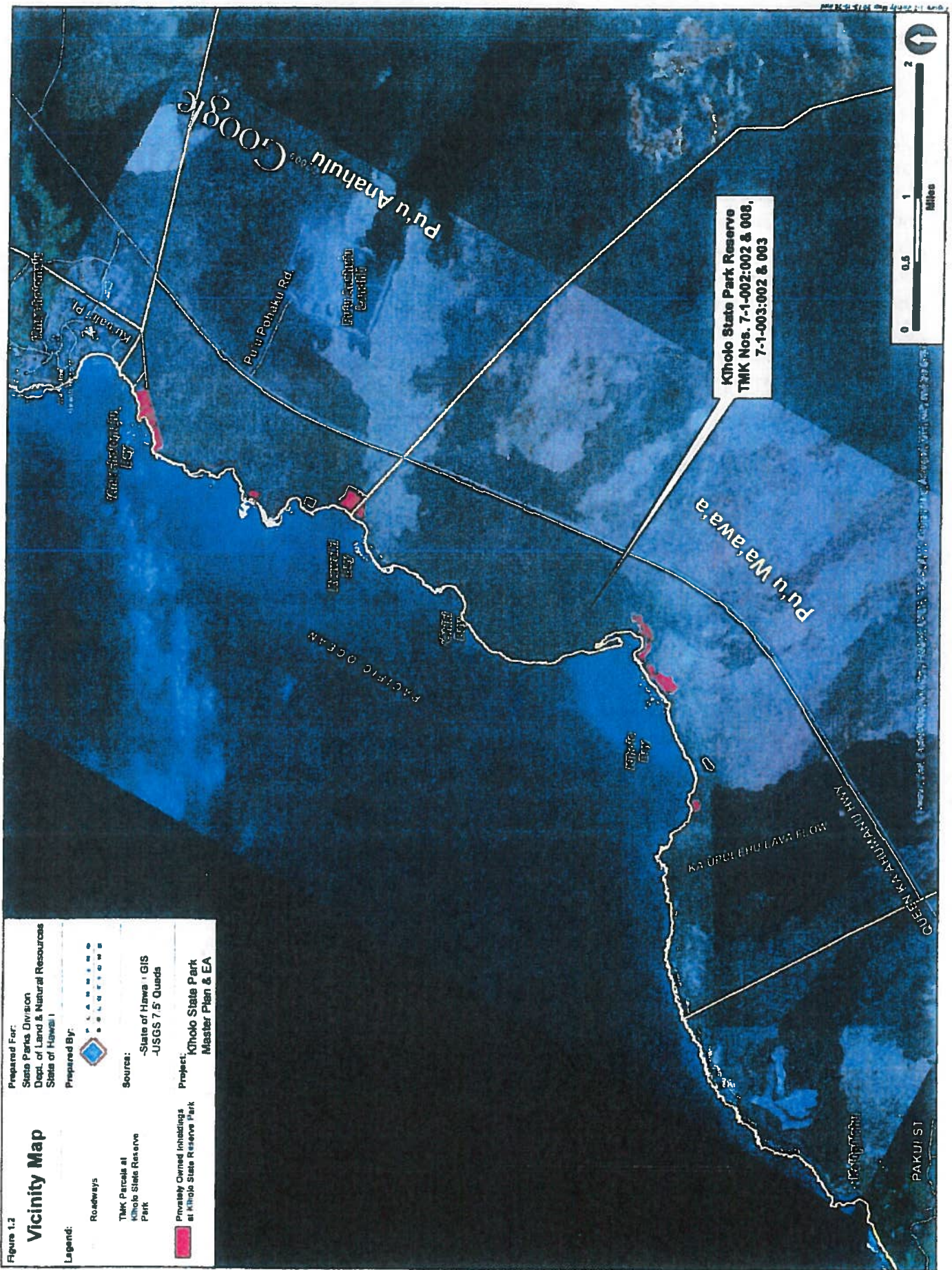
A preliminary field inspection was conducted of the route for the proposed new access road and compared with the results of the archaeological reconnaissance survey performed by Tom Dye & Colleagues, Archaeologists, Inc. and indicated that the proposed route would not affect any identified archaeological or historic features, nor would it pass over important lava tubes that might contain undiscovered archaeological resources. Prior to final design of the access improvements, a full archaeological inventory survey will be conducted pursuant to Chapter 6C, HRS.

The addition of four to six additional campsites south of the Loretta Lynn residence are proposed each with an area large enough to accommodate ten campers with a fire pit, picnic table, and adjacent refuse container, and portable toilet. To create these campsites, minor clearing of brush and rocks would be needed using hand tools and light machinery.

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 343, HRS, and its implementing regulations, Section 11-200, HAR, a detailed analysis of the effects that the Master Plan improvements could have on cultural practices, resources, and features was made.

In 2011, Kēpa and Onaona Maly of Kumu Pono Associates LLC prepared “*He Mo’olelo ‘Aina No Nāpu‘u – Traditions of Pu‘u Wa‘awa‘a & Pu‘u Anahulu Lands of Kīholo State Wilderness Park, District of Kona, Island of Hawai‘i, An Ethnography of Kīholo at Nāpu‘u*,” prepared as part of a Cultural Impact Assessment Consultation Study for the Kīholo State Wilderness Park. It is a detailed ethnographic study that focuses on the region traditionally known as Nāpu‘u that comprises the ahupua‘a of Pu‘u Anahulu and Pu‘u Wa‘awa‘a in the Kekaha region of North Kona. Selected oral history interviews were conducted that link knowledge of cultural landscapes, storied places, and past practices. Most of the interviewees are descended from





**Figure 1.3**  
**Vicinity Map**

**Prepared For:**  
 State Parks Division  
 Dept. of Land & Natural Resources  
 State of Hawaii

**Prepared By:**

**Source:**  
 -State of Hawaii GIS  
 -USGS 7.5' Quads

**Project:**  
 Kiholo State Park  
 Master Plan & EA

**Legend:**

- Roadways
- TMK Parcels at Kiholo State Reserve Park
- Privately Owned Inholdings at Kiholo State Reserve Park

Kiholo State Park Reserve  
 TMK Nos. 7-1-002:002 & 008,  
 7-1-003:002 & 003



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 Reserve 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,

  
FOR Daniel S. Quinn  
State Parks Administrator

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL:

  
William J. Aila, Chairperson



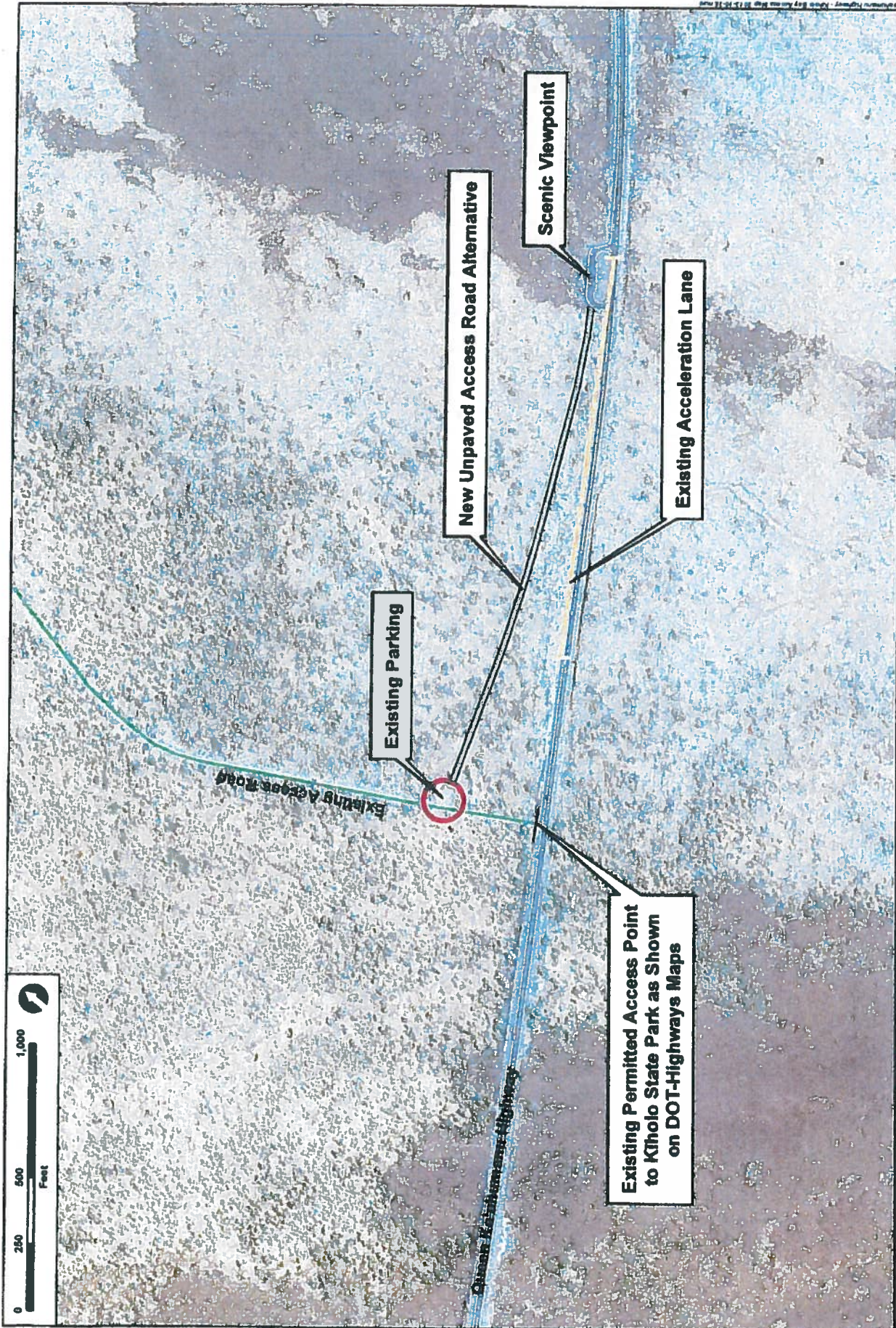


Figure 5.2  
**Proposed Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway - Kiholo Bay Access Map**

**Project:**  
 Kiholo State Park  
 Master Plan & EA

**Source:**  
 -State of Hawai'i GIS  
 -ESRI Satellite Imagery

**Prepared By:**  
  
 P L A N N I N G  
 S O L U T I O N S

**Prepared For:**  
 State Parks Division  
 Dept. of Land & Natural Resources  
 State of Hawai'i



