

Sanford Service Center at Leilani Quarry – EIS Preparation Notice

Virtual Public Scoping Meeting

Date: January 14, 2025

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT:

All right. Good evening, everyone. It's 6:02. We might have a few more people jump in at some point, but I think in the interest of everyone's evening, we'll go ahead and get started.

This is the EIS scoping meeting — the virtual scoping meeting — for Sanford Service Center at Leilani Quarry, in Puna District in East Hawai'i. We have a lot of information to cover, so we wanted to start with some general procedures.

We ask that folks please hold their comments throughout the presentation. There will be a comment section at the end of the presentation for anyone who wishes to speak. As folks probably know, now that we're doing so many things virtually, please remain muted throughout the presentation to minimize any cross-chat.

As a reminder, this meeting is being recorded per Hawai'i Administrative Rules § 11-200.1. We are required to record these meetings, so just be aware that the recording is underway. Thank you.

By way of introductions: my name is Ethan McCown. I'm a senior planner with Group 70 — G70 — a local firm. We are architects, planners, and civil engineers providing support services across the state. We are supporting Sanford Service Center in their upcoming Environmental Impact Statement and for this EIS Preparation Notice and public scoping meeting.

Also joining us tonight is Irene Nichols Ferguson, a planner at G70. The principal in charge of our project is Kawika McKeague, our principal planner, who is not on the call this evening. In his stead, we have Jeff Overton from G70 joining us tonight.

That is our team presenting this evening.

Folks may or may not be familiar with the EIS process. The EIS process is driven in large part through HAR § 11-200.1 and Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 343, collectively known as HEPA — the Hawai'i Environmental Policy Act. HAR § 11-200.1 requires public scoping meetings.

The purpose of these public scoping meetings is to gather public feedback on what will become the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. We are looking for public comment and feedback on: the proposed action, which we will get to shortly; alternatives to be analyzed in the EIS; and any specific focus areas the EIS should place on resources that could be impacted by the proposed action.

If you have a comment related to any of those topics, we would love to hear it. We will have an opportunity for those comments at the end of tonight's meeting.

There is a nuance to this EISPN worth explaining. You may have noticed in the Environmental Review Program's publication — the Environmental Notice — that there was a withdrawal letter associated with a first EISPN. A first preparation notice was previously published in July of 2019 for the same proposed action — approximately five and a half years ago.

In the summer of 2019, amendments to HAR Chapter 11-200 were passed and became effective. Those new rules stipulated that actions begun under the previous rules may continue to follow the older rules if completed within five years of the new rules' effective date. Because this project never published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement — which is the next step in the EIS process — we are required to go back and issue a new

preparation notice, which includes a new public scoping meeting. That is what we are doing tonight.

This is intended to clarify for anyone who noticed a withdrawal concurrent with the publication of a second EISPN in the Environmental Notice. If anyone has procedural questions, we are happy to address those at the end of the presentation.

So — a little about the business G70 is supporting in this endeavor. Sanford Service Center is a local business that conducts mining and quarrying operations on a 30-acre portion of what we are calling the petition area. The operation is known as Leilani Quarry, and it employs 25 to 30 local workers supporting local working families in East Hawai'i and Puna. The cinder quarry operates on privately owned land. It is multigenerational, and has been in operation since 1977.

What is produced at Leilani Quarry is a vital resource: a low-density, black-colored, porous cinder — sometimes called "popcorn cinder." That area of Puna is geologically recent and rich in this type of cinder resource, which is essential to the nursery industry as a growing medium. If you purchase an anthurium or an orchid at a Home Depot or Walmart on Hawai'i Island, the planting medium is very likely cinder from Sanford Service Center's Leilani Quarry.

This is a vital resource for the horticulture and floriculture industry in East Hawai'i. As a point of reference, the County estimated the total value of crops in 2022 at approximately \$500 million. We can say with confidence that Sanford Service Center and Leilani Quarry are contributing to an important industry in the county and the state.

The following is a map showing the location of Leilani Quarry. This is Hawai'i Island, zoomed in on Puna District. Leilani Estates is visible here. Fissure 8 — the site of the major 2018 eruption — is also marked. Sanford Service Center's Leilani Quarry is located within the petition area, which is important for the proposed action of this EIS. The broader area represents the larger TMK parcel, the privately owned parcel within which the petition area sits. Areas of dark coloration visible on the map correspond to the quarry itself.

It is important for folks to understand how operations at Sanford Service Center are conducted. The EISPN uses the terms "mining and quarrying activities," but another way to think about it is as excavation or grading. There is no blasting, no rock crushing, and no heavy vibrations from breaking rock. The cinder is excavated at the surface and then filtered through screens. Sanford Service Center is not planning any increase in heavy machinery as part of the proposed action. On average, approximately six gravel trucks per day travel in and out of the quarry. That number is not expected to increase under the proposed action.

Here are some site photographs. Pu'u Kali'u is visible in the background. The foreground shows the surface from which cinder is excavated. Heavy machinery is visible on the left, used to access the fine popcorn cinder. The bottom right image shows what that fine cinder looks like — the same material you would find as the growing medium in potted anthuriums or orchids at major retailers across Hawai'i Island.

Now let's discuss the proposed action.

Every EIS has a proposed action — the action the EIS is examining and analyzing. The proposed action here would allow the expansion of cinder mining with the approval of a special permit from the State Land Use Commission. Specifically, the proposed action is a petition to change the State Land Use District designation of the subject parcel from Conservation District to Agricultural District.

When you petition the Land Use Commission to change land — even privately owned land — from Conservation to another district, it necessarily triggers the need for environmental review. In this case, that is an Environmental Impact Statement.

As folks may or may not know, there are four State Land Use Districts in Hawai'i: Urban, Rural, Agricultural, and Conservation. We are proposing to petition a change from Conservation to Agricultural. This would allow Sanford Service Center to bring their operations into regulatory conformance over the long term — ensuring they are operating within a land use district consistent with mining, quarrying, and the important services they provide to our local economy.

This is one of the only quarries on Hawai'i Island — and potentially in the state — where this type of valuable cinder resource can be extracted. This has been recognized by the Governor through an emergency proclamation in 2018 during the eruptions, and subsequently by the Legislature, which passed an act directing the State to identify other locations in Hawai'i where a similar cinder resource could be obtained. Other sources exist, but Leilani Quarry is one of the primary ones, and it is vital for local industries.

The proposed action would allow expansion of operations from the current 30-acre footprint to approximately 73 acres. The petition area — outlined in yellow — represents the whole parcel that would be reclassified under the proposed action from Conservation District to Agricultural District. However, reclassification of the full petition area does not mean that mining and quarrying activities would occur across the entire parcel.

What you will see in the figures, broken down further: in blue, the license area — approximately 73 acres to which Sanford Service Center, in coordination with the property owner, would be able to expand mining and excavation activities. In orange, approximately 21 acres of intentional buffer areas, established for resource management objectives and conservation measures to ensure that activities are buffered from adjacent parcels. The Leilani Estates subdivision is visible at the upper portion of the map, with the orange buffer running horizontally between the quarry operations area and the subdivision boundary.

The Draft EIS will address existing conditions, potential impacts from the proposed action, and proposed mitigation measures.

Resource areas already identified for analysis in the Draft EIS include:

Geology and geohazards — given the project's proximity to Fissure 8 and the geologically active nature of the area.

Hydrology and water resources — the EIS will carefully examine the extent to which ongoing quarry activities may impact water resources and identify applicable mitigation.

Biological resources — including the results of three biological surveys conducted between 2013 and 2024, the most recent completed in 2024. These surveys inventoried endangered, threatened, and protected species and proposed management and mitigation measures.

Air quality — related to quarry operations and equipment.

Hazardous substances — associated with heavy machinery, though impacts are expected to be minimal.

Economic impacts — including the quarry's contributions to the local economy.

Historic and cultural resources — including archaeological resources and resources important for cultural practices.

Public facilities, infrastructure, and utilities — impacts are expected to be minimal given the project's remote location in Puna.

Land use — including whether quarry use precludes future land uses and whether the proposed action is in conformance with applicable land use regulations.

A number of technical studies have been completed and will be cited in the Draft EIS. In addition to the biological surveys, the studies include: a Cultural Impact Assessment prepared by Orr and Hahn; an Archaeological Inventory Survey; and an Archaeological Site Preservation Plan. The Archaeological Site Preservation Plan has been reviewed and approved by the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) and will be incorporated in full into the Draft EIS.

EIS rules require that a proposed action be analyzed alongside a reasonable range of alternatives.

Alternative 1 is the proposed action: the Land Use District Boundary Amendment from Conservation to Agricultural.

Alternative 2 would involve an amendment to the Conservation District subzone classification. The subject parcel is currently in the Limited subzone. A change to the Resource subzone would allow mining and quarrying activities subject to a Conservation District Use Permit from the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR). This alternative will be fully analyzed in the EIS.

The proposed reclassification to Agricultural District is preferred in part because it brings the parcel into consistency with surrounding land classifications — much of the surrounding land is already State-designated Agricultural, and the parcel is currently zoned Agricultural by the County of Hawai'i.

The No-Action Alternative will also be analyzed, as required. Under the no-action scenario, all land use designations remain unchanged. The parcel remains in the Conservation District Limited subzone, and under that scenario, Leilani Quarry would not be able to sustain operations in the long term and would eventually cease operations.

The EIS will also analyze consistency with applicable State and County plans and policies, including: Hawai'i State Land Use Law; the Hawai'i State Plan; the Hawai'i State Functional Plans; the Hawai'i Coastal Zone Management Program; the County of Hawai'i General Plan; and, if applicable, the Special Permit process through the County of Hawai'i.

That brings us toward the close of the presentation.

For those wishing to submit comments on the EISPN: the comment deadline is February 7, 2025, which is coming up in just a few weeks. Comments may be submitted by mail to the

address provided, or by email to LeilaniQuarryProject@g70.design. Oral comments may also be provided tonight. A link to the EISPN is available on this slide — we recommend taking a screenshot for your reference.

We will now open the floor for comments. We are complying with HAR Chapter 11-200.1, and scoping comments should be directed at the scope of the Draft EIS — that is, the proposed action, the alternatives, and the resource areas to be analyzed. Please unmute or raise your hand if you would like to provide a comment.

Thank you all very much.

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