

JOHN WAIHEE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



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STATE OF HAWAII

DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
P.O. BOX 821
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

April 26, 1993

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KEITH W. AHUE, CHAIRPERSON
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In reply, please refer to:
REF: DOFAW

DOFAW

Mr. Brian J.J. Choy, Director
OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY CONTROL
Central Pacific Plaza, 4th Floor
220 South King Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Mr. Choy:

Subject: Proposed Land Acquisition at South Kona, Hawaii; Tax Map Keys:
3rd Div./8-7-01:4,6,7,118-7-12: 1,3,4,7:8-8-01: 11,12,13;& 9-2-01: 5

A draft environmental assessment was prepared by the Division of Forestry and Wildlife and sent to your office for publication in the OEQC Bulletin. It was published in the January 8, 1993 bulletin. During the 30-day review period, we have received either no comments or no objections to the request. Two comments were received which dictated a response. This response is the attachment to the final environmental assessment.

Because it has been determined that the proposed project will not have a significant impact on the environment, we hereby issue a negative declaration determination in conformance with the requirements of Chapter 343, Hawaii Revised Statutes, as amended, relating to Environmental Impact Statements. Please publish notice of this determination in your next scheduled OEQC Bulletin.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Wayne F. Ching of the Division of Forestry and Wildlife at 587-0166.

63

Mr. Brian J.J. Choy
Page 2
April 26, 1993

Very truly yours,


KEITH W. AHUE

enclosures

cc: Chris Yuen, HI Board Member
Division of Land Management
Hawaii Branch DOFAW

1993-05-08-HI-FEA-South Kona Forest Reserve Land Acquisition

MAY - 8 1993

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR THE
SOUTH KONA FOREST RESERVE
LAND ACQUISITION

TMK: 8-7-01: 4,6,7,11
8-7-12: 1,3,4,6,7
8-8-01: 11,12,13
9-2-01: 5

This Environmental Document prepared pursuant to Chapter 343, HRS

PREPARED BY

THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE

STATE OF HAWAII

Responsible Official: _____
Keith W. Ahue, Chairperson Date

**CHAPTER 343, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES (HRS)
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

I. SUMMARY

Proposing Agency: Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife

Project Name: South Kona Forest Reserve Land Acquisition

Project Description: The proposed project involves the acquisition of a privately owned parcels so that the State can: 1) "Protect and manage lands having resource values to the State including natural, environmental, economic, recreational, and scenic values, and 2) control future growth, development and land uses."

Project Location: Lands adjacent to the South Kona Forest Reserve
Tax Map Keys: 8-7-01: 4,6,7,11, 8-7-12: 1,3,4,6,7
8-01: 11,12,13, 9-2-01: 5

State Land Use: Conservation, Agriculture

Contact: Michael G. Buck, Administrator
Division of Forestry and Wildlife
1151 Punchbowl St., Rm. 325
Honolulu, HI 96813
Telephone: 587-0166

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. Project Location

The subject parcels includes approximately 18,425 acres and is located adjacent to sections of the South Kona Forest Reserve (see attached map). The parcels are located between the 1340-foot elevation on the lower (makai) end of TMK: 8-7-12:01 and up to the 6800-foot elevation on the upper (mauka) end of TMK: 9-2-01:5. The sites are presently natural forest, much of it containing non-native species, or in pasture. The Division of Forestry and Wildlife, DLNR has requested the authorization to acquire the subject parcel and this environmental assessment is the initial step in that acquisition process.

B. Environmental Characteristics

The subject parcels are presently natural forest, much of it containing non-native species, or in pasture. Vehicular access is available to portions of the area over unimproved 4-wheel drive roads.

Ohia, hapu'u and koa are the dominant overstory and occurs almost throughout the forested areas. Vegetation such as naio, a'ali'i, and ohelo grow in mixture with scrubby ohia in the upper areas. Other plants include alahe'e, olopua, maile, and hoio. Some areas of the parcels has historically been cleared for pasture use.

The Pahoehoe 2 Section as well as the Kahuku Section parcels are considered critical bird habitat for the 'alala as well as the Hawaii Creeper (*Loxops maculatus mana*), Hawaii 'Akepa (*Loxops coccineus coccineus*), 'Akiapola'au (*Hemignathus wilsoni*), and the 'O'u (*Psittirostra psittacea*).

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, "Soil Survey of Island of Hawaii, State of Hawaii," the predominant soils in the project area range from a'a lava and pahoehoe lava bedrock to the very dark brown extremely stony muck. Much of these soils excluding the a'a lava are used or cleared for pasture and woodland.

III. SUMMARY OF MAJOR IMPACTS AND PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

Authorization for the acquisition is provided under the provisions of *Chapter 173A, HRS, Acquisition of Resource Value Lands*. Further, the Division of Forestry and Wildlife contends that the proposed acquisition is in consonance with Article XI, Section 4 of the State Constitution which states that, "The State shall have the

power to acquire interests in real property to control future growth, development and land use within the State. The exercise of such power is deemed to be for a public use and purpose."

Consequently, this EA document will not address any potential physical impacts as is the normal practice, since the acquisition process is essentially a paper process.

IV. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The "Do Nothing" alternative is not considered a viable alternative in view of recent developments by the BLNR. The inclusion of the parcels to the South Kona forest reserve will provide a contiguous habitat for native wildlife as well as a contiguous watershed. The inclusion will limit outside disturbances and lower costs regarding infrastructure. It will also provide increased multiple use opportunities which include habitat protection, recreation, and commercial forest uses.

Forest land in West Hawaii is being converted to other land uses at a rapid rate. There is a concern that these strategic forest lands will be lost if not purchased at this time. This land acquisition remains the only opportunity left to consolidate a large block of State-owned native forest for 'alala habitat.

V. FUNDING AND PHASING

The acquisition process has been initiated with the preparation and processing of the EA document. The balance of the process will involve the appraisal of the subject parcel, and the negotiations to acquire the land. At this early first step of the process, the total funding is contingent on the appraisal and the acquisition is to be accomplished, i.e. negotiated purchase, condemnation, or judicial action.

VI. FINDINGS AND REASONS SUPPORTING DETERMINATION

After completing an assessment of the potential environmental effects of the proposed acquisition, and consulting with other government agencies (see attachment, Comments Received), it has been determined that for the purposes of acquisition, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. Therefore, this document constitutes a Notice of Negative Declaration.

Reasons supporting the Negative Declaration determination are as follows, using as the criteria, the policies, guidelines and provisions of Chapters 342, 342, and 344, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

**Environmental Assessment
South Kona F.R. Land Acquisition
Page 4**

1. The proposed acquisition will not adversely affect the physical and social environment.
2. There will be no change in the existing ambient air or noise levels. Terrain features on the site will not be affected or changed.
3. The acquisition would not impact the State Land Use District Boundary designation.

Forest land in West Hawaii is being converted to other land uses at a rapid rate. There is a concern that these strategic forest lands will be lost if not purchased at this time. This land acquisition remains the only opportunity left to consolidate a large block of State-owned native forest for 'alala habitat. Acquiring the parcels would create a contiguous block of over 26,000 acres of state owned forest lands in South Kona.

**Environmental Assessment
South Kona F.R. Land Acquisition
Page 5**

Agencies Consulted During Review Period

The following U.S. Government, State of Hawaii, and County of Hawaii agencies were consulted during the review period:

- 1) U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- 2) Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry
- 3) State Department of Agriculture
- 4) State Department of Hawaiian Home Lands
- 5) Office of Hawaiian Affairs
- 6) Office of State Planning
- 7) Agencies of the Department of Land & Natural Resources
- 8) County of Hawaii Planning Department
- 9) County of Hawaii Public Works Department

Purtenant comments to the project were received by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the County of Hawaii Planning Department (see attachment). No comments or objections to the projects were received from the other agencies.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Ltr. from Mr. Robert P. Smith, Fish and Wildlife Service
- 2) Ltr. from Ms. Virginia Goldstein, Hawaii County Planning Dept.