

JOHN WAIHEE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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KEITH W. AHUE, CHAIRPERSON  
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Ref: LM-GA

MAY - 6 1993

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: Final Environmental Assessment, Notice of Determination and Negative Declaration for Proposed Land Exchange Between State of Hawaii and Richard Smart Trust Involving State-Owned Land at Honokaia, Hamakua, Hawaii and Privately-Owned Land at Waipunalei, North Hilo, Hawaii; Tax Map Keys: 3rd Division/4-6-11:11 and 12, and 3-7-01:3, Respectively

A draft environmental assessment (EA) for the above-captioned land exchange project between the State of Hawaii and the Richard Smart Trust was prepared by the Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Department of Land and Natural Resources, State of Hawaii, and was submitted to your office on December 10, 1992. The draft EA notice was then published in the OEQC Bulletin on January 8, 1993.

No comments or objections to the land exchange project were raised by the general public during the 30-day review and comment period as required by law. Hence, we have determined that the proposed land exchange between the State of Hawaii and the Richard Smart Trust will not have a significant impact on the environment and the preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. Based on our determination and findings, we are filing a negative declaration for this land exchange project in conformance with the requirements of Chapter 343, Hawaii Revised Statutes, as amended, relating the Environmental Impact Statements.

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Mr. Brian J. J. Choy  
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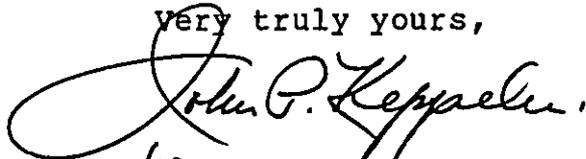
Further, we are enclosing the following environmental assessment documents for your information and perusal.

1. OEQC Bulletin Publication Form; and
2. Four (4) copies of the final environmental assessment.

In my position as the accepting authority, I wish to have the final environmental assessment notice for the land exchange project published in the OEQC Bulletin on May 8, 1993.

Your assistance in this matter is appreciated. Should your OEQC staff have any questions with regards to this matter, they may call Mr. Glenn Abe of our Land Management staff at 587-0414.

Very truly yours,

  
for  
KEITH W. AHUE

Encs.

cc Hawaii District Land Board Member  
Hawaii District Land Office  
Mr. Michael Buck, Administrator, DOFAW

1993-05-07-05-08-171-REA - Waipunaiei Land Exchange between  
~~05-03~~ - State of Hawaii & Richard Smart Trust

FINAL  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
FOR THE  
**WAIPUNALEI LAND EXCHANGE**

TMK: 4-6-11: 11 & 12 and 3-7-03:03

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  
Keith W. Ahue

APR 28 1993  
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:** Waipunalei Land Exchange

**Project Description:** The proposed project involves the exchange of private real estate owned by the Richard Smart Trust and State owned land parcels. The land exchange will increase the acreage of the Hilo Forest Reserve by 1,564 acres and will: 1) preserve additional natural resources to include native flora and fauna, recreation, forested watershed, and scenic values; 2) consolidate the Laupahoehoe forest and the Humuula forest; 3) reduce the potential cattle trespass problem in the area; and 4) obtain access to several land areas within the Hilo Forest Reserve.

**Project Location:** The State parcels are located in the County of Hawaii, Hamakua District, land of Honokai'a, TMK: 4-6-11:11 (738.233 acres) and TMK: 4-6-11:12 (522 acres). The Richard Smart Trust parcel is located in the same county, North Hilo District, land of Waipunalei, TMK: 3-7-01:3 (1,564 acres).

**State Land Use:** All parcels involved are zoned 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

#### State Parcels

The two land parcels contain approximately 1,260 acres and are located 8 miles northeast from Kamuela town or 7 miles west from Honokaa town. These land parcels are currently leased to Richard Smart Trust for pasture use. These parcels are currently being leased to the Richard Smart Trust for pasture use (State General Lease, Nos. 4468 & 4469). The lease expires in 2011.

#### Richard Smart Trust Parcel

This land parcel contains approximately 1,564 acres and is located 20 miles northwest from Hilo town or 14 miles southeast from Honokaa town. The Division of Forestry and Wildlife, DLNR has requested the authorization to enter into a land exchange agreement and this environmental assessment is the initial step in that land exchange process.

### B. Environmental Characteristics

#### State Parcels

These land parcels are used for cattle ranching purposes. Few individual and small clusters of isolated ohia trees are disbursed throughout the area. The major vegetation in the areas introduced pasture grasses. According to the *Soil Survey of Island of Hawaii, State of Hawaii* which was published in 1973 by the Soil Conservation Service and the University of Hawaii, the State lease lands contain the Honokaa Soil series. This soil is defined as having poor to fair top soil with continuous wetness. Another soil type classification which is found in the parcels is the Rough Broken Land Series, which is defined as having poor top soil with steep slopes.

#### Smart Trust Parcel

This land parcel consists of a relatively good native forest canopy of ohia in most places and a mixed ohia/koa canopy in other places. The understory consists of both native and non-native species. The area has been grazed extensively for decades except for the last three or four years where no grazing was permitted.

The native plant communities provide good wildlife habitat especially for native forest birds. Bird species include the Hawaii Creeper (*Loxops maculatus mana*), Hawaii 'Akepa (*Loxops coccineus coccineus*), and the 'Akiapola'au (*Hemignathus wilsoni*).

The soils in the Smart Trust parcel can be described as being well drained silty loams

that formed in volcanic ash. The surface layer is dark reddish-brown. These soils are primarily in areas suitable for pasture and woodland. The area has been used for cattle grazing for many years.

### III. SUMMARY OF MAJOR IMPACTS AND PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

Authorization for the land exchange is provided under the provisions of *Chapter 171-50 (b), HRS, Exchanges*. This exchange will have a negative impact upon the cattle industry because cattle pasture land totalling 1,564 acres will be removed from cattle ranching use and will be put into the State Forest Reserve System.

### IV. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The "Do Nothing" alternative is not considered a viable alternative. The land exchange will allow the Division of Forestry and Wildlife to "connect" two existing parcels of the Hilo forest reserve. This will provide a contiguous habitat for native wildlife as well as a contiguous watershed. This "connection" will limit outside disturbances and lower costs regarding infrastructure. Values of maintaining this area in a forested condition include watershed, forest bird habitat, public hunting and other recreational use, native forest ecosystem protection and appropriate commercial forest management in selected areas.

### V. FUNDING AND PHASING

The land exchange 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 exchange the land.

### VI. DETERMINATION, FINDINGS, AND REASONS SUPPORTING DETERMINATION

After completing an assessment of the potential environmental effects of the proposed acquisition, and consulting with other government agencies, it has been determined that for the purposes of exchange, 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).

1. The proposed exchange 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 alter or impact the State Land Use District Boundary designation.

4. This Notice of Negative Declaration shall serve to meet the requirements of Chapter 343, HRS.

The land exchange between the State and the Smart Trust gives the State an opportunity to add to and consolidate the Hilo forest reserve.





