

HE'EIA NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Below is a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and responses regarding the proposed designation of He'eia estuary in Kāne'ohe, Hawai'i as a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). These FAQs are compiled from questions raised by the public at scoping and informational meetings during the site designation process.

Q. *If a NERR site is designated in Hawai'i, will there be restrictions to the cultural, recreational or commercial activities that occur in the area?*

A. No, the NERR designation does not add new regulations or restrictions on uses or activities within the NERR boundaries. The existing Federal, State, and County rules and regulations that apply to the area will continue to apply. As part of the NERR designation process, each NERR site is required to develop a management plan including a public access plan as well as a resource protection plan. The management plan will contain a summary of existing rules and regulations on uses and activities in the area that identify permissible and prohibited uses and activities. For example, the San Francisco Bay NERRS Public Access Plan acknowledges "traditional uses" as follows: *"Recreational and commercial fishing, hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, camping, and boating are all traditional uses within the boundaries of the Reserve sites. Some of these activities are subject to state regulation and require licenses and/or permits. Traditional use access will continue according to local and state laws."* A similar approach may be used for the He'eia NERR Management Plan.

Q. *Does the NERR designation mean that new Federal regulations are imposed?*

A. No, the NERR designation does not add any new Federal regulations.

Q. *How were the boundaries determined for the NERR proposal?*

A. The general location and boundaries for the He'eia NERR site were first proposed by the He'eia community partners and submitted to the Office of Planning for consideration as a new NERR during the site selection process in 2013. Input on the appropriateness of the site and proposal boundaries was solicited from the general public, the neighboring community, affected landowners, and local, state and federal agencies during public meetings in January and February, 2014. Based on feedback, the Office of Planning revised the boundaries taking into consideration landownership boundaries, site partner's conservation plans, and what would meet the national guidelines for selection as a new NERR site. Those boundaries were the ones included in the nomination document and submitted to NOAA by former Governor Abercrombie for consideration as a new site (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Proposed He'eia NERR site boundaries as included in the Hawai'i NERR Site Nomination Document, May 2014.



Q. Can the boundaries for the NERR be changed, and how?

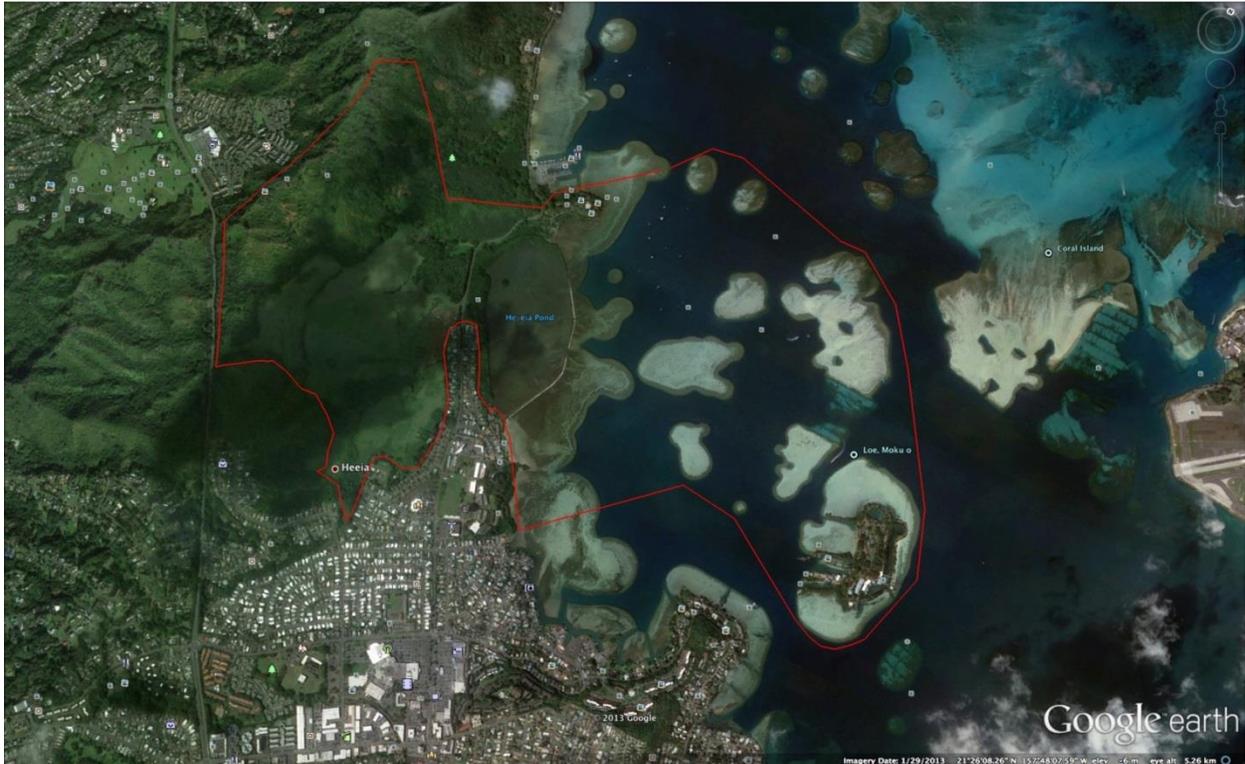
A. Yes, changes to the boundaries can be made during the NOAA designation process now underway, or in the future when the management plan for the NERR is updated. As part of the designation, NOAA will conduct a review of the nominated boundaries to evaluate their appropriateness for inclusion in the NERR, and also examine appropriate alternatives that have been suggested during the NEPA scoping and public information meetings on the proposed designation and content of the draft management plan. The draft management plan will include a description of the project site and the proposed boundaries. The public will be able to provide comments on suggested changes for consideration by OP and NOAA. The plan also includes a section on land acquisition that identified lands that may be appropriate for acquisition (or de-designation if no longer useful) in the future. Management plans are updated every five years and new boundary considerations can be proposed, evaluated, and included in the management plan and implemented as part of the site's ongoing management actions.

Q. Why has the proposed boundary for the NERR changed?

A. The boundary was first proposed by the He'eia community partners as part of their site proposal in April, 2013 (Figure 2). Based on input from private landowners to the south of the proposed boundary that the boundaries seemed to overlap with their property, the Office of Planning refined the boundaries. In refining the boundaries, some potentially appropriate areas in the wetland area and in Kāne'ōhe Bay were omitted from the area and the error was not caught by any of the reviewing parties. This was an oversight on the part of Office of Planning. The site partners have identified those areas, including the four fringing reefs in Kāne'ōhe Bay and upland portions of the Hawai'i Community Development Authority property for consideration in the current process. Suggestions on alternative

boundaries are being evaluated in the NOAA designation process and in the development of the management plan. Additionally, the management plan has a section on Land Acquisition that can identify and consider changes in the boundaries as part of future management actions. If you have a suggestion about areas to include or exclude in the NERR boundary, please submit it using the [Written Comment Form](#).

Figure 2. Original He'eia NERR site boundaries proposed by the He'eia site partners for the site selection process in April, 2013.



Q. *Why does the proposed NERR include coral reefs and a portion of Kāne'ohe Bay?*

A. Any area designated as a NERR needs to be a representative estuarine ecosystem that includes the diversity of fauna, flora, and natural processes occurring within the estuary. To encompass the diversity of the He'eia estuary, representative areas of upland forested-watersheds, streams, wetlands, fish pond, marine and coral habitats have been included in the proposal. This range of habitats provides all the essential elements of the estuary necessary to research and understand how all function together productively and sustainably.

Q. *Are commercial fishing interests included in the planning process? Is the fishing community being included in the development of the management plan?*

A. The fishing community, both the commercial and recreational fishers are welcomed and encouraged to participate in the planning process and development of the management plan. The planning process is open and transparent. A total of 10 meetings are taking place during this phase of the designation process, and are open to fishermen and the fishing community to participate. These meetings include 2 scoping meetings on the Draft EIS and Draft management plan, 6 focus group meetings, and 2 public

hearings for soliciting comments on the draft management plan and draft EIS. The Office of Planning also maintains a website with additional background information, draft documents, summaries of public comments, responses to frequently asked questions, notices of meetings and ways to provide input. Visit the website at <http://planning.Hawaii.gov/czm/initiatives/nerrs-site-proposal-process/>.

Q. *Who are the partners involved in the project, and can new partners be added?*

A. Five site partner organizations did much of the initial work developing the concept, proposal and documentation to propose He'eia as a NERR site in Hawai'i. The site partners are Ko'olaupoko Hawai'i an Civic Club, Kāko'o 'Ōiwi, Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology, Paepae o He'eia , and Kama'āina Kids/He'eia State Park. Collectively, they are engaged in research, education, restoration and protection of the He'eia estuary. Other entities involved in developing and supporting this project include Papahana Kualoa, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, and state and federal agencies. Expanding and nurturing partnerships with community groups is a common goal of NERRS across the country and will likely be one of the new He'eia NERR.

Q. *Where is the money coming from to fund this project?*

A. The major source of funds for this project will come from the federal partner, NOAA and its National Estuary Research Reserve Program and the State of Hawai'i, through the state agency management partner to support the NERR. In recent years, approximately \$500,000 in federal funds has been available to each NERR site each year to carry out program activities. A 30% state match is required and could come from direct funding by state agencies, or staff salaries to coordinate the education, research and management activities of the NERR. NERR sites in other states have also leveraged private funding, which amplifies modest public investment. Additionally, approximately \$4 million per year of competitive funding is available through the NERRS Science Collaborative, for researchers at NERR sites across the country. This funding does not currently come to Hawai'i.

Q. *What State agency will be the management partner and implementing agency for the He'eia NERR?*

A. The He'eia NERR is expected to be managed by University of Hawai'i (UH), Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology with oversight from NOAA. A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UH and NOAA will be developed as part of the Management Plan as well as an MOU between UH and the additional landowners and managers involved in the area included in the NERR.