

Hawai'i Board on Geographic Names
PUNA Permitted Interaction Group Report
Name Proposals for New Features associated
with the 2018 Kīlauea eruption
December 20, 2019

2018 Kīlauea Eruption Event Timeline

(source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_lower_Puna_eruption)

May 3, 2018 – Kīlauea erupted along the volcano's East Rift Zone. Outbreaks of lava fountains up to 300 feet (90 m) high, lava flows, and volcanic gas in the Leilani Estates subdivision were preceded by earthquakes and ground deformation that created cracks in the roads.

May 4 – A 6.9 magnitude earthquake hits Puna.

May 27 – 24 fissures erupted lava in and near the Leilani Estates and Lanipuna Gardens subdivisions.

May 29 – Lava from a new northeastern flow overruns Hawai'i Route 132, cutting access between Kapoho and Pāhoa.

June 4 – Lava entered the Kapoho Crater and evaporated Green Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake in Hawai'i. Later that same evening, the northeastern flow of lava speedily moved forward and destroyed the subdivision of Vacationland Hawai'i.

June 5 – Kapoho Bay is filled in with lava forming a point where the bay had been.

August 15 – The eruption almost completely subsided. A total of 13.7 square miles (35 square km) of existing land is covered by lava flows. About 875 acres (3.54 km²) of new land has been created in the ocean. Approximately two thousand residents were forced to evacuate their homes. Roughly 700 houses were destroyed by the eruption. It was estimated that recovery efforts would cost more than \$800 million.

December 5 – after three months of inactivity, the eruption was declared to have ended.

HBGN – Puna PIG Timeline

August 2018 – The Hawai'i County Council's Governmental Relations and Economic Development Committee passed Resolution No. 640 proposed by Councilwoman Sue Lee-Loy. The resolution urged "the State Board on Geographic Names to consult with community members who have direct traditional, cultural, and familial ties to the areas of Puna and Ka'ū that have been impacted by the recent volcanic activity, in order to establish appropriate names for the Fissure 8 vent or any other features of the 2018 eruption of Kīlauea volcano."

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February 25, 2019 – After determining the best way to proceed, on the Hawai'i Board on Geographic Names (HBGN) approved the establishment of a Permitted Interaction Group (PIG). The members of the PIG include 3 HBGN Board members, Mr. Marzan, Mr. Wong, Ms. Silva, and one non-Board member, Ms. Louis. The scope of the PIG's investigation is to:

- *set a submission deadline for any new name proposals for Fissure 8, [June 30, 2019]*
- *review all the proposed names for features associated with the 2018 Kīlauea eruption event*
- *report back to the full Board with recommendations no later than December 31, 2019*

April 2019 – Puna PIG meets twice, April 11 by telecom and April 22 in person, to strategize. The plan is to:

- *Review applications online. Mr. Wong will create google spreadsheet based on Mr. Buto's submitter list, adding columns for each PIG member to include comments and recommendation. Completed Friday April 19, 2019.*
- *Contact all submitters to inform them about the guidelines the HBGN uses to make decisions.*
- *Plan two separate community meetings, one in May and the other between August and October.*
- *NOTE: The PIG decides to focus on creating a process for Fissure 8 that could be used for naming other features associated with the 2018 Kīlauea eruption event.*

May 16 – 1st Puna Community Meeting. Mr. Marzan and Mr. Wong travel to Hawai'i and meet Ms. Louis (a Hawai'i Island resident)

- *10am Meet & Greet at Hawai'i County Council – PIG members meet Hawai'i County Council members, staff, and some of the name submitters.*
- *5-7pm Puna Community Meeting at Pāhoa Community Center. The purpose is to:*
 - *Introduce the origin and function of the HBGN*
 - *Explain the process the PIG will use in its recommendations*
 - *Encourage community discussion*
- *NOTE: Several name submitters were present and addressed the audience. In one instance, a submitter explained their rationale for their name and decided to support another name application. Community members also shared their experiences during the eruption. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs videotaped the meeting for archival purposes.*

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August 30, 2019 – Puna PIG meets via telecom and plans 2nd community meeting

- *Full list of names submitted is finalized. See:*
<http://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/op/gis/bgn/placenames/Kilauea-2018/NameLog.pdf>
- *Mr. Wong drafts short list of “recommended” names based on HBGN Guidelines on “Consultation with Knowledgeable Community Members” where highest priority is given to Native Hawaiian speaking members from the community where the geographic name is located. The list includes the following names:*
 - ***Keahiluawalu O Pele***
 - *refers to fire pit 8 of Pele*
 - *submitted via mail on Oct 19, 2018*
 - *by Mahealani Kaiwikuamo‘okekuaokalani-Henry*
 - *submitter explains, “Dream from Papa and Waieka”(sp.?) given to Mahealani Kaiwikuamo‘okekuaokalani-Henry*
 - ***Ahu ‘Ailā‘au***
 - *refers to an altar, Ahu to the volcano deity ‘Ailā‘au*
 - *submitted via email on December 8, 2018*
 - *by Kalani Makekau-Whittaker for: Pi‘ilani Ka‘awaloa, Keone Kalawe, and Lei Kaleimamahu*
 - *submitters explain, Ahu=Mound/shrine/altar or cairn (dictionary. Pukui) ‘Ailā‘au=Hawai‘i deity for the volcano and lava; predates Pelehonuamea*
 - ***Ke Ahi ‘Ena‘ena***
 - *refers to “raging fire”*
 - *submitted via mail on Jan 23, 2019*
 - *by Hannah Hana Pau*
 - *submitter explains, “Ke Ahi ‘Ena‘ena is my recommendation for fissure 8. It was this “furnace” that belched out the fury and destruction of molten lava. Never have I witnessed a Lake of Fire so fluid, so swift and relentless. Its intent to destroy. My ancestral lands and roots are in Puna. My family and I have lived through many eruptions but none like this one. We knew it was different. It was angry. This “raging fire” was fueled and spewed by Fissure 8.”*
 - ***Pohāka‘ena***
 - *refers to “exploding rage”*
 - *submitted via email on May 9, 2019*
 - *by Hannah Hana Pau*
 - *submitter explains, “Pohāka‘ena is another recommendation for fissure 8. It was not only an angry flow; it was exploding in rage. Its enormous body mass moved with a vengeance of insatiable appetite, devouring forests, consuming homes, swallowing an entire lake and belching forth lava bombs. Its aftermath devastating.” Variant Names/Spellings: Pohā Ka ‘ēna*

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September 19 – 2nd Puna Community Meeting. Mr. Marzan, Mr. Wong, and Ms. Silva travel to Hawai'i and meet Ms. Louis (a Hawai'i Island resident)

- *11am – PIG members arrive and prepare for meeting*
- *4pm – PIG members visit Fissure 8 in Puna*
- *6-8pm Puna Community Meeting at Pāhoa Community Center. The purpose is to:*
 - *Briefly introduce the origin and function of the HBGN*
 - *Explain the process the PIG will use in its recommendations*
 - *Encourage community discussion*
 - *Provide community with progress report of the*
- *NOTE: This event was not well attended as it was competing with other community events. As such, only a few name submitters were present to address the audience. One submitter, Dr. Larry Kimura, suggested the Boards' process for naming was flawed, based on how the process was open to everyone, instead of select knowledgeable individuals and in his view, lack of use of historical documents for finding older/traditional place names. Video of meeting can be viewed on Big Island Video News <https://www.bigislandvideonews.com/2019/09/20/video-another-meeting-on-naming-fissure-8-ends-with-no-clear-preference/>*

November 5 – Ms. Louis provides an update at the Hawai'i County Council Governmental Relations and Economic Development Committee Meeting on Name Proposals for the 2018 Kīlauea Eruption. The purpose is to briefly explain:

- *the PIG timeline of events including the PIG background, establishment, and scope*
- *the process the PIG used in its recommendations, see handout*
- *the community chooses a name and, thus, the HBGN can decide NOT to designate a name if the community either does not agree on a name or does not agree the process is proper*
- *NOTE: There were 2 testimonies of note. One by submitter, Mahealani Kaiwikuamo'okekuaokalani-Henry, and the other by Puna resident, Donna Walker. Video can be viewed on the County of Hawai'i website http://hawaiicounty.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=1&clip_id=1551*

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Recommendations

There are two possible recommendations for the HBGN:

1. Create another PIG to continue the community discussion to allow for additional support for one of the recommended high priority names
 - a. There was less community in attendance and less discussion at the second meeting where it was planned to further narrow the list or gain community support for one of the names.
 - b. Allow community more time to voice their opinions and share thoughts
 - c. Allow for time to consider other processes for name selection/creation
2. Select a name that appears to have the most community support at this time – **Ahu 'Ailā'au**.
 - a. Name was created through a collection of culturally knowledgeable community members and kupuna.
 - b. At the first community meeting submitters Francisco and Kapp, chose to support this name after submitters Ka'awaloa and Kaleimamahu presented their rationale for this name. Other community members at the meeting also expressed admiration or acknowledgement for 'Ailā'au as a deity that was present during the eruption. See OHA video of first Puna community meeting.
 - c. Submitter Keone Kalawe posted a YouTube video further clarifying the rationale for suggesting the name gaining widespread appeal with 3,400 views. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmY1bHgTocM>.
 - d. Puna resident, Donna Walker, testified at the November 5 County Council meeting on behalf of her extensive 'ohana residing in Puna for the adoption of this name; see her testimonial packet.

Additional Discussion Points

The name refers to a diety older than Pele. The most prominent issues against selecting this name, besides discussions for other names, include that some find it difficult to pronounce, most people are not familiar with this deity, and the idea that the destructiveness of this flow could not be attributed to Pele.

The first two issues appear to be a matter of education. Pronunciation of any new word can be daunting, but should not be a limiting factor for any name adoption. With time and usage, this issue will become less problematic.

Not all names were maintained by all populations. Some names were maintained by smaller select groups such as the kahuna or the ali'i. Some names were only shared among family members. Thus the fact that the name 'Ailā'au is not known to a broad population is not unusual. However, it is an opportunity for the community to bring back into consciousness a name and its story(ies) of historic importance.

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The last issue is a criticism of gendered activity. The submitters have maintained part of their rationale for suggesting this feature be associated with 'Ailā'au has to do with Hawai'i scientific understandings of lava flows. As generational occupants of the lands affected by the eruption, the submitters state their experiences with this flow were vastly different from previous lava flows. Specifically, the smell and characteristics of the flow were distinct. Some people from the community have also indicated they "saw" 'Ailā'au walking amongst them during the flow.

With regard to the physical distinctions of the lava flow, it has been suggested that the ferocity of the flow, speed, and volume indicates it could be from an older vent, one not associated with Pele. The idea that a female could not be as ferocious or that only a man could demonstrate such characteristics is a point of discussion. However, It appears this has more to do with the Hawai'i scientific longitudinal observations of the community members. Several long time residents attest to this flow having a different feel, a different smell, a different level of energy.

With regard to recommendations for the PIG process, one comment from Dr. Larry Kimura suggests the process is "flawed" as he asserts the HBGN should look up names that are associated with these types of events from online archives and present them to the community for consideration. Another criticism involves who the PIG identifies as "the community" and how "the community" gets to "vote" on each name.

On the first issue, it is agreeable that there are lots of traditional place names that can be researched through historical documents and records or that are now available online that are easily searchable. The HBGN actively does this for its other name changes on current geographic features and this suggestion may be caused by an unfamiliarity with the HBGN and its processes. Additionally, this direction is not preferable for the PIG and HBGN in this instance. First, the names found in these sources were given to specific features already in place by specific peoples. While the PIG acknowledges the importance to bringing these names back into the consciousness of the Puna community, we feel this is a new and different feature than those that have occurred in the past, and the methodology suggested by Dr. Kimura doesn't necessarily fit in this instance. Although the name suggestions such as those referring to the deity 'Ailā'au falls into this similar category of historical reference. Furthermore, the PIG process emphasized a community driven effort to finding a name, hoping one would organically rise up with community support. In doing so, we had hoped to avoid an appearance of a top-down approach to decision-making, where the government is perceived to impose their will on communities regarding the naming of features in their area. Lastly, this type of in-depth research or name creation is beyond the scope and capacity of the PIG.

For the second process issue, while it is easy to say, "the community" refers to the people currently residing in Puna, it suggests that all Puna residents should have a say in the naming of Fissure 8. While they do, not all will care or want to or will be able to have their sentiments known. Thus, not all Puna community members will have an actual say or vote on which name(s) will be selected. Additionally, there were several names which could be used as examples of culturally knowledge individuals coming together to find historical references or

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processes to create a name. Again, it is possible that this issue has more to do with a lack of familiarity with the current HBGN process.

While processes can always be improved the PIG has acted in good faith and extended its best effort to tend to its scope as assigned by the HBGN on February 25, 2019. Focusing on a process that could be replicated for other new features associated with the 2018 Kīlauea eruption was a good decision given the report deadline of December 31, 2019. It should be stated that the PIG was clear in stating on several occasions that the HBGN does not “name” features but designates names, in this case, one that is selected by community support.

Suggestions for How to Proceed

If more confirmation is needed, further discussion with Councilmembers Ashley Kierkiewicz and Matt Kaneali'i-Kleinfelder, the two members representing the district of Puna, have been supportive of the current process thus far, and could help give more insight into which way their community is leaning.

After discussions about the PIG report have concluded, the HBGN should seriously consider conducting a Board meeting in Puna to vote on designating the official name for Fissure 8. Councilwoman Lee Loy has previously indicated there may be County funds available to help those Board members unable to get departmental support for travel.

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News coverage of Fissure 8 naming process:

Hawaii Tribune Herald:

<https://www.hawaiitribune-herald.com/2019/07/04/hawaii-news/deadline-for-submissions-passes-for-proposed-fissure-8-names-community-meeting-to-be-conducted-by-fall/?HTH=624813b4bfc5b2f50bd4286d463cb99bd7112ecc>

KHON2:

<https://www.khon2.com/news/local-news/kilauea-eruptions-fissure-8-gets-20-name-suggestions/>

KITV:

<https://www.kitv.com/story/40745773/deadline-to-submit-name-proposals-for-fissure-8-has-passed>

(references Hawaii Tribune Herald article)

Hawaii News Now:

<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2019/07/05/state-releases-list-names-being-considered-fissure/>