

**STATE OF HAWAI'I**  
**DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**  
**DIVISION OF STATE PARKS**

October 24, 2014

Board of Land and Natural Resources  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Members of the Land Board:

**SUBJECT:** Request Approval of the Final Master Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Kōke'e and Waimea Canyon State Parks; Tax Map Keys: (4) 1-2-01: 03, 04, 08, 09, 11; 1-4-01: 02, 13, 15-19; 1-4-02: 04, 05, 07, 08, 10, 12-16, 18, 20-32, 34-37, 39-48, 51-69, 71, 73, 75, 76, 78, 79, 81, 85, 86, 93; 1-4-03: 1-14, 16, 17; 1-4-04: 01-14, 16-21, 24, 27-31, 33, 35-70, 72-75; 5-9-01: 16, 17, Waimea, Kaua'i

**LAND TITLE STATUS:**

Section 5(b) of the Hawai'i Admission Act

DHHL 30% entitlement lands pursuant to the Hawai'i State Constitution: NO

**CURRENT USE STATUS:**

State Parks

**ENVIRONMENTAL, ZONING AND PERMIT ISSUES:**

Conservation District – Due to portions of the area being in the Conservation District, Chapter 183C, HRS, approvals may be required.

County Zoning – The properties are zoned both Conservation and Agricultural.

**SUMMARY:**

Kōke'e and Waimea Canyon State Parks have a combined acreage of 6182.4 acres, approximately 1.75 percent of the total land area on the island and 40 percent of the State Park acreage on Kaua'i (**Figure 1**). The 6,175 acre Nā Pali Coast State Wilderness Area adjoins Kōke'e along a portion of the rim of Kalalau Valley forming a continuous natural park landscape of nearly 12,500 acres.

Lands surrounding the Parks consist primarily of State forest reserve, natural area reserve, and wilderness preserve lands administered by the Division of Forestry and Wildlife and are actively managed for natural resource conservation, hunting, forest product development, and outdoor

recreation. Access to DOFAW administered lands is via numerous unimproved 4-wheel drive ridge roads that originate off Kōke'e Road.

Kōke'e and Waimea Canyon State Parks were the first parks established under the State Park System and created in recognition of the unique environmental resources and rich natural heritage existing in the uplands of western Kaua'i. The two parks overlay and are surrounded by large tracts of forest, wilderness, and reserve areas that contain some of the most pristine examples of native ecology in the state. Designated forest reserve, preserves, and natural areas within and adjacent to the parks include: Ku'ia Natural Area Reserve, Hono o Nā Pali Natural Area Reserve, Alaka'i Wilderness Preserve, Pu'u ka Pele Forest Reserve, Nā Pali – Kona Forest Reserve, and the Mokihana Game Management Area. These areas support a remarkable assemblage of endemic, indigenous, and introduced animal species, including the sole endemic Hawaiian terrestrial mammalian species, the 'ōpe'ape'a, Hawaiian hoary bat and 16 endemic avian species or sub-species including 10 of which are listed as threatened, endangered, or candidate species under both the federal and state endangered species programs.

Since 2002, the division has been developing a master plan for the Parks that seeks to preserve and perpetuate the existing character of Kōke'e and Waimea Canyon by protecting the area's unique native ecosystems, scenic views, historic and cultural landscape, and recreational resources, and by guiding public uses and developing park facilities that do not compromise the Parks' natural resources, wilderness values, cultural significance, and intrinsic qualities.

Planned improvements will be concentrated within existing developed areas along the Kōke'e Road corridor in order to minimize the development "footprint" on the natural landscape. Exceptions include the construction of a new park entry station at the entrance to Waimea Canyon State Park. Other proposed improvements include the repairs and upgrades to infrastructure and utilities to meet regulatory standards, provisions for visitor orientation and services, and public health and safety, to enhance the park users' experience. Priorities for the capital improvement projects and parks management programs will be based on

- Natural resources protection and management;
- Preservation, education and restoration of the geological and historical features;
- Safety and protection of park visitors, recreation residents, and staff;
- Revenue generation; and
- Primary visitor attractions, facilities that attract and receive the largest number of visitors.

In January 2005, the Land Board accepted the draft Master Plan and endorsed the preparation of an EIS. On May 8, 2005, a final Environmental Assessment (FEA) and an Environmental Impact Statement Preparation Notice (EISPN) was published with the Office of Environmental Quality Control (OEQC). In May 2006, the draft EIS was published with a public comment deadline of July 7, 2006. Due to delays in the distribution of the document, the public comment period was extended to August 7, 2006, a notice of which was published in the June 23, 2006 issue of *The Environmental Notice*, an OEQC publication.

The division received hundreds of letters, emails, and petitions that focused on the plan's proposals for revenue generation, an entry gate, widening the roads to accommodate tour buses, transferring the roads from DOT to DSP, building a lodge in Kanaloahuluhulu Meadow and development of lower elevation turnouts. Due to concerns raised, an additional public

information meeting was held in Līhu‘e on January 27, 2007 and the public comment period was extended to February 8, 2007.

In July 2008, Act 223 became law, with the Legislature overriding the Governor’s veto, which required the Board to directly negotiate new leases with existing lessees. Eighty-nine (89) leases were directly negotiated with an effective date of January 1, 2009. Five nonprofit organizations were placed on revocable permits and treated separately from the 2009 leases because the disposition was not to be based on appraised values. However, the Board has approved the issuance of leases similar to the leases issued in 2009 at nominal rent.

On January 1, 2012, 16 additional leases became effective following an auction that included the 3 tier process for bidders, first to residents of Kaua‘i, second to Hawai‘i residents, and if any lots remained, open to anyone. Bids were received for all 16 leases during the first tier of the process.

The Act also established the Kōke‘e State Park Advisory Council (KSPAC) with responsibilities to: 1) review and assist the State in revising and updating the Kōke‘e and Waimea Canyon State Parks Master Plan; 2) advise and assist in the management of the Kōke‘e recreation residence leases; 3) enhance community education and cultural awareness of Kōke‘e and Waimea Canyon State Parks; 4) participate in the preservation and protection of the area’s natural and cultural resources; and 5) advise and assist in the implementation of the Master Plan recommendations.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The Division of State Parks (DSP) is committed to managing the State’s natural, cultural and recreational resources as a public trust and actively promotes public participation in much of its work. This commitment was demonstrated early and throughout the master planning process. The master planning process included nine (9) public meetings, eight (8) Land Board meetings, and twenty-three (23) meetings with the KSPAC. Numerous informal meetings with individuals and small groups have also taken place, some initiated by the DSP, some at the request of interested members of the public.

The final Master Plan was carefully prepared to preserve the Parks’ existing character while ensuring park user safety and the upgrade of amenities, infrastructure, and utilities in a manner that reinforces the Parks’ historic character and wildland environment, and avoids intensifying development. Kōke‘e and Waimea Canyon State Parks are cherished for their natural beauty and wildland character by locals and visitors alike. The Parks attract nearly five hundred thousand (500,000) visitors each year, over four hundred thousand (400,000) from out-of-state. As these numbers are likely to grow in the future, it is the DSP’s responsibility to ensure that when visitors come to the Parks, they are provided with adequate facilities, infrastructure, and public services that contribute to their enjoyment of the experience. Additionally, the DSP has sought ways to limit the development footprint, to guide the visitors’ activities in the Parks, and to educate park users about the natural and cultural features and the importance of preservation.

A summary of the proposed improvements includes:

- Replacement of the Kōke‘e Lodge and the Natural History Museum, to include a Parks Visitor Service Center. A maximum of two structures will be used to house the lodge, museum, and visitor service center, located in the same location as the existing buildings.

Designed to be one-story with a maximum building height of twenty-five (25) feet and a combined square footage restricted to a maximum of 8,000 sf, the structures represent an approximate increase of 33% of the existing lodge and museum.

- Renovation of the State rental cabins and an evaluation of the number of additional cabins that can be constructed and managed within the existing space.
- Renovation of the existing facilities at Waimea Canyon Lookout that will include a pedestrian view plaza between the view platform and unmanned visitor information center, snack and refreshment concession and restroom facility. The view plaza will not increase the existing footprint of the lookout by more than 30% but will provide visitors with a facility designed to enhance their experience.
- Full size commercial tour buses will be restricted to Waimea Canyon Lookout and only school buses allowed up to the Meadow and the Kōke'e Discovery Center by permit. Mid-size buses (20 seats) and vans will be allowed no further than Kalalau Lookout and only passenger vehicles allowed to access Pu'u o Kila Lookout.
- Proposed parking lots have been reevaluated and reduced in size and designed with an emphasis on efficient use of space rather than expansion to minimize the impacts to the environment. Surfaces will be hardened only to the extent required for ADA accessibility and general durability. Wherever practicable, permeable surfaces such as grass pavers or gravel will be used. Improved areas will be landscaped using native plants to blend the facilities in with the natural environment.
- The entry gate was removed from the plan and replaced with a park entry station that will be designed as a small structure to house the fee collection operations and a small bathroom. An entry fee will be collected from non-resident visitors and commercial operators and be used to help pay for the added impacts to the Parks' facilities from visitor use. The entry station will not function as a visitor center, rest stop or restroom. Its approximate size and specific elements will be determined when the project is implemented. Its design will be subject to review by the KSPAC. Authority to approve the final design and location rests with the Board.
- To protect the scenic beauty of the area and prevent undesirable development, the lands along Waimea Canyon Drive may be acquired. In order to preserve open space and natural resources, including the views from and towards Waimea Canyon, Kekaha, and points beyond, lands contiguous to the Parks will be preserved.
- Park visitors predictably stop at several existing paved pull-off areas and unpaved shoulders along Waimea Canyon Drive to stop and rest, resulting in unsafe and eroded shoulders and potentially unsafe traffic conditions. To mitigate these concerns, safety improvements will be made with vehicle and pedestrian guardrails, ground stabilization, and signage while not developing these areas into formal "lookouts." (The proposed lower elevation lookout, including a parking area, comfort station, picnic facilities, and interpretive signage was deleted from the plan in response to concerns about the visual and symbolic development impacts.)

In addition to the 23 meetings of the KSPAC, that involved the DSP and the general public, other meetings with the permitted interaction groups or P.I.G.s, were held. Under the Sunshine Law, a permitted interaction allows a board to designate two or more board members, but less than the number of members that would constitute a quorum of the board to investigate matters concerning board business. The designated board members are required to report their findings and recommendations to the entire board at a properly noticed meeting. The board can also assign two or more of its members, but less than the number of members that would constitute a quorum of the board to present, discuss, or negotiate any position that the board has adopted. The DSP and several PIGs collaboratively revised and refined sections of the Master Plan to make them acceptable to both parties.

In March 2014, the KSPAC voted to approve sending the Master Plan forward to the Land Board for approval and making it clear that 1) the community has serious reservations about the entry station; 2) \*\*there will be no diminishment of Native Hawaiian rights; and 3) that DLNR should not take over the road from DOT in order to have the entry station in the preferred location. (\*\*NOTE: The preservation of native Hawaiian gathering and cultural access rights was included in the mission statement of the DSP for this plan.)

Of the numerous concerns raised about the plan by the KSPAC, there are two unresolved issues:

1) Construction of an entry station that will support the operations, maintenance and capital improvements at Kōkeʻe and Waimea Canyon State Parks and at other parks throughout the State; establish the Parks' identity with the presence of park rangers; orient park visitors and distribute information about Parks' resources and preservation efforts; manage access for park safety and resource management, including monitoring for poaching and illegal taking of native woods and plant material; and the collection of entry fees from non-residents and commercial operators to help pay for the impacts from visitor use. As an option, another location for the entry station near the entrance to Kōkeʻe State Park was included in the final Master Plan.

2) DSP's proposed ownership and management of Kōkeʻe Road and Waimea Canyon Drive. The preferred location of the entry station is at the intersection of Kōkeʻe Road and Waimea Canyon Drive, just before the entrance to Waimea Canyon Lookout. This site is on a portion of the road owned by DOT\*\*. DOT will not allow the DSP to charge a fee on a State Highway or road under their jurisdiction. (\*\*NOTE: The State DOT is responsible for the entire length of Waimea Canyon Drive and Kōkeʻe Road from its intersection with Waimea Canyon Drive to the southern boundary of Kōkeʻe State Park.)

Waimea Canyon Lookout is one of the primary visitor attractions within the Parks and for many visitors, is their only stop in the Parks. There would be a significant loss of potential revenue if the location of the entry station were further up the mountain and past Waimea Canyon Lookout.

These unresolved issues are described in Section 10 of the final EIS. The division would like to complete the Chapter 343, HRS, process by filing the document with OEQC. With the Board's approval of the Master Plan and EIS today, followed by the Governor's acceptance of the EIS, the DSP will have completed the master planning process and may begin to implement its recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Board:


1. Accept the final Master Plan and the final EIS, copies of which were distributed to each of the Board members; and
2. Recommend that the Governor accept the final Master Plan and final EIS for Kōke'e and Waimea Canyon State Parks.

Respectfully submitted,



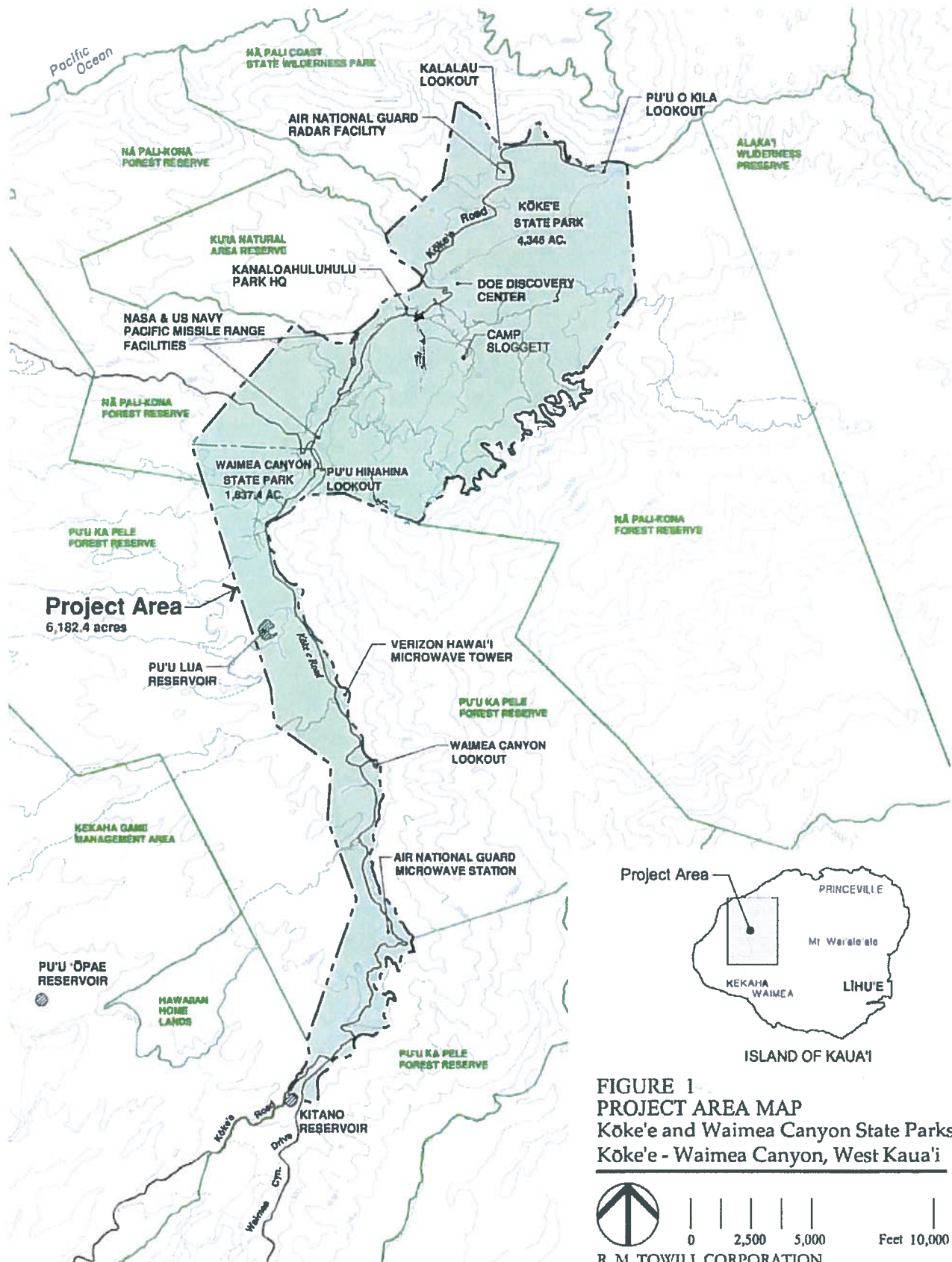
DANIEL S. QUINN  
State Parks Administrator

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL:



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WILLIAM J. AILA, JR., Chairperson  
Board of Land and Natural Resources




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R. M. TOWILL CORPORATION