

News Release



Maui National Wildlife Refuge Complex
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Keālia Pond and Kakahai‘a National Wildlife Refuges Seek Comments on Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plans *Public Invited to Participate in Open Houses*

The Keālia Pond and Kakahai‘a National Wildlife Refuges’ Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP) have been released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for public review and comment. When final, the plans will guide management of the refuges for the next 15 years.

“The information we’ve gained from our years of research and monitoring has been used to develop the strategies that benefit endangered waterbirds but also take into account our neighbors’ concerns,” said Glynnis Nakai, project leader for the Maui National Wildlife Refuge Complex. “This is another opportunity for the public to have important input into how their National Wildlife Refuge will be managed.”

Refuge staff will hold two open houses to hear comments from the public and to address questions regarding the draft plan and its associated environmental assessment. On Moloka‘i, the open house will be September 7, 2011, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Mitchell Pauole Center, located in Kaunakakai at 90 Ainoa Street. On Maui, the open house will be September 8, 2011, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Kīhei Community Center, located in Kīhei at 303 E. Lipoa Street.

The draft plans provide the vision, goals, objectives, and strategies for management activities on Keālia Pond and Kakahai‘a National Wildlife Refuges. Keālia Pond National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1992 to protect wetland habitat for endangered waterbirds, primarily Hawaiian stilt and Hawaiian coot; provide dependable habitat for wintering migratory wetland birds; and provide wildlife-dependent public uses. Kakahai‘a National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1976 to protect wetland habitat for endangered waterbirds, primarily Hawaiian stilt and Hawaiian coot; and provide dependable habitat for wintering migratory wetland birds.

The Draft CCP/EAs management alternatives for both refuges range from “no change” to full restoration and management of native habitats. At Keālia Pond National Wildlife Refuge, management proposals aim to maximize the ability to control water in the main pond and adjacent vegetated mudflats, significantly remove invasive plants, and control larger areas of pickleweed on the flats. Additional visitor services staff would increase visitor and environmental educational opportunities, recruit and

train volunteers to assist with refuge programs, and efforts would be made to provide vegetated barriers and/or blinds to provide better wildlife viewing opportunities.

At Kakahai‘a National Wildlife Refuge, proposed management would maximize wetland habitat with complete restoration of the 15-acre Old Pond and 5.5 acres of New Pond. Monitoring activities would resume and a predator-proof fence installed to minimize or eliminate predators from the wetlands. Opportunities for visitors to engage in wildlife-dependent recreation may expand depending on staffing, and an observation area would be constructed along the refuge entrance road. The Service notes that the expanded programs proposed in the Draft CCPs are not currently funded and therefore would not be implemented until such time as additional resources are appropriated for these purposes.

Copies of the full documents and/or a summary (planning update) can be obtained at the refuge administrative office or by calling the refuge at 808.875.1582. The documents are available online at <http://www.fws.gov/kealiapond/planning.html> and <http://www.fws.gov/kakahaiia/planning.html>.

Comments on the draft plans and environmental assessments may be made at an open house meeting or by letter, fax, or email. All comments must be emailed or postmarked by September 19, 2011, to be considered. Comments may be sent by email to: FWSPlanningComments@fws.gov (please put “Maui NWRC CCP” in the subject line); by mail to Glynnis Nakai, Project Leader, P.O. Box 1042, Kīhei, HI 96753; or by fax to 808.875.2945.

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