



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# News Release

*Maui National Wildlife Refuge Complex*

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### **Comments Sought on Environmental Assessment for Keālia Pond National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters/Visitor Center Building**

An environmental assessment examining the potential effects of construction and operation of a proposed headquarters and visitor center at Keālia Pond National Wildlife Refuge is now available for public review and comment. The building, which is currently in the planning and design phase, was funded through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service expects the construction project will begin later this year and be completed in 2011.

“Last year we worked with Alexander and Baldwin to acquire 13 acres adjacent to Mokulele Highway as a suitable site for our new headquarters and visitor center,” said Keālia Project Leader Glynnis Nakai. “This environmental assessment looks at how construction and future operation of the facility may affect the environment and other factors, such as recreational and educational opportunities.”

The preferred alternative would construct a small, energy-efficient building on an upland area of the refuge, off the existing access road from Mokulele Highway. The site currently is covered by kiawe and is not used for any other purpose. The 7500 square-foot facility would become the refuge’s permanent administrative office, replacing a modular building that was destroyed by fire in 2006. It also would include an exhibit hall, multi-purpose room, and space for volunteers.

“Every effort has been made to ensure the facility will not impact the endangered waterbirds or migratory birds that depend upon Keālia Pond,” Nakai said. “We believe the new building will not only help us in our efforts to meet our mission to recover endangered species, but also will be a major asset to the community.”

The document is available on the refuge’s website at <http://www.fws.gov/kealiapond> or by calling the refuge at (808) 875-1582. Comments must be received by February 12, 2010.

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