



Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge Land Conservation Planning Study

Planning Update 2, November 2005

Aloha

This is the second in a series of updates provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to share information on a proposal to expand the Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge currently protects 203 acres of coastal habitat. The proposed additions would complement existing habitat and add areas for wildlife conservation to the Refuge.



The proposed Kilauea Point Refuge additions would provide habitat for endangered birds.



Ae'o (Hawaiian Stilt). Photo USFWS.

Thank You for Participating

Planning Update 1, distributed in May 2005, marked the beginning of public scoping for this study. In it, we provided the following information and requested comments on the proposed Refuge expansion.



To review Planning Update 1, visit the planning Website at: <http://pacific.fws.gov/planning>

Select "Projects Online" to find a link to the Kilauea Point study. You can also request a copy by contacting the Refuge, contact information is on the last page.

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- The Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-481) authorized the Service to acquire up to 234 acres of land, in five specific parcels, by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange.
- In response to the Act, the Service initiated a study to determine the feasibility and effects of acquiring and managing high quality wetlands, coastal bluff, and dune habitats as additions to the Refuge; and conserving the native wildlife species that occur there.
- As part of the study, the Service developed four preliminary alternative refuge expansion proposals (described in Update 1) which are being evaluated in the development of a land conservation plan and environmental assessment.

Refuge staff attended a Kilauea Neighborhood Association meeting on June 7, 2005, to describe and receive comments on the proposed Refuge expansion alternatives. Approximately 75 people attended the meeting, and we sincerely thank the Association for providing us this forum. Numerous written comments were collected at the meeting and in responses to the first Planning Update. We appreciate your comments, and we will continue to consider them during the planning process. A summary of the comments and issues raised during scoping and our responses are on the following pages.

Summary of Public Comments and Issues

Issue: The community should be kept better informed about this project. Several commenters were concerned that the Service was not informing the community about the Refuge expansion proposal.

We mailed the first Planning Update in May 2005, to over 500 individuals and groups and posted it on our website. We also met with local landowners, and the proposal was covered by local news media. From these initial contacts, our mailing list has expanded and we hope to be reaching all interested parties as a result. Also, comments are welcome at anytime during the planning process and will be considered during development of the draft land conservation plan and environmental assessment.

Our first Planning Update introduced preliminary alternatives for public review and comments. The preliminary alternatives may be modified. There is not a predetermined acquisition alternative; rather, we are evaluating the area's wildlife habitats to determine whether these areas are suitable to become part of the Refuge. We are comparing the wildlife benefits with concerns over social and economic issues. This entire process will continue in an open manner with full public involvement.

Issue: How is the Refuge coordinating with or informing Hawaiian organizations?

Prior to distribution of the first Planning Update, the Service contacted the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA). The first update was mailed to several officials at OHA's Honolulu office. We look forward to working with OHA and other native Hawaiian organizations during the planning process to identify, preserve and protect native Hawaiian cultural

sites and traditional practices within the proposed expansion area.

Issue: Does the Refuge currently have enough land to protect the birds and other wildlife?

Recovery plans for nene and endangered waterbirds outline the specific need for additional protected habitat to increase the species' populations to recovery goals. Our highest priority habitat goals are to: (1) protect and restore 30 acres of high quality nene habitat in the Kilauea River Valley to provide foraging and nesting areas with minimal disturbances and mortality; and (2) create 15 to 20 acres of wetland management units to control standing water and maintain various types of wetlands to provide feeding and nesting habitat for the four endangered Hawaiian waterbirds—the duck, stilt, moorhen, and coot.

Issue: Why is the Refuge expansion proposed now instead of waiting to study these options during the Comprehensive Conservation Planning (CCP) process scheduled to begin in the next few years?

The Service is responding to passage of The Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act of 2004, which authorized acquisition of up to 234 acres as Refuge additions. In addition:

- Much of the proposed expansion areas are privately owned, and presently, some of the landowners have expressed an interest in selling to the Service. Waiting several years to conduct and complete a CCP could result in the properties being sold to private interests who wish to subdivide and develop them; possibly prohibiting public access, degrading the health of the river and bay, and diminishing wildlife habitat value.



Kilauea Point. Photo USFWS.

Summary of Comments continued . . .

- Protecting, in perpetuity, access to an important coastal resource for the community of Kilauea, complements the revised Kaua`i County Master Plan.
- It is timely to conduct this study now to dovetail with current town planning in an effort to balance the protection of wildlife and plants with the needs of the community.

Issue: Will the Service Provide Recreational Access to the Refuge?

Several commenters expressed concern that the Refuge would eliminate access and recreational opportunities on lands proposed for addition to the Refuge.

The Refuge is currently preparing a land conservation plan and environmental assessment which will address the recreational uses of the proposed expansion areas. By law, National Wildlife Refuges are managed first and foremost for the benefit of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats.

Before uses are allowed on a national wildlife refuge, Federal law requires written compatibility determinations be completed which state that the uses are compatible. Hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, and environmental education and interpretation are priority public uses of the Refuge System. These uses receive enhanced consideration over other general public uses in refuge planning and management. Only compatible uses can be allowed.

Some of the recreational and access uses that we will be evaluating as part of this planning process are:

- Fishing
- Wildlife Observation
- Photography
- Environmental Interpretation

- Beach Access (individual beaches are discussed following this list).
- Public access to a trail from the lower valley to Kilauea Falls during daylight hours.
- Other nonpriority public uses, such as swimming and boating.

Kahili Beach, Rock Quarry side. Rock Quarry Road is, for the most part, a county road. The Refuge currently owns a small portion of it from the Refuge boundary near the boat ramp, to the end of the parking area near Mokalea Point (see map). The Refuge has no intention of closing Rock Quarry Road. Over the past year, we have worked with Kilauea community members to improve the road and provide better access to this area of the Refuge. We will continue to work with the owners of the road, to maintain a passable gravel/dirt road to the beach and shoreline. Thus, we expect beach access to remain unchanged.

Kahili Beach, Wailapa side. The road to Kahili Beach from Wailapa Road is owned by the county, as is the parking lot. There is currently a documented and recorded public easement for foot traffic to Kahili Beach through the 5-acre coastal dune property. The Refuge would maintain this easement for pedestrian access to the beach (see map), therefore, public access and parking would not change as a result of this project. At Kahili Beach, the land between the mean high tide line and the water would remain in State ownership under this proposal.

Driving on the beach is illegal in Hawaii. If acquired, the Service would prohibit vehicle traffic on the dunes and beach. Driving motor bikes, all terrain vehicles, off road vehicles, or any other motorized vehicles on the dunes would be counter productive to wildlife management, cultural site preservation, and native vegetation restoration.



'Ale'ula (Hawaiian Moorhen). Photo USFWS

Summary of Comments continued . . .

Kauapea Beach (Secrets). The Service is currently evaluating legal access issues associated with public access to Kauapea Beach.

Recreational access to the Kilauea River and Falls. Kilauea Falls is currently in private ownership and the public has no legal access to this area. Under management of the Refuge, a public hiking trail from a lower valley access point to the falls, could be developed and open during daylight hours, if found compatible.

Motorized boating could be permitted on the Kilauea River, but speed limits may be necessary to protect shore nesting wildlife from disturbance and the river bank from erosion.

Access to some off-trail areas may be limited to guided tours pending compatibility analysis.

Issue: Will the Service recognize cultural tradition and practices? Several commenters expressed concern that access to lands used by the Native Hawaiian community for customary and traditional practices would be prohibited under Service ownership.

The proposed Refuge lands would be subject to Native Hawaiian rights under State and Federal laws, if acquired by the Service. The Refuge would work with the native Hawaiian community to identify and document culturally important sites and practices that occurred within the proposed acquisition areas. We would work cooperatively to facilitate access to these areas and resources.

Issue: Why isn't Crater Hill open for public use?

In 1988, the Crater Hill property was donated to the Service for inclusion in the Refuge. The property deed for the donation contained several restrictions, one of which prohibited general, unsupervised public use of the Crater Hill property.

In addition, access to Crater Hill is through Seacliff Plantation. This development is privately owned and gated, through which, the Refuge has an easement to access the Crater Hill area for management and maintenance activities only. We do not have the right or authority to allow public access through Seacliff Plantation.

Issue: Will the Crater Hill hike be reopened to the public?

The Refuge plans to reopen a trail to Crater Hill. In order to be compatible, the trail must be redesigned to avoid negative impacts to sensitive wildlife habitat while still providing opportunities for good wildlife observation and breathtaking views of the lighthouse and crater.

Issue: Are you going to put up any more fences?

Currently, the Refuge does not plan to erect fences on the proposed additions. However, if wildlife or habitats are negatively affected by people, dogs, pigs, etc., then fences may be required to provide protection for species such as waterbirds, nene, and seabirds.

Issue: Is the Service promoting expansion of ecotourism? Several commenters expressed concern that the Refuge would develop the area for ecotourism.

The Refuge will not promote the Kilauea River as a tourist destination. The Service has no plans to build a visitor center or contact station in the Kilauea River Valley. Refuge management shares community concerns regarding increased tourism, and is not seeking to increase tourism to the Refuge. Currently, during peak use periods, the Refuge has more visitors at the lighthouse than can be efficiently managed. In a separate effort, we are exploring solutions to our parking and congestion issues at Kilauea Point and related traffic issues in Kilauea.

Issue: Will the County lose property taxes because of this proposed Federal acquisition?

Like other public lands, National Wildlife Refuges are not subject to property taxes, however, the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act was enacted so National Wildlife Refuge System lands would fairly contribute funds to county tax rolls.

Refuge Revenue Sharing Act payments are intended to offset losses in property tax revenues, not to be payments in lieu of taxes. Refuge Revenue Sharing Act payments to the county for Refuge lands are based on the greater of: 75 cents per acre; 0.75% of the appraised value; or 25% of the net receipts collected from the Refuge.

Where we've been

Our work so far has focused on identifying wildlife resources in the project area and the community's issues, and preparing the draft environmental assessment for public review.

In addition, the Service provided information to a large and widespread audience regarding this planning process by distributing Planning Update 1 to more than 500 people and several organizations and groups.

We are thankful for community participation and feedback which has helped us identify many issues and will ultimately result in a better alternative for the entire community.

Where we are now

We are currently collecting information and developing documents that analyze

the feasibility and impacts of our proposed alternatives regarding:

- Access and easement issues.
- Cultural resources and traditional practices including archeological reviews.
- Native and invasive plant communities.
- Seabird nesting.
- Social and economic issues.
- Other wildlife use.
- Contaminant analyses.

Where we're going

Using the information collected, refuge planners will complete the land conservation plan and environmental assessment, which will address Refuge expansion alternatives and conceptual management of lands proposed as additions to the Refuge. These draft documents will be made available to the public for review and comment. A planning update will announce the documents' availability and how to obtain a copy of them.

The Planning Process Schedule

Public scoping begins/Planning Update 1 is issued.....	May 2005
Public scoping comment period ends.....	June 1, 2005
Planning Update 2, identify community issues and concerns...	November 2005
Draft documents available for public review and comment.....	January 2006
Public open house.....	February 2006
Public comment period ends.....	March 2006
Notice of Decision.....	June 2006



Honi (Green Sea Turtle)

Who Do I Contact?

Send Comments or Requests for Information to:

Ben Harrison, Chief, Refuge Planning Branch
 Division of Refuge Planning and Visitor Services
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 911 NE 11th Avenue
 Portland, OR 97232
 Phone: (503) 231-2232 or toll free (877) 312-1751
 Fax: (503) 231-6187

Or E-mail Comments to:

FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov
 (Please use "Kilauea Point Refuge" in the subject.)

For Information on the Refuge System, contact:

Michael "Mitch" Mitchell, Deputy Project Leader
 Kauai National Wildlife Refuge Complex
 PO Box 1128
 Kilauea, HI 96754
 Phone: (808) 828-1413 Fax: (808) 828-6634

For Information on Land Acquisition, contact:

Georgia Shirilla, Chief, Acquisition Branch
 Division of Realty and Refuge Information
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 911 NE 11th Avenue
 Portland, OR 97232
 Phone: (503) 231-2236 or toll free (800) 662-8933
 Fax: (503) 231-6161



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 Fish and Wildlife Service
 Kauai National Wildlife Refuge Complex
 P.O. Box 1128
 Kilauea, HI 96754

Address correction requested

In this issue:

A summary of the questions and comments we received from the public on a proposal to expand the Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge is provided, with Service responses.

Visit the Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge Website at: <http://pacificislands.fws.gov/wnwr/kauainwrindex.html>