Aloha

This is the first in a series of updates provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to share information on a proposal to expand the Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge currently protects coastal cliff and upland habitats. The Service is proposing to expand the Refuge by up to 217 acres. The proposed addition of coastal and wetland habitats, would complement the habitat currently protected by the Refuge.

What is the Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge?

Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) was established in 1985, when the land was transferred from the U.S. Coast Guard to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). The Refuge currently consists of 199 acres of protected land on the northernmost tip of Kauai. The Refuge was established and is managed to provide habitats for a host of increasingly rare Hawaiian wildlife and plant species.

What is the Land Protection Planning Study?

Wildlife habitat along the Kilauea River could be conserved as part of the Kilauea Point Refuge.

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What is the Process? The Service is initiating a study to determine the feasibility and effects of acquiring and managing high quality wetlands and coastal bluff and dune habitats, as additions to the Refuge, and conserving the native wildlife species that occur there.

Who Do I Contact? Contact information is on page 4. The Service would like to receive comments on the information provided in this Update by June 1, 2005.

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The Study Area. The five parcels specified in the legislation comprise the study area. The study area includes sea bluffs and coastal dunes, the Kilauea River estuary with its unique ecological and biological diversity, and a portion of the River which includes one of the largest waterfalls in the State.

How Do I Comment on the Proposal?

Your participation is encouraged throughout the planning process. Contact information is on page 4. The Service would like to receive comments on the information provided in this Update by June 1, 2005.

What Happens Next? The Service is initiating a study to determine the feasibility and effects of acquiring and managing high quality wetlands and coastal bluff and dune habitats, as additions to the Refuge, and conserving the native wildlife species that occur there.

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What are the Preliminary Alternatives?

One of the primary components of the expansion planning process—described on page 3—is developing Refuge expansion alternatives within the study area. Four preliminary alternatives for the proposed expansion, including a no-action alternative, are provided below for your review and comment. Within the study area, there are approximately 17 acres that do not contain coastal or river habitats. This acreage was excluded from all alternatives.

It is Service policy to acquire land only from landowners who are willing sellers. The legislation stated that “All acquisitions of land or waters under this Act shall be made in a voluntary manner and shall not be the result of forced takings.” Acquisitions are subject to funding availability.

Under Alternative A, the No-Action Alternative, the Service would not expand the Kilauea Point Refuge. The No-Action Alternative is the baseline to which the other alternatives are compared.

Under Alternative B, the Coastal Alternative, the Service is proposing to expand the Refuge by approximately 52 acres. This alternative proposes acquiring from willing sellers 35 acres of coastal bluff, 5 acres of coastal dune, and 12 acres that include the mouth and estuary of the Kilauea River (see map 1).

Under Alternative C, the Riverine Alternative, the Service is proposing to expand the Refuge by approximately 182 acres. This alternative proposes to acquire from willing sellers 165 acres of important lowland habitats that include tidally influenced brackish and freshwater wetlands, and riparian, upland shrub, and forest habitats; 12 acres of coastal river mouth and estuary; and 5 acres of coastal dune (see map 2).

Under Alternative D, the Coastal plus Riverine Alternative, the Service is proposing to expand the Refuge by approximately 217 acres. This alternative proposes to acquire from willing sellers the following habitats: 12 acres of coastal river mouth; 165 acres of brackish and freshwater wetlands, riparian, upland shrub, forest, and portions of the Kilauea River; 5 acres of coastal dune; and 35 acres of coastal bluff. Alternative D would protect a variety of habitats ranging from coastal bluffs for nesting seabirds, beach dunes for 'Ilio-holo-i-ka-ua'ua (Hawaiian Monk Seals) and Honu (Green Sea Turtles), open water of the Kilauea River, tidally influenced riverine wetlands for four species of endangered wetland birds, and upland shrub and forest for native habitat restoration (see map 3).

What are the Goals of Conserving the Area’s Wildlife Habitats and What Species would Benefit?

Protection and management of coastal strand, estuary, riparian, and grassland habitats would complement endangered species recovery efforts at Kilauea Point Refuge, and nearby Hanalei Refuge, by providing endangered waterbirds another area for roosting, feeding, and nesting as well as offer public use opportunities.

Wetland habitat in the estuary and adjacent ponds provide habitat for the endangered Nēnē (Hawaiian Goose), Koloa maoli (Hawaiian Duck), 'Alae keʻokeʻo (Hawaiian Coot), 'Alae ʻula (Hawaiian Moorhen), and Aeʻo (Hawaiian Stilt).
Estuary waters support all four species of native stream gobies, along with other native fish, prawns, shrimp, invertebrates, and juveniles of several important recreational and commercial marine fish species.

Coastal bluffs provide nesting habitat for seabirds such as the Mōlī (Laysan Albatross), Æ (Red-footed Booby), ‘Ua’u kani (Wedge-tailed Shearwater), Koaʻe kea (White-tailed Tropic Bird), Koaʻe ʻula (Red-tailed Tropic Bird), and resting habitat for the ʻĀ (Brown Booby) and Iwa (Great Frigatebird). Beach dunes provide potential resting habitat for the endangered ʻIlio-holo-i-kaʻuua (Hawaiian Monk Seal) and threatened Honu (Green Sea Turtle).

What is the Expansion Planning Process?

The process is carried out as follows.

- The planning process integrates three components—detailed study and planning, extensive public involvement, and environmental compliance.

- The documentation that evolves from the process includes an environmental compliance document, a land protection plan, and a conceptual management plan. The alternatives can range from no Refuge expansion to proposing to include all or part of the study area lands.

- These draft documents are provided to the public for review and comment to ensure the interested public is informed about the Service’s proposal. Your comments are considered as we develop final documents.

- Based on the refuge expansion alternatives presented in the final documents, Service decision-makers will select an alternative for implementation.

Your participation is encouraged throughout the process. Now is a good time to get involved because the planning process has just begun.

What Happens Next?

This Update begins public scoping. Comments received by June 30, 2005, will be considered during development of the draft planning documents. Beginning in June, public comments will be reviewed and the Service will begin drafting an environmental compliance document, a land protection plan, and a conceptual management plan. The availability of the draft documents and public review and comment period, will be announced in future planning updates and news releases. A schedule of key planning steps follows (dates may change):

The Planning Process Schedule

Public Scoping begins/Planning Update 1 is issued.....................May 2005
Public Scoping Comment Period Ends........................................June 1, 2005
Draft Documents Distributed/Public Comment Period Begins.........August 2005
Public Comments on Draft Documents are Due.........................September 2005
Notice of Decision........................................................................December 2005
Who Do I Contact?

Send Comments or Requests for Planning Information to:
Cathy Osugi, Wildlife Biologist
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, OR 97232
Phone: (503) 231-6838 or toll free (877) 312-1751
Fax: (503) 231-6187

For Information on the National Wildlife 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
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

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