

# News Bulletin

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## Service Announces Final Determination of Critical Habitat for Protected Species on Maui Nui

HONOLULU, Hawaii – A final rule designating critical habitat for 125 federally protected species found in Hawaii was released today by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The final designated critical habitat includes 157,002 acres located within the islands of Molokai, Maui, and Kahoolawe in the State of Hawaii, and includes critical habitat for one tree snail, two forest birds, and 122 plants.

Critical habitat identifies the specific areas of habitat within the geographic range of a listed species that are essential for its long-term survival. The designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or allow government or public access to private lands. It does require federal agencies that undertake or permit activities that may affect critical habitat to consult with the Service to ensure those actions do not negatively impact important characteristics of these areas.

“The Service listened to public and agency comments and amended the original proposed critical habitat based on the best scientific information and for the greatest protections for the resources,” said Mary Abrams, State Supervisor for the Service’s Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. “The areas excluded from the final designation are based on solid conservation agreements with local groups, which will protect threatened and endangered species while supporting land use. These conservation agreements demonstrate that threatened and endangered species can successfully coexist with the interests of private and public landowners.”

The Service amended the proposed critical habitat and excluded 85,161 acres from the final designated critical habitat, including exclusion of all critical habitat on Lanai. Areas may be considered for exclusion from critical habitat based on conservation partnerships; areas excluded from Maui Nui critical habitat include ranchlands with a history of conservation management, as well as lands owned by private landowners participating in local watershed partnerships or other significant conservation efforts. Final critical habitat comprises 20 percent federal lands, 55 percent state lands, and 25 percent private lands.

By taking an ecosystem and partnering approach, conservation efforts can be leveraged and threats addressed more effectively while improving the ecological health of our islands, which benefit the people and the plants and animals. Many of these animals and plants are found nowhere else in the world and the Service looks forward to continuing to work with local governments, industry, our partners, and the people of Hawaii to learn more about what makes these islands so special.

The final rule will publish in the Federal Register on March 31, 2016. Copies of the final rule may be downloaded from the Service's website at [www.fws.gov/pacificislands](http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands) or by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service's Honolulu office 808/792-9400.

For more information about critical habitat, visit: <http://go.usa.gov/3GTdj>

*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit [www.fws.gov/pacific](http://www.fws.gov/pacific), or connect with us through [facebook.com/USFWSPacific](https://www.facebook.com/USFWSPacific), [twitter.com/USFWSPacific/](https://twitter.com/USFWSPacific/), [tumblr.com/blog/usfwspacific](https://www.tumblr.com/blog/usfwspacific), [flickr.com/photos/usfwspacific/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwspacific/) and [youtube.com/user/USFWS](https://www.youtube.com/user/USFWS)*