

**Finding of No Significant Impact  
for the  
Kakahai‘a National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan  
Maui County, Hawai‘i**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has completed a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) for Kakahai‘a National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The CCP will guide management of the Refuge for 15 years. The CCP/EA describes our proposals for managing the Refuge and their effects on the human environment under three alternatives, including the no action alternative.

**Decision**

Based on our comprehensive review and analysis in the CCP/EA, we selected Alternative C for implementation, because it will guide management of the Refuge in a manner that:

- Achieves the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the purposes, vision, and goals of the Refuge.
- Maintains and restores the ecological integrity of the Refuge habitats and populations.
- Addresses the important issues identified during the CCP scoping process.
- Addresses the legal mandates of the Service and the Refuge.
- Is consistent with the scientific principles of sound wildlife management and endangered species recovery.
- Facilitates priority public uses appropriate and compatible with the Refuge purpose and the Refuge System mission.

**Summary of the Actions to be Implemented**

Implementing the selected alternative will have no significant impacts on the environmental resources identified in the CCP/EA. Refuge management under the selected alternative will restore habitat for endangered species and resources of concern, and improve the Refuge’s capability to provide food for migrating and wintering waterbirds, including shorebirds and waterfowl. Improving the Refuge’s coastal and wetland habitats will increase the value of these lands and waters for a variety of native plants and wildlife.

The availability and quality of wildlife-dependent recreation on the Refuge will improve under the selected alternative, but within a regional context, the cumulative change would be small. A summary of the CCP actions we will implement follows.

Under Alternative C, we will restore the 15-acre Old Pond and 5.5 acres of New Pond. Physical restoration of the Old Pond will include: removal of aggressive pest species, dredging accumulated sediment, reconfiguring bathymetry and radial levees, reconstructing perimeter levees, replacing the water control structure, and replacing the pump between the two ponds. Restoration of Old Pond will provide open water and emergent habitat for breeding, foraging, and nesting ‘alae ke‘oke‘o with minimum supplemental water due to the presence of natural groundwater springs.

Management actions include a compilation of data on the wetlands and initiation of research to evaluate the geomorphology, hydrology, and elevation in preparation for a restoration design that would meet the needs of two focal species: ae'o and 'alae ke'oke'o. A new well, pump, water distribution line, and control outlet for New Pond will be constructed and existing levees will be reconstructed. The capability of flooding and dewatering the ponds will provide permanent and seasonal habitat for ae'o and 'alae ke'oke'o, and indirectly benefit migratory waterbirds. All monitoring activities would resume with the presence of wetland function. If feasible, a predator-proof fence will be installed to minimize or eliminate predators from entering the wetlands.

The Service will work with the Hawai'i Department of Transportation on planning and design to modify the culvert passing under Kamehameha V Highway to allow water from the upper watershed and periodic dewatering of the wetlands to flow to the ocean naturally without blockage from sand. We will contract a comprehensive archaeological and cultural investigation for the Refuge and surrounding lands prior to expanding restoration efforts beyond previously disturbed lands.

Maintaining the wetlands at Kakahai'a NWR will require a regular on-site staff presence. The opportunities for visitors to engage in wildlife-dependent recreation may expand depending on staffing, and, at a minimum, a kiosk will be constructed on the earthen platform along the Refuge entrance road. Volunteer groups will be coordinated to assist staff with restoration and maintenance activities.

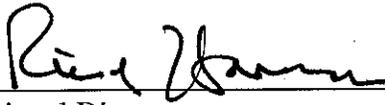
#### **Public Involvement and Changes Made to the Selected Alternative Based on Comments**

We incorporated a variety of public involvement techniques in developing and reviewing the CCP/EA. This included three planning updates, several meetings with partners, and public review and comment on the Draft CCP/EA. The Service responses to public comments are provided in the CCP, in Appendix K.

Based on the public comments we received and considered, Alternative C as described in the Draft CCP/EA has been slightly modified to clarify our management strategies to seek new partnerships with other government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private individuals to leverage our funding and staffing capabilities.

#### **Conclusions**

Based on review and evaluation of the information contained in the supporting references, I have determined that implementing Alternative C as the CCP for Kakahai'a National Wildlife Refuge is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, we are not required to prepare an environmental impact statement.

  
Acting Regional Director

9/28/11  
Date

## **Supporting References**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. July 2011. Kakahai‘a National Wildlife Refuge, Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. September 2011. Kakahai‘a National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Note: This Finding of No Significant Impact and supporting references are available for public review at Maui National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Milepost 6 Mokulele Highway, Kihei, Hawai‘i 96753, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Hawaiian and Pacific Islands National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 5-231, Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96850. These documents can also be found on the Internet at <http://pacific.fws.gov/planning/>. Interested and affected parties are being notified of our decision.