

Appendix D. Wilderness Review for Keālia Pond NWR

General Information on Wilderness Reviews

Wilderness review is the process used to determine whether or not to recommend lands or waters in the Refuge System to Congress for designation as wilderness. Planning policy for the Refuge System (602 FW 3) mandates conducting wilderness reviews every 15 years through the CCP process.

The wilderness review process has three phases: inventory, study, and recommendation. After first identifying lands and waters that meet the minimum criteria for wilderness, the resulting wilderness study areas (WSA) are further evaluated to determine if they merit recommendation from the Service to the Secretary of the Interior for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). Areas recommended for designation are managed to maintain wilderness character in accordance with management goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the final CCP until Congress makes a decision or the CCP is amended to modify or remove the wilderness proposal. A brief discussion of wilderness inventory, study, and recommendation follows.

Wilderness Inventory

The wilderness inventory consists of identifying areas that minimally meet the requirements for wilderness as defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964 (Wilderness Act). Wilderness is defined as an area which:

- Has at least 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition, or be capable of restoration to wilderness character through appropriate management at the time of review, or be a roadless island;
- Generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable;
- Has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; and
- May also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historic value. These features and values, though desirable, are not necessary for an area to qualify as a wilderness.

Wilderness Study

During the study phase, lands and waters qualifying for wilderness as a result of the inventory are studied to analyze values (ecological, recreational, cultural, spiritual), resources (wildlife, water, vegetation, minerals, soils), and uses (habitat management, public use) within the area. The findings of the study help determine whether to recommend the area for designation as wilderness.

Wilderness Recommendation

Once a wilderness study determines that a WSA meets the requirements for inclusion in the NWPS, a wilderness study report that presents the results of the wilderness review, accompanied by a Legislative Environmental Impact Statement (LEIS), is prepared. The wilderness study report and LEIS that support wilderness designation are then transmitted through the Secretary of the Interior to the President of the United States, and ultimately to the Congress for approval.

The following section summarizes the inventory phase of the wilderness review for Keālia Pond NWR and the proposed Molokini Unit.

Wilderness Inventory

The wilderness inventory is a broad look at the planning area to identify WSAs. These WSAs are roadless areas within refuge boundaries, including submerged lands and their associated water column, that meet the minimum criteria for wilderness identified in Sect. 2. (c) of the Wilderness Act. A WSA must meet the minimum size criteria (or be a roadless island), appear natural, and provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation. Other supplemental values are evaluated, but not required.

Evaluation of Size Criteria for Roadless Areas, Roadless Islands, and Submergent Lands and Associated Water Column

Identification of roadless areas, roadless islands, and submerged lands and associated water column, required gathering land status maps, land use and road inventory data, satellite imagery, aerial photographs, and personal observations of areas within refuge boundaries. “Roadless” refers to the absence of improved roads suitable and maintained for public travel by means of motorized vehicles primarily intended for highway use.

Inventory units meet the size criteria for a WSA if any one of the following standards applies:

- An area with over 5,000 contiguous ac. State and private lands are not included in making this acreage determination.
- A roadless island of any size. A roadless island is defined as an area surrounded by permanent waters or that is markedly distinguished from the surrounding lands by topographical or ecological features.
- An area of less than 5,000 contiguous Federal acres that is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition, and of a size suitable for wilderness management.
- An area of less than 5,000 contiguous Federal acres that is contiguous with a designated wilderness, recommended wilderness, or area under wilderness review by another Federal wilderness managing agency such as the Forest Service, National Park Service, or Bureau of Land Management.

Keālia Pond NWR, is a highly modified 691-acre parcel of land located on the island of Maui and does not meet the size criteria. It is also bounded and bisected by State-owned and Refuge-owned roadways maintained for travel by passenger vehicles.

The Molokini Unit, a roadless islet (19 acres proposed as an overlay refuge), meets the roadless island criteria for a WSA.

Evaluation of the Naturalness Criteria

A WSA must meet the naturalness criteria. Section 2.(c) of the Wilderness Act defines wilderness as an area that “...generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.” The area must appear natural to the average visitor rather than “pristine.” The presence of ecologically accurate, historical landscape conditions is not required. An area may include some manmade features and human impacts provided they are substantially unnoticeable in the unit as a whole. Human-caused hazards, such as the presence of

unexploded ordnance from military activity, and the physical impacts of refuge management facilities and activities are also considered in the evaluation of the naturalness criteria. An area may not be considered unnatural in appearance solely on the basis of “sights and sounds” of human impacts and activities outside the boundary of the unit. The cumulative effects of these factors were considered in the evaluation of naturalness for each wilderness inventory unit.

In the wilderness inventory, specific manmade features and other human impacts need to be identified that affect the overall apparent naturalness of the tract. The following factors were primary considerations in evaluating the naturalness of the Refuge:

- Administrative and storage containers, greenhouse;
- Well pumps, earthen dikes, exposed water lines, water control structures; and
- Gates, parking lots, and roadways.

Keālia Pond NWR is bounded and bisected by State-owned and Refuge-owned roadways maintained for travel by passenger vehicles. This inventory unit contains numerous earthen dikes, ditches, roadways, buildings, and water control structures and does not meet the naturalness criteria.

Public access to the Molokini Unit has been limited since the early 1900s due to the sensitivity of burrowing seabird nest sites. Therefore, seabird habitat is intact and nesting birds have been successful. Nonetheless, a navigation aid beacon, an active and permanent U.S. Aids to Navigation System erected from a cement foundation on top of the islet, has a strong visual presence on the islet. The Molokini Unit does not meet the minimum naturalness criteria for a WSA.

Evaluation of Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

In addition to meeting the size and naturalness criteria, a WSA must provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation, and does not need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre. Further, an area does not have to be open to public use and access to qualify under these criteria. Congress has designated a number of wilderness areas in the NWPS that are closed to public access to protect ecological resource values.

Opportunities for solitude refers to the ability of a visitor to be alone and secluded from other visitors in the area. Primitive and unconfined recreation means nonmotorized, dispersed outdoor recreation activities that do not require developed facilities or mechanical transport. These primitive recreation activities may provide opportunities to experience challenge and risk, self-reliance, and adventure.

These two opportunity “elements” are not well defined by the Wilderness Act but in most cases can be expected to occur together. However, an outstanding opportunity for solitude may be present in an area offering only limited primitive recreation potential. Conversely, an area may be so attractive for recreation use that experiencing solitude is not an option.

These inventory units do not offer opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. Daily management activities at Keālia Pond NWR occur, including road maintenance, mowing and disking of fields, and manipulation of water control structures. Recreational and educational activities are only conducted in group settings, and only allowed as staff-guided activities.

Although the Molokini Unit is free from human habitation, the marine environment surrounding the islet, managed by the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources as the Molokini Shoal

Marine Life Conservation District, is one of the most popular diving and snorkeling sites in the Hawaiian Islands. The constant presence of people and marine vessels around the inventory unit therefore does not allow for an individual to experience solitude within the overlay refuge. The Molokini Unit is and will remain closed to public access to protect the fragile nests of burrowing seabirds. However, given the lack of development on the island, opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are theoretically possible. The Molokini Unit does not meet the minimum criteria for solitude for a WSA, however it does meet the minimum criteria for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Evaluation of Supplemental Values

Supplemental values are defined by the Wilderness Act as “ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historic value.” Based upon the findings of the required components for WSA designation, supplemental values were not evaluated.

Findings

The inventory units of Keālia Pond NWR and the proposed Molokini Unit do not meet the minimum criteria for consideration as WSA (see Table D.1).

Table D.1 Wilderness Inventory Summary

Kealia Pond NWR (691 acres)	
Required Components	
(1) Has at least 5,000 ac of land or is of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation and use in an unconfined condition, or is a roadless island.	No. Does not contain 5,000 acres, is not a roadless island, and is not practicable to manage as a wilderness.
(2) Generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.	No. Landscape is highly modified and actively managed.
(3a) Has outstanding opportunities for solitude.	No. Refuge is actively and regularly managed.
(3b) Has outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.	No. Recreation is highly regulated and requires staff presence.
Other Components	
(4) Contains ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historic value.	Not evaluated.
Summary	
Parcel qualifies as a wilderness study area (meets criteria 1, 2 & 3a or 3b).	No.
Molokini Unit (19 acres)	
Required Components	
(1) Has at least 5,000 ac of land or is of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation and use in an unconfined condition, or is a roadless island.	Yes. It is a roadless island.
(2) Generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.	No. Contains a permanent aids to navigation beacon, highly visible within the tiny islet.
(3a) Has outstanding opportunities for solitude.	No. Marine vessel and human presence around the islet is heavy.
(3b) Has outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.	Yes. Unit is not currently open to the public, however opportunities are present.
Other Components	
(4) Contains ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historic value.	Not evaluated.
Summary	
Parcel qualifies as a wilderness study area (meets criteria 1, 2 & 3a or 3b).	No.

