

Appendix K. Public Comments and Service Responses

In this appendix the Service responds to comments that were received on the Keālia Pond NWR Draft CCP/EA, August 2011 during the official public comment period from August 19-September 19, 2011. Comments were received via comment card and e-mail. All substantial comments regarding the Draft CCP/EA are presented below. Some comments have had formatting changes and other minor edits to correct spelling or punctuation, but the majority of comments are as received. Service responses indicate where changes were made to the CCP based on specific comments.

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Comments and Responses

1. Pat Waters

Comment:

As an owner in close proximity to Keālia Pond "Sugar Beach Resort" I am very concerned at any attempt to use water level as a mediation of midge population. The current level of control has been totally unsuccessful and the midges have been a complete out of control nuisance. The reason given by Ms. Nakai when she informed us that they were out of the methoprene at different times, pumps were down to so water level could not be controlled. I would hate to rely on water control based on prior performance on the pond management. Please do all that you can to reduce the nuisance of these midges, it is an economic disaster that has been promoted by the enhancement of the pond without proper management or oversight.

Service Response:

We are proposing to use an integrated pest management approach to control the adult midge population at Keālia Pond. As noted in your comment, we did not have proper water pumping equipment in the past to seasonally manipulate water level to reduce adult midge populations. Now, with installation of pumps and electrical service on Wells C and D which was completed in April 2011 and are now in operation, primarily when conditions are typically the driest (August-December) and data from our midge monitoring efforts, we believe water manipulation will reduce midge populations. We will continue to use methoprene as necessary in an integrated approach with water level manipulation to control excessive midge emergence from the Main Pond.

2. Richard and Laverne Stovicek

Comment:

Alternative C simply covers most of our concerns. As I recall, the bypass of the highway going on the east side of the pond was to be completed by 2020. Any news to verify the closing of the Hwy. and N.Kīhei Rd. would be a solution in keeping cars out of this area.

Service Response:

We will pursue discussions with the landowners, A&B and HC&S, to determine if it is a viable option. If the landowners endorse the possibility of a bypass, we can bring HDOT into the conversation for further evaluation. The HDOT was supportive of the proposal when it was proposed in association with a new housing project in Mā'alaea, which did not occur. If the landowners are not in favor of a N.Kīhei Rd. bypass, we will not pursue it.

Comment:

We now know more about the Keālia Pond!! And how very, very interesting. We have lived on Maui for over 30 years and finally know what a wonderful wildlife refuge we have in the Keālia Pond. Five Stars on the Comprehensive Conservation Draft Plan.

Service Response:

We appreciate the support expressed by this comment.

3. Diana Schulte

Comment:

In favor of Alternative C.

Service Response:

We appreciate the support expressed for our preferred Alternative.

4. Pam Daoust

Comment:

On behalf of the Mā'alaea Community Association (MCA) I am commenting here on the Kealia Pond NWR. We strongly support Alternative C. This Alternative appeals the most to us because:

a. It provides for the most comprehensive oversight of this community, island and State resource.
b. It offers the best opportunity for controlling water levels in the Refuge, the key element in the most successful management of the area.

c. It allows for better mitigation of the three nuisance issues associated with the refuge: control of insect populations (midges), control of blowing dust and sediment, and the tilapia problem.

d. It offers the best opportunity for protecting and expanding viable wildlife habitat, controlling alien species and eradicating predators, especially during nesting season.

e. It enhances opportunities for the public to enjoy the area and to participate in volunteer and educational activities.

Service Response:

We appreciate the support expressed for our preferred Alternative.

5. Skippy Hau, DAR

Comment:

I support Alternative C. It provides clear goals and objectives along with Environmental Education expansion for the next 15 years. (3-2) I strongly support a weather station or on-site monitoring and the new education center which should be an integral part in teaching climate and weather. Volunteer projects should be expanded with the Native Hawaiian Plant Society and Maui Botanical Garden (2-37)

Service Response:

We appreciate the support expressed for our preferred Alternative. Maui Nui Botanical Gardens and the Hawaiian Native Plant Society (Maui) have been added to the partnership list. Our list of partners was intended to provide examples and not be exhaustive. We welcome other partnerships to help us achieve the refuge purpose, Refuge System mission, and common goals.

Comment:

Will there be testing for contaminants? What is the status of the wells and possible pesticides and fertilizers coming from the sugarcane fields or the old Pu‘unēnē airfield. These nutrient sources should be identified and used for selected vegetation areas.

Service Response:

Soil and water analyses for Keālia Pond were completed in 2004 with no indication of contaminants in the brackish water wells, piezometers, surface water, and soils, even soil samples taken at the base of streams. Nutrients were also analyzed and were not detected at elevated levels.

Comment:

Are crayfish a serious problem? What about the status of axis deer, cattle egret, and other invasive species?

Service Response:

Crayfish are nonnative but do not pose a problem. They are eaten by ‘alae ke‘oke‘o and also fed to chicks – a good source of protein. Axis deer are on the Refuge; however, they are rarely seen and the staff has not seen evidence of negative impacts. Cattle egrets are a serious problem and we talk more about removal of their roosting areas in Chapter 4.

Comment:

Having Keālia Pond flowing into the ocean could improve estuary conditions for brackish and freshwater organisms. This could also allow tilapia and topminnows to re-infest drainage and gulch in South Maui areas that flow after heavy rain storms. What about the *Na Wai Eha* study?

Service Response:

It would not be appropriate for the Service to re-infest other drainages with nonnative tilapia and topminnows. As long as the ocean currents remain the same, the outlet will remain a sandplug with breaching during heavy rain events and high water.

The legal battle over Na Wai ‘Eha streamflow dates back to 2004, when Maui community groups petitioned the CWRM to restore the Waihe ‘e, North & South Waiehu, ‘Iao, and Waikapū Streams. The final decision in 2009 did not direct any changes to the Waikapū Stream; the flow remained the same as what was designated in 1988.

Comment:

Has the Service considered the possibility of a resident caretaker or the building of a dorm to house visiting researchers or weekend education activities?

Service Response:

Neither of these actions (construction of a dorm or resident caretaker) were considered in this CCP.

Comment:

The Refuge or Rotary Clubs should not be the only ones actively managing the beach and dune areas. Together with the County and HDOT, a long-term management plan would be helpful. The recycled fence needs to be better aligned with dune protection. Dune accretion is allowed to blow across Kīhei Road. Camping and beach activities need to be better managed. What is being planned for the Boardwalk? Is there a landscaping plan? Will alien species removal or establishment of native plants be addressed?

Service Response:

Only a small portion of the dunes lie within the Refuge property. Restoration of the dunes is accomplished in coordination with a number of different agencies and groups (County, A&B Properties, CWD, HDOT, State Planning, Maui College, volunteer groups, etc.).

There is a rough restoration plan for the dunes and Boardwalk areas that includes removal of pest plant species and outplanting of native coastal plants. Replacement of plants is conducted as soon as possible to retain sand. In some areas the sand keeps building up along the vegetation and fence, and it does spill onto the highway. Camping and beach activities are not within our jurisdiction; however, if Refuge staff observes inappropriate use occurring on adjacent A&B Properties, we inform them and they notify/remove the people.

6. Jane Jermain

Comment:

None [of the alternatives] appeal to me!

In the 1970s into the 1980s the midges did not exist. The turtles are only affected by light at specific times but I would suggest putting strong flood lights at the visitor center and use them only at strategic times. Molokini has survived quite nicely without interference by NWR people.

The commenter also suggests reducing Refuge staff to save money; removal of the sandplug to allow tidal action; not pumping water; and removal of N. Kīhei Road.

Service Response:

According to the entomologist at Bishop Museum, the spotted-winged midge was first identified on O'ahu in the early 1940s; however, we have no documentation indicating when the species initially occurred at Keālia Pond NWR on Maui. Although this same entomologist identified it at the Refuge in 1997, it was primarily because they were asked to sample and identify the species, and it is not valid to assume that was the first time they appeared at the Refuge. No matter when they first inhabited the pond, we are presently challenged with managing resources that have changed dramatically from outside sources (e.g., land use, loss of wetlands, and especially introduced nonnative invasive plant and animal species such as the spotted-wing midge). In 2002, we set up large lights around the ponds to deter the midges from going towards the lights at neighboring condominiums; yet, there was not a measureable decrease in midge abundance at the condominiums.

The Refuge has identified methods to control midges; however, it is not feasible or realistic to eradicate them entirely from the wetlands, including other wetlands in Kīhei.

We acknowledge that some residents may not see the value in protecting, preserving, and managing the natural resources, or like to see taxpayer dollars being directed to managing an area that they feel does not benefit them. However, we have strived to develop this plan with the purpose of restoring the wildlife habitat conditions and promoting wildlife-dependent public uses at Keālia Pond to meet our trust responsibility to conserve, manage, and restore fish, wildlife and plant resources for present and future generations of Americans in a cost-effective manner that does not significantly impact the human environment.

7. Fern Duvall

Comment:

Will Molokini remain "in" the State list of "seabird sanctuary system"? Or be managed in a compatible use only? The latter would be to remove it from the sanctuary system.

Service Response:

Once Molokini is established as an overlay refuge, it would no longer be a State-managed seabird sanctuary within the DLNR system. DOFAW's participation would be consultatory and would provide assistance in continuing the seabird monitoring program and development of a native plant restoration plan.

Comment:

CORRECTION NEEDED: *Nothocestrum latifolium* is 'Aiea the native tree; *Nicotiana glauca* is the non-native tree-tobacco. Molokini hosts a population of the tree-tobacco that could well support the Blackburn's Sphinxmoth. Monitoring the tree-tobacco plants for 'ōkai 'aiea should occur. It is LIKELY that they occur on the plants on Molokini. They are known both from Maui and from Kaho'olawe.

Service Response:

A correction was made with insertion of information re: tree tobacco host. We have included monitoring for 'ōkai 'aiea when trips are made for planting.

Comment:

'Iwa are known to regularly predate wedge-tailed shearwater chicks from shallow burrows on Molokini. Up to 163 'Iwa have been counted at Molokini, when the shearwater chicks were young (end of August), hunting and grabbing chicks.

Service Response:

Thank you for sharing your expertise, we have added your sentence to the section.

