



New Headquarters and Visitor Center USFWS

Chapter 5. Refuge Facilities and Public Use Programs

5.1 Refuge Infrastructure and Administrative Facilities

The Refuge headquarters is located at Keālia Pond NWR along the entrance road off of Mokulele Hwy. and includes a new office and visitor center building (HQ/VC), metal storage containers, constructed impoundments, and brackish water wells with pump and appurtenances. The infrastructure and facilities discussed in this section include fences and boundary markers, entrances, roads, trails, administrative and maintenance structures, and water-related structures (Figure 5.1, page 5-5). Facilities associated with specific public use programs (boardwalk, visitor/EE shelter) are discussed in section 5.2.

5.1.1 Headquarters and Visitor Center

The first office (1995) was in a leased building at 101 N. Kīhei Rd., across from the Refuge. In 1997, a double-wide trailer was placed near the Kanuimanu Ponds for the staff. In November 2006, a fire of unknown cause(s) damaged the office beyond repair and a leased office trailer is serving as the base of operations and visitor contact station until a new building is completed. Although operation and maintenance cost of the new building is expected to be more than the original trailer office, its energy efficiency will help minimize those costs.

The new Complex headquarters and Keālia Pond Visitor Center (HQ/VC) was funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. It will become the primary visitor contact station

for the entire Complex. The building is located off the main entrance road and includes administrative offices, an exhibit hall, and multipurpose rooms. The design was based on Leadership in Energy Efficiency and Design (LEED) criteria with the goal of attaining Silver status. Our LEED elements include the use of photovoltaic panels for power and solar hot water system; water-efficient fixtures; design and building placement to take maximum advantage of ambient lighting; and landscaping with native plants.

The new VC exhibits portray the cultural history, ecology, and biology of the Refuge, and include three-dimensional hands-on displays. A multi-purpose room will be available for Refuge-related special events (e.g., guest lecturers and special presentations).

5.1.2 Maintenance Facilities

Our maintenance facilities are comprised of three metal shipping containers that serve as storage for hand and power tools, biological supplies, and maintenance supplies. These containers are set in a fenced maintenance compound where work materials and supplies (pumps, fencing, and carpentry tools), Refuge vehicles, and heavy equipment are also stored. The lack of a covered maintenance garage exposes our fleet and equipment to environmental elements and increased deterioration. Heavy equipment attachments are covered with tarps to provide some protection from the environment.

5.1.3 Trails

The Refuge has two areas accessible for pedestrian use. Although Kanuimanu Ponds and the Keālia Coastal Boardwalk encompass only a small percentage of the total acreage of the Refuge, they do provide quality experiences for the public while minimizing disturbance to endangered and migratory waterbirds.

The Kanuimanu Ponds (20 acres), located at the end of the entrance road, are earthen ponds constructed in 1970 by Global Marine, Co., that later transferred to Pacific Aquaculture Corp. operating as Hawai'i Fish Farm, Inc. The facilities raised freshwater prawns, Chinese catfish, tilapia, and apple snails in the ponds and raceways until 1995, 3 years after Keālia Pond was established as a national wildlife refuge.

The aquaculture operation was terminated by the Service primarily because of the conflict in management practices, including target species requirements for water coverage and depth, and native versus nonnative aquaculture species. Raising fish requires constant high water which limits waterbird use of the ponds, especially for wading birds like the ae'ō. The endangered status of ae'ō and 'ālae ke'oke'o requires us to ensure that management practices are optimal for their foraging, resting, and nesting requirements.

The Kanuimanu Ponds' levees were severely undercut and covered with dense pickleweed and Indian marsh fleabane to an extent that areas had to be closed to the public for safety reasons. In a collaborative effort with Ducks Unlimited, Inc., we implemented a restoration plan to enhance habitat for endangered waterbirds and also maximize visitor experiences in wildlife-dependent activities (e.g., wildlife observation). The removal of pest plants, increased elevation and width, and subsequent planting of native species has resulted in a safer path and creation of more diverse

habitat for endangered waterbirds, throughout the year (e.g., shallow water habitat, better protection from mammalian predators, and chicks' access to adjacent ponds). The earth work was completed in 2004. Outplanting of native species and control of pest plants are continuous projects to maintain the integrity of the levees and habitat quality.

The 2,200-foot-long elevated Keālia Coastal Boardwalk is located off N. Kihei Rd. at Mā‘alaea Flats. The \$2.2 million cost for this boardwalk and parking area was primarily funded by Central Federal Lands Highway Division (CFLHD). We also received funding from other Federal, State, and County agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and local businesses. The purpose of the Boardwalk is to provide public access into an area that is sensitive to pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and prevent illegal entry onto the Flats when waterbirds are present.



Keālia Coastal Boardwalk © Sonny Gamponia

The decking, handrails, and cap rails of the boardwalk are constructed of recycled wood/plastic composite lumber, one of the prime uses for recycled plastic trash bags and waste wood fibers. The composite material contains no toxic chemicals such as those used in conventional treated lumber. Recycled wood/plastic composite lumber typically consists of a 50:50 mix of wood fibers from recovered saw dust and waste plastics that include high-density polyethylene, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), and others. This material has a longer lifespan than solid wood products, which results in lower maintenance and replacement costs, no matter how harsh the environment. Since the official opening of the boardwalk in September 2009, repair needs have been limited to defective boards which were replaced by the manufacturer.

5.1.4 Roads and Parking Areas

The Refuge's main access is the entrance road on a utility easement from A&B off Mokulele Hwy. The 0.5-mile asphalt road leads to the HQ/VC, greenhouse, and Kanuimanu Ponds. Another right-of-entry from A&B is for access to the old Baitfish Ponds through the sugarcane fields; however, this dirt road is not open to the public. Parking areas on the Refuge include the VC (30+ spaces), maintenance area, Kanuimanu Ponds (8 spaces), and the Keālia Coastal Boardwalk (15 spaces and 2 bus parking stalls).

5.1.5 Fences and Gates

The Refuge has both wood and chain-link fences and metal gates to maintain, some of which came with the perpetual conservation easement and, therefore, aged and in need of replacement. Most of these older fences and gates are located at the old Baitfish Ponds site. There are sections of barbed-wire/kiawe-post fences on the Refuge that are remnants of former grazing operations. Other old fences are in the forested areas and have lower priority for removal. Newer fences and gates are located at the Refuge entrance, maintenance area, and the boardwalk. The Refuge boundaries are delineated by signs but not an encompassing fence.

5.1.6 Wells, Pumps, Water Distribution Lines, and Water Control Structure

The priority facilities at the Refuge are the three brackish water wells and sump with associated water distribution lines. These must be kept in proper condition to manipulate water in the Main Pond and constructed ponds, particularly during the driest months. Originally, we used three wells that were constructed in 1970 for the aquaculture facility; however, the 25-foot casings (8 in. pipe) on two of the wells were extremely corroded and required continuous repairs. In 2010, these wells were abandoned and capped, and new wells were drilled. These new wells are outfitted with high-capacity (800 gpm) pumps that are more efficient in energy use and pumping capacity than past pumps. Each pump is tied in to a water distribution line that directs water to different areas of the wetlands: the Kanuimanu Ponds (Well C); the main body of water on the east side (Well A); and the north-central area of the Main Pond (Well D). All wells are 90-100 feet deep and contain brackish water (2-4 ppt salinity) used for wildlife and habitat management purposes.

Installation of pumps and electrical service on Wells C and D was completed in April 2011 and they are now in operation, primarily when conditions are typically the driest (August-December). The wells and pumps are expected to last 20 years, beyond the scope of this CCP.

The old Baitfish Ponds, located on the northwest side of the Refuge were recently (2007) reconfigured to combine the six individual ponds into one management unit. A sump, remnant of the aquaculture facilities, is used to pump water into the pond through a water distribution line. The current setup with a 425-gpm pump is the maximum capacity for drawing water from the relatively shallow (25 ft.) sump and meets the Refuge's needs for that area.

A concrete culvert under the N. Kīhei Rd. bridge connects the main body of water north of the highway to the ocean; however, a sandplug forms naturally and prevents continuous flow. This culvert was likely intended to only pass water through; however, it has become an important component of the Refuge's water management program and capabilities to hold water or release water for the benefit of endangered waterbirds. Ideally, the Refuge would like this culvert to serve as a water control structure with gates and flashboards in order to maintain high water during 'ālae ke'oke'o nesting season and provide the capability of releasing water, as needed. The design for this water control structure has been prepared; however, the estimated \$350,000 in funding for construction has not been provided.

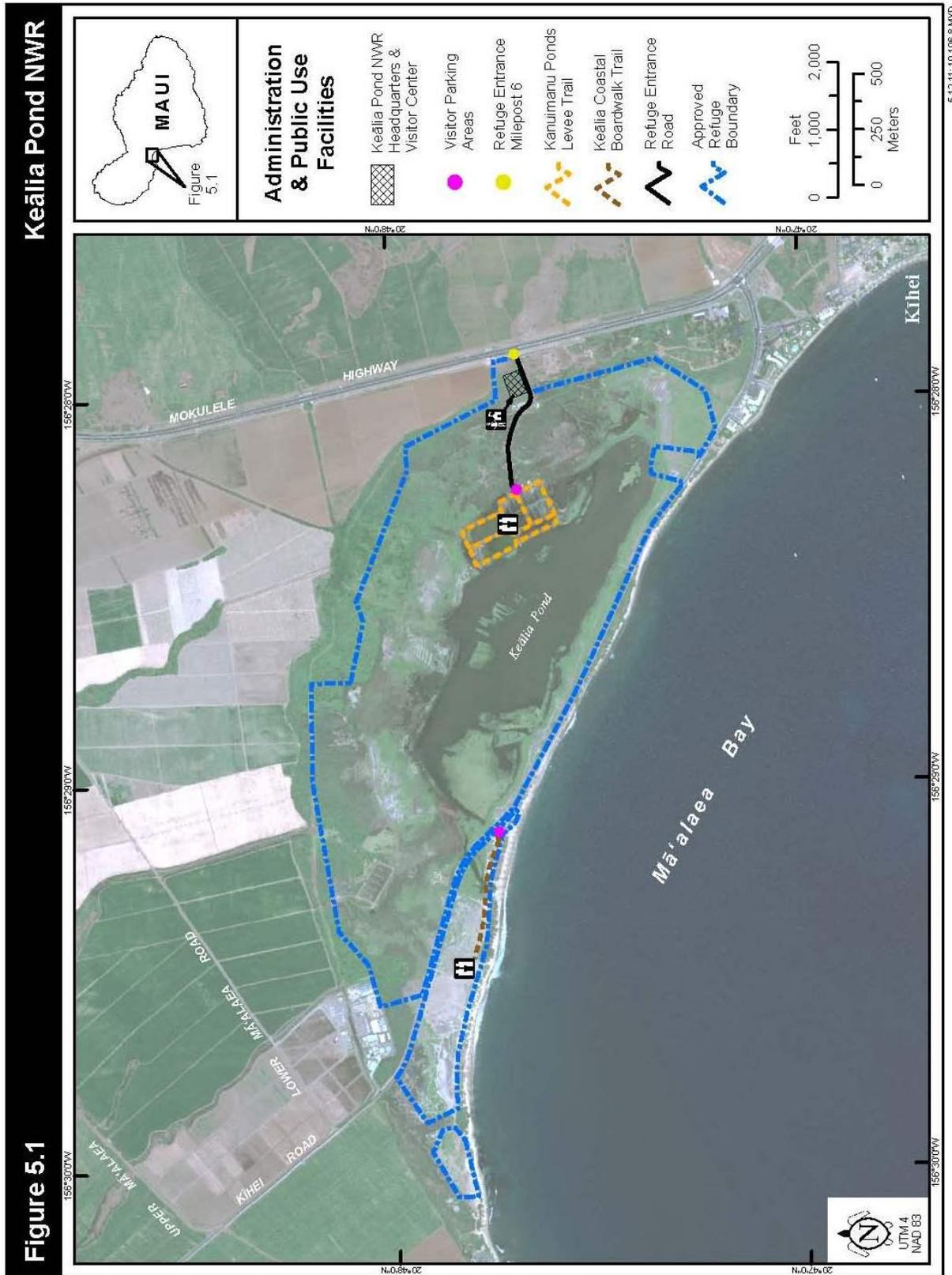


Sandplug between ponds and ocean USFWS

5.1.7 Visitor and Environmental Education Shelter

A 2.5-sided shelter is under construction at the Kanuimanu Ponds on the old office trailer footprint. The steel and wood structure is on a concrete and asphalt pad that allows accessibility to all visitors and will include interpretive panels highlighting the resources the visitor can expect to see. The project is funded by the CFLHD discretionary program and is intended to provide visitors and school groups relief from the sun and wind.

Figure 5.1 – Administration & Public Use Facilities



To preserve the quality of the map, this side was left blank intentionally.

5.2 Visitor Services

When the Refuge was established in 1992, management oversight was from the Hawaiian and Pacific Islands NWR Complex office in Honolulu. The first refuge manager, wildlife biologist, and refuge ranger were hired in 1994 to provide on-site management. At that time, the aquaculture facilities, with buildings, fish tanks, and pumps, were still in operation. The initial priorities were to monitor the resources (primarily waterbird use) and interact with the community. During the first year open to the public (1994-95), 95 visitors came to the Refuge. Visitation has increased to nearly 10,000 in 2009-10, primarily as a result of increased visibility (entrance signs, cleared entrance, and expansion of Molulele Hwy.), outreach (off-site interpretation, special events, and public meetings), and additional structures that are accessible by the public (Keālia Coastal Boardwalk).

The Refuge has the option of closing areas to public access during critical periods of endangered waterbird breeding seasons. In past years, some or all of the Kanuimanu Pond levees have been closed during ae‘o nesting and chick-rearing periods, and to a lesser degree ‘alae ke‘oke‘o nesting season. These closures are temporary and intended to prevent human disturbance to waterbirds and protect the public from aggressive birds protecting their eggs or chicks, primarily ae‘o that are most susceptible to disturbance (April-July). These closures have not totally impaired visitors’ opportunities to view birds as many of the birds are visible from the parking area. Increased numbers of waterbirds nesting in these ponds has resulted in more opportunities to observe birds and their chicks.

The Refuge also has the option of closing all, or portions of, the Keālia Coastal Boardwalk if the public activity is shown to disturb endangered waterbirds. This has not yet been necessary given the current water conditions (e.g., Mā‘alaea Flats becomes dry in June/July) and the minimal, or absent, nesting activity.

Our new visitor services manager has oversight of the public programs including the VC, volunteers, EE, and interpretation. Although a majority of the visitors arrive from the continental United States, the Refuge also receives a large number of international visitors (Canada, Asia, and Europe) and the highest visitation is usually during January-February.

5.2.1 Accessibility of Recreation Sites and Programs

The Keālia Coastal Boardwalk is 8 feet wide and can accommodate 2 passing wheelchairs and slopes are within Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. The new HQ/VC is also designed to meet ADA standards. The earthen levees of the Kanuimanu Ponds have some limitations on accessibility. The levees are wide, flat, and compacted to allow minimal effort for wheelchairs; however, due to the nature of the ponds there aren’t handrails or hold bars available. An advantage at this site is the close proximity of waterbirds to the parking area and start of the levees. All of the Refuge visitor facilities have accessible parking stalls marked for “Placard or Special License Plate Required.”

5.2.2 Special Use Permits

All activities on the Refuge are evaluated to ensure they are compatible with the Refuge purpose. Public use activities include, but are not limited to: wildlife observation, photography, EE, and interpretation. Compatibility Determinations (CD) for these activities were approved in 2004. These CD were updated and included in Appendix B. The areas open to the public are concentrated in a relatively small percentage of the Refuge's total acreage mainly to take advantage of what already existed when the Refuge was established. Wildlife observation and photography are general uses; however, EE programs require a SUP to identify specific activities and general conditions that are allowed while performing the activity, particularly since the programs include sampling for educational purposes.

Periodically, the Refuge receives requests to access the wetlands beyond these public areas for research, photography, or other purposes. If approved by the refuge manager, a SUP is issued. Examples of past approved uses include: outside research projects (universities) and Federal, State, and County investigations (e.g., updating flood zone maps and streamflow surveys).

5.3 Wildlife Observation and Photography

The Kanuimanu Ponds provide the primary wildlife viewing and photography access at the Refuge for visitors. A walking trail around the ponds is an easy stroll and, although it is an earthen path on pond levees, it is accessible to visitors in wheelchairs. Access is permitted when the gate is open and staff is present. These ponds are the most heavily used by visitors, many of whom are birdwatchers and amateur photographers. The highest quality wildlife viewing opportunity occurs August-April when there is a high diversity and abundance of endangered waterbirds and migratory bird species.

The Keālia Coastal Boardwalk at Mā'alaea Flats has interpretive panels and three kiosks that tell the story of the wetland and its ecological and biological functions. The boardwalk includes three ramps that provide access to the beach. Access to the boardwalk is provided year-round (365 days, including Federal holidays) from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Gates were installed to prevent nighttime parking and camping at the facility. The Boardwalk's location off the highway makes it very visible and popular with visitors and residents.

Photography for professional or commercial use on the Refuge requires a SUP.

5.3.1 Desired Future Conditions for Wildlife Observation and Photography

The Refuge has identified additional opportunities for the public to engage in wildlife observation and photography. Viewing into the Main Pond from the Kanuimanu Ponds can be enhanced by creating higher elevation platforms off the levees. This would require widening areas of the levees bordering the Main Pond. This would allow visitors a better vantage point on a relatively flat surface. In addition, photo blinds would benefit photographers and birdwatchers. A vegetated blind was considered; however, woody vegetation impairs the integrity of the levee so our preferred option is to construct a blind that would blend with the environment and withstand the regular tradewinds. Although the location of the boardwalk is beneficial for informing and educating the public, the quality of wildlife observation is low due to the current lack of water management capabilities at

Mā‘alaea Flats. In most years, the Flats are dry from mid-June-December so wildlife observations are limited to the pond outlet. The value of the visitors’ experience can be increased if the Refuge had the capability to maintain shallow water habitat on the Flats during the dry season. This could be accomplished by constructing a well, pump, and waterline on the upper flats.

Parking at the Kanuimanu Ponds is limited and is not likely to accommodate the increased visitation expected with the new HQ/VC. An alternative to driving further down the Refuge road to access the ponds is to walk along the road (0.3 mile) and, in the future, construct a boardwalk from the HQ/VC to the ponds. The path of this boardwalk would traverse through kiawe forest, pass by a small permanent pond on the west side of the road and terminate at the Kanuimanu Pond parking area. This would facilitate interpretation of nonnative passerine birds, pest species, and other related topics.

The Refuge has limitations on opening new areas to public access because our priority is to protect endangered waterbirds. Currently, only the Boardwalk is open 365 days a year. Kanuimanu Ponds and the current office are open Monday-Friday, except for Federal holidays. With additional staff and volunteers, we plan to have the VC and Kanuimanu Ponds open on weekends in the future.

5.4 Interpretation

Interpretation at Keālia Pond NWR is in the form of displays, exhibits, and verbal communication that highlight the ecology, biology, and cultural history of the area to accommodate a diversity of visitor interests. The VC exhibit hall will provide 2- and 3-dimensional displays and hands-on activities for the public. The diversity of topics that can be interpreted on the Refuge includes everything from watersheds to aquatic invertebrates and careers in natural resource fields.

The Keālia Coastal Boardwalk is not staffed so the interpretive panels are essential for informing the public about the resources and the ecological and biological functions that are either visible or hidden from view. A map indicates the location of the HQ where visitors will be able to have one-on-one interaction with Refuge staff and volunteers.

Currently, visitors check-in at the temporary office and are on their own to explore open areas of the Refuge. Interpretive tours are available upon request and are typically given to school or other groups rather than individuals. The tours are designed to meet the needs or interests of the group with the intention of supplementing their in-class curriculum. Most school group tours include hands-on exploration, including: water quality sampling, invertebrate sampling, pest plant removal, and native planting. The interpretive program is popular with groups that are limited on time (2-3 hours) but want participants to experience the natural environment.

Off-Refuge interpretive programs are provided by staff and volunteers, as requested and if time permits. These programs have been held for school groups, County of Maui programs (Kaunoa Senior Center, Parks and Recreation), and Mainland groups (Elderhostel, birding groups).

5.4.1 Desired Future Conditions for the Interpretation Program

We would like to increase outreach to local groups and visitors to direct more attention to the Refuge as an outdoor learning experience. Specialized tours could be developed to meet the needs of the public. This will increase the Refuge’s visibility as part of the community where people can explore the natural resources and gain a sense of stewardship in becoming involved with refuge programs.

5.5 Environmental Education

Our goal is to provide a high-quality EE program with specific learning objectives and diverse hands-on opportunities. We seek to have the students engaged outside where all senses are utilized. Thus, the new HQ/VC does not include an indoor classroom; an EE shelter is located outdoors near wildlife habitat and acts as a staging area. Environmental education (as opposed to interpretation) is a formal program geared towards school curriculum for specific grade levels and compliant with DOE requirements. Our current EE program is minimal due to staff availability to plan, design, and implement an appropriate wetland education program.



Students at Keālia Pond © Jay Franey

In lieu of Service staffing, EE is a collaborative effort with nongovernmental educational organizations that have developed a wetland curriculum based on DOE standards. The organizations that regularly use the Refuge for EE are Hawai‘i Nature Center (since 1997) and Maui Digital Bus (since 2005). Under a SUP, these groups coordinate the schedule and provide the instructors for the school group while the Refuge provides the site. This has proven to be a worthwhile cooperative effort, which brings more than 1,300 students to the Refuge annually. A majority of the students are within the Hawai‘i Nature Center program. Their wetland curriculum is popular with teachers and includes all aspects of the wetlands, including wetland function, bird observations, invertebrates, and biology (food chain, bird behavior, mucking in the mud for invertebrates).

Maui Digital Bus has an innovative program that teaches students the use of technologically advanced equipment, including: water quality dataloggers, digital microscopes, and geographic information system (GIS). A small bus was renovated into a mobile laboratory where students can examine their samples (water, invertebrates), map locations with GPS, and gain hands-on experience using advanced field equipment. This organization is growing in popularity and is continually expanding upon their programs. Currently, the Refuge is working with Maui Digital Bus to formalize an EE program specific to Keālia Pond NWR.

5.5.1 Desired Future Conditions for the Environmental Education Program

Refuge-specific EE programs will be developed for school groups of varying age levels. Development of all programs will include pre- and post-visit materials for the teachers use once they return to the classroom. Teachers’ workshops will be held annually to introduce the teachers to the

opportunities so they can incorporate an onsite visit with their classroom activities. Volunteers would be recruited and trained to assist with the program. All EE programs will have a stewardship component where students would participate in a wetland restoration project. Currently, this includes hand removal of pest plants and outplanting native plants.

A program for upper-level students (9-12th grades) will be developed based on scientific methodology. Students would be given a management issue and within the school year or semester, they would develop the methods to sample, evaluate, and form conclusions to what they observed. Other opportunities will likely become apparent as the Refuge implements programs and receives feedback from teachers and educators. We are open to creating new partnerships for EE with other organizations.

5.6 Volunteers

Refuge volunteers are a vital component to the operations and management of Keālia Pond NWR. Currently, 45-60 volunteers provide over 4,000 hours of labor on the Refuge annually. Our volunteer projects include: Dawn Patrol, habitat management, pest species management, propagation and outplanting of native plant species, maintenance, and interpretation.

5.6.1 Desired Future Conditions for the Volunteer Program

With additional staffing, we will put more effort into recruiting volunteers for all programs (biological, habitat, visitor services, education and interpretation). Development of a Friends group “Friends of Keālia Pond NWR” is a high priority. Through the friends group we plan to recruit and train new volunteers for staffing the VC and Boardwalk. Volunteers will enable us to operate the VC despite our limited staff positions.

5.7 Partnerships

Since 1997, the Refuge has collaborated with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), DAR, and Hawai‘i Wildlife Fund to monitor sea turtles (honu and honu ‘ea) nesting on Maui. As a partner, the Refuge recruits, trains, and manages a group of 40-50 volunteers, called the Dawn Patrol, who are assigned to walk sections of beach from Mā‘alaea to Mākena and Lahaina to Kā‘anapali, June-September. Information on individual nesting females and hatching/emergence success for Maui contributes towards protecting and providing for threatened and endangered marine life, and contributes to the Statewide monitoring effort.

The growing concern and stewardship of Maui’s terrestrial, wetland, and ocean resources has resulted in numerous other collaborative efforts between Federal, State, County, nongovernment organizations, and individuals in the form of partnerships. The Refuge participates in partnerships to share information and work towards common goals of preserving, restoring, and outreaching stewardship opportunities to others. Partnerships are primarily ecosystem based with the common denominators concentrating on shared issues or problems. An increasing effort to combine resources

has brought together the sharing of information and a more cohesive identification of Maui's target issues. Additional partnerships include:

- Southeast Maui Watershed Partnership
- Maui Pest Species Committee
- Maui Conservation Alliance
- Maui Wildland Fire Working Group
- West Nile Virus Working Group
- Hawai'i Pacific Joint Venture
- Maui Conservation Alliance
- Maui Nui Botanical Gardens
- Hawaiian Native Plant Society

5.8 Law Enforcement

The Refuge is located between two urban areas (Kīhei and Mā'alaea) and susceptible to a myriad of law enforcement issues, including theft, vandalism, and trespassing. The highest number of incidents occurs along N. Kīhei Rd. where vehicle accidents occur at least six times per year. All these vehicle accidents have resulted in damage of Federal property: sea turtle fence made of recycled plastic; guardrails maintained by HDOT, and the pipe gates at the boardwalk. Of the accidents reported to the Maui Police Department, contributing causes range from sleeping at the wheel to alcohol consumption. The sea turtle fence has sustained repeated damage from vehicles bumping into it and requires ongoing repair by Refuge staff.

The Keālia Coastal Boardwalk is located within the Refuge boundary; however, it is disconnected from the entrance road making it difficult to monitor. Vandalism to the boardwalk occurs frequently in the form of graffiti, trash dumping, and trespassing during closed hours. Frequent cleanups are needed after trespassers have used the area to party and drink alcohol. In 2007, a bronze turtle sculpture located at the westernmost kiosk was stolen. It was returned to police a couple months later. On another occasion, vandals removed the nuts/bolts of one section of the same kiosk for what appeared to be a jumping-off site for mountain bikes or a motor bike. This is one of the more challenging areas to manage and protect because it is visible from N. Kihei Rd. The gates to the boardwalk are opened at 6:00 a.m. and closed at 7:00 p.m. by a contracted vendor. Although lights may be an advantage to the safety and security of the boardwalk, the Refuge has not installed these due to light pollution, sea turtle nesting season (May-December), and nocturnal seabird concerns.

Theft of Federal property is a continuous concern despite the precautionary measures that are in place. The isolation of the Refuge from surrounding lighted areas has been a disadvantage and there is a high cost of stolen equipment and supplies.

5.8.1 Desired Future Conditions for Law Enforcement

The Refuge will continue to have law enforcement issues, particularly with increased visitation and exposure. The Pacific Islands' Zone Law Enforcement Officer is stationed on O'ahu and is available, as needed; however, due to his/her schedule and availability, the timing is only after an incident has occurred and no apprehension or citations have been given. We have identified the need

to hire a dedicated Refuge Officer for the Complex in our implementation plan (Appendix C) in order to help minimize or prevent incidents from occurring.

5.9 Outdoor Recreational Opportunities and Trends on Maui

The coastal and inland areas surrounding the Keālia Pond NWR have high potential for public recreation. Located adjacent to one of Maui’s main population centers, the area provides easy and safe public access to both the aquatic and terrestrial natural resources. The 1998 Kīhei-Makena Community Plan states that although careful resource management must be employed to protect existing parks, shoreline recreational opportunities and access “must be increased to meet the growing needs of the region and island residents.” In addition to the wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities available on the Refuge, local area recreation includes: beachgoing, picnicking, swimming, diving, fishing, snorkeling, and canoeing (Maciolek 1971).

5.9.1 Federal, State, and County Recreational Parks

There are other Federal, State, and County parks on the Island of Maui that provide different or similar types of opportunities for the public. Two other Federal agencies devoted to natural and cultural resources are located on the Island of Maui: the National Park Service manages Haleakalā National Park, located approximately 40 miles from the Refuge (or 1.5 hour driving) and NOAA oversees the Hawaiian Island Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary from a facility in Kīhei, 3 miles from the Refuge. Many of the Refuge visitors engaging in birdwatching also visit Haleakalā where they can observe native forest birds and pristine Hawaiian forests. As a sister agency, the Refuge welcomes opportunities to collaborate on programs for the public.

Other wetland managed areas on Maui include Kanahā Bird Sanctuary managed by DLNR and Waihe‘e Refuge managed by Maui Coastal Land Trust. Both located on the north shore of Maui. These wetlands complement Keālia Pond NWR biologically (waterbird use) and provide visitors different vantages and experiences.

