

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Division of Forestry and Wildlife
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

September 15, 2008

Chairperson and Members
Natural Area Reserves System Commission
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii

NARS Commission Members:

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH THE OFFICE OF MAUNA KEA MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT HILO FOR COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OF MAUNA KEA ICE AGE NATURAL AREA RESERVE, HAWAII

This submittal requests the Natural Area Reserves (NARS) Commission to approve and recommend to the Board for adoption the proposed cooperative agreement with the University of Hawaii at Hilo Office of Mauna Kea Management for the purpose of cooperative management of Mauna Kea Ice Age Natural Area Reserve, Hawaii.

Background and Discussion: The summit of Mauna Kea is unique and of significant importance to the people of Hawaii for many reasons. The mountain hosts many significant cultural sites and is a focal point of spiritual and cultural significance, a home of deities, and a place of spiritual connection with one's ancestors, history and the heavens. The mountain is an important habitat for rare endemic species, including the wekiu bug and the Hawaiian silversword. Finally, as the highest point in the main Hawaiian islands, Mauna Kea contains unique topographical and geological features such as a high-elevation lake, glacial moraine and meltwater deposits, and glacially sculpted cinder cones and lava flows.

The Mauna Kea Science Reserve (managed by the Office of Mauna Kea Management under the University of Hawaii at Hilo) was established in 1968 for use as a scientific complex and covers 11,288 acres on the summit of Mauna Kea. Guided by the Board of Regent approved 2000 Mauna Kea Science Reserve, the OMKM, with advice from the Mauna Kea Management Board (MKMB) and Kahu Ku Mauna Council, is charged with the protection, preservation and enhancement of the cultural and natural resources of the University of Hawaii's leased lands including the Mauna Kea Science Reserve, summit access road, and Hale Pohaku. OMKM is responsible for day-to-day management, reviewing proposed developments, setting policy, and overseeing commercial tour operations and filming

A portion of the summit containing significant natural, geological, and cultural features (including the Keanakakoi adze quarry, Lake Waiiau, and Pu'u Pohaku) was removed from the Science Reserve to create the Mauna Kea Ice Age Natural Area Reserve (NAR) (managed by the DLNR-DOFAW-NARS) in 1981. The NAR is bounded by the Mauna Kea Science Reserve and the Mauna Kea Forest Reserve (managed by DOFAW-Forestry).

Mauna Kea is visited by a variety of users: scientists, technicians and support staff; visitors; hikers; hunters; winter recreational users; Hawaiian cultural practitioners; media crews; and commercial tour operators. Management of the Science Reserve and the NAR often involves many of the same challenges: increased visitation, litter, lost hikers, unintentional and intentional alteration of the landscape or individual features. The daily presence of OMKM Rangers at the visitor center near the summit provides an invaluable resource for both the Science Reserve and the NAR as a consistent on-site presence.

OMKM Rangers have directly assisted with NARS management by reporting observed violations of NARS rules, sharing information on the hazards of travel at high elevation and monitoring the health and safety of visitors to the NAR, initiating and participating in rescue operations of visitors lost in the NAR, and informing visitors about the natural and cultural resources of the mountain. OMKM and DOFAW-NARS collaborate on resource surveys of the summit area, including natural resource surveys and surveys of cultural resources.

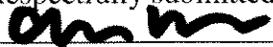
To date, these efforts have occurred informally, and based on their success, the Parties believe that it is appropriate to formalize the relationship, to the benefit of both parties. Significant economic and staffing advantages, and increased effectiveness of monitoring and management actions, such as conservation research, management, protection and recovery efforts, are expected if action is coordinated and shared between DOFAW-NARS and OMKM.

A draft cooperative agreement has been prepared to clarify the roles of the parties and will be submitted to the Board of Land and Natural Resources and the University of Hawaii for approval, subject to approval as to form by the Attorney General's office. A draft of the cooperative agreement will be distributed at the NARS Commission meeting for review, with a request that the NARS Commission recommend that the Board approve entering into such a cooperative agreement, subject to further edits as required by the Board or the University and approval as to form by the Attorney General's office.

Recommendation:

That the NARS Commission approve and recommend to the Board for adoption the proposed cooperative agreement with the University of Hawaii at Hilo Office of Mauna Kea Management for cooperative management at Mauna Kea Ice Age Natural Area Reserve, subject to approval as to form by the Attorney General's office.

Respectfully submitted,



CHRISTEN MITCHELL, Planner
Division of Forestry and Wildlife