State of Hawai`i
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Division of Forestry and Wildlife
Honolulu, Hawai`i 96813

June 4, 2008

Chairperson and Members of the Enhancement Subcommittee
Natural Area Reserves System Commission
State of Hawai`i
Honolulu, Hawai`i

NARS Commission Enhancement Subcommittee Members:

SUBJECT: Previous discussions on NARS Enhancement

BACKGROUND:

To prepare for the June 4 workshop, please review a short summary of the discussions and comments from the individual NARS Enhancement Subcommittee members, as well as from the April 21 NARS Commission meeting.

Since these comments direct the analysis in differing ways, one goal of the workshop is to find consensus on some of these issues, or innovatively find ways to satisfy the differing recommendations. Please come prepared to discuss:

-Should designation and NARS management focus on preserving intact communities or adding un-represented natural communities that may not be as intact?

-If a natural community is protected in a national park, NAPP, etc., should it be a lower priority to include in the NARS, even if it is not represented in the NARS?

-How will we reach out to land managers/scientists/partners to involve them in this analysis?

-How does the land's ownership affect the prioritization of the area?

STAFF ANALYSIS:

Mission

What is the state's role: THE vehicle to conserve or a part of the conservation picture?

Focus on areas that have high need/very threatened/not represented in NARS.

Focus on areas that are intact and are likely to remain intact in the long term.

Framework
Caution on scoring areas numerically or doing a SAP analysis (don't want to forget criteria that cannot be measured numerically).

Instead, have dynamic ways of adding and subtracting maps and have that framework – such as having many maps that can be projected and changed live in a meeting.

On each proposal, do a GIS analysis to see the criteria-filling attributes, and summary of area based on criteria.

Focus on representativeness and scientific value to narrow down areas then focus on ownership and size, etc.

Use existing available data, do not wait for more studies.

Representativeness
Recommended models: TNC Ecoregional plan (10 classes of ecosystems), HI GAP (37 classes), Hawai`i Natural Communities Classification (200+ communities), Endangered species plots (but is constrained to areas w/ access).

Prioritize biological areas over geological areas which are less at risk.

Need redundancy in the system. Most important to identify intact native ecosystems. All areas are under potential threat by ungulates, weeds, and global climate change. High elevation rainforest is the most defensible with climate change factored in, unlike alpine or coastal areas.

Representativeness should not be mapped. In beginning, don't lose any specificity in ecosystem classifications.

Ecosystems (E.g. wet lowland forest) differ between islands, and even within islands, look at different make-ups of insects, birds, and plants.

Scientific Value
Recommended models: HI GAP, DOFAW Vegetation classes, Predicted species richness, TNC Ecoregional plan with the various measures of Viability.

Difficult to do statewide analysis of where most intact native areas are -got to move ahead with what we have.

Tempting to gravitate to "green" (very good viability) areas, but important to look at the yellow/red areas that may be more disturbed, but are the best representative of some ecosystems; therefore they may be of a higher priority, esp if have endangered species (e.g. caves, anchialine pools, geological features).

Ownership
Recommended models: HI GAP with management intent status 1-4, maps of private/state/county/federal lands.

Need a data driven approach for selecting potential NARS areas that would initially ignore property ownership. Once high value areas are ID'ed, then a property filter could be applied to see what areas are already protected, and what areas need protection or management. One benefit would be identifying areas for possible acquisition. Areas already owned by the state could be acted on as appropriate. NARSC can make recommendations that other agencies that control land focus on preserving the important ecosystems identified, or petition to change sub-zone.

How feasible is it to buy new land for the NARS? Where would the money come from?

Need a crude value to the level of protection, can't wait for HCA Effective Conservation.

Number of Areas
Disagreement with the idea that NARS should not contain "unnecessary duplications"of natural communities already managed by other conservation organization – believes there should be much redundancy in System, as well as with other areas managed for conservation. Also, making NARs near other managed lands can leverage resources and provide learning opportunities for how to manage similar ecosystems.

Look at other entities with similar mandates, such as National Park Service (NPS), with perpetual management, etc.; should representativeness be measured only within the NARS and the NAPP or others?

Size of Areas
Models: Maps of forest patch size, TNC's Ecoregional Plan: scored smaller areas as less viable.

Need to have a discussion on the size of areas, and whether to focus on small areas that may be more vulnerable or threats, or larger and less vulnerable areas.

Buffers are good to include.

Restoring areas between intact habitats could allow migration during climate change.

Administrative
Incipient invasive species map not good. Data on distribution of melastomes, nitrogen-fixing species, strawberry guava, feral animals, and fire & volcanic risk could determine threats. However, this data does not exist statewide.

After analysis identifies areas, need to note the infrastructure and easements.

Process
Focus on the roadblocks that prevent addition of NARS, instead of this evaluation.

Need input of others, like branch (make sure feasible), experts, land managers, Invasive Species Councils, and Watershed Partherships. Strategic Plan reiterates the value of Partnerships; learn from them and look at what all are doing together or on adjacent lands; perhaps enhancing this with a Memorandum of Understanding.

In the past, the critical deciding point for proposals was whether they had a proponent. Ask:
What makes an area feasible to manage, for instance attributes of alien species invasions.
Size issues – is smaller more or less appealing, and what is the need for buffers?
What is the local use/opinion of the various areas?

Talk to NARS managers: should more NARS be added in general? Or is it case by case?

Do-ability should possibly be a criteria for adding new NARS. There is a big pushback from forestry for adding new NARS.

DOFAW should have a bigger vision on the role of NARS and management guidelines to make sure the divisions are moving in tandem.

While analysis is conducted, keep moving forward w/ existing nominations. Pick one or two from our current pending list, and do whatever we can to push these forward. Or, move ahead quickly with existing backlog of potential NARS. A more refined process and further analyses will definitely help us do this task in the future, but we already have a lot of information for many extremely important sites that have been nominated or suggested for the NARS and we need to build up some momentum.

Make the point that new NARS means more staff and funding – a role of the NARS Commission is to gather support from the legislature for more funding for the NARS.

RECOMMENDATION:
That the NARS Commission Enhancement Subcommittee discuss these issues and collaboratively work to move the analysis forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Emma Yuen, Planner
Division of Forestry and Wildlife