



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

COUNTY OF MAUI

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

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MAYOR

DAWN CHANG
CHAIRPERSON

JOINT NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 12, 2023

MAUI'S MĀLA WHARF TO REOPEN EARLIER THAN ANTICIPATED *Recreational Boaters Allowed Beginning Saturday*

(LAHAINA, MAUI) – After receiving a trailer from Maui County, this morning, to serve as staff space at Māla Wharf, the facility is reopening much sooner than anticipated. The ramp and facilities will reopen full-time for recreational vessel activity on Saturday, Oct. 14 at 6:00 a.m. People will be able to use the facility to access vessels moored offshore.

The trailer arrived on-site today and will provide temporary office space for harbor agents with the DLNR Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation (DOBOR). A janitorial service cleaned the Māla Wharf restrooms, which have non-potable water. The County of Maui was able to ensure water and wastewater services would be available for facilities at the site.

This morning, DOBOR staff put up signs, created in collaboration with the Hawai'i Dept. of Health, warning people of potential human health risks from exposure to contaminants in ocean water. Ocean water testing results are not in, so it's unknown whether fish caught in these waters are safe to eat.

While the beach, adjacent to the wharf is not under DOBOR jurisdiction, Kapena Bergau and Harold Nakaoka, maintenance workers for the division spent time gathering fire debris, most of it wood with nails or screws visible. DOBOR Administrator Ed Underwood said they and workers from all levels of government are going above and beyond the call of duty to help normalize life in Lāhainā.

“We thought it would take 30 to 60 days to get an office trailer into west Maui, but thanks to the County of Maui, we were able to get one right away. Their assistance in ensuring the availability of restroom facilities and lighting have been invaluable and made the reopening possible. We’re very appreciative of the county’s support in opening Māla Wharf. There has been overwhelming support for doing so,” said DLNR Chair Dawn Chang.

“Reopening Māla Wharf to our local recreational boaters means that our residents will now be able to use the boat ramp daily,” said Mayor Bissen. “I appreciate the efforts of our different County departments who worked together with the State to accelerate the opening. Access to the ocean at Māla Wharf is an important step forward in our recovery efforts and will also give families more opportunity to reconnect with Moloka`i and Lāna`i `ohana by traveling across the channels in their vessels.”

Chang added, “Based upon the updated information, DOBOR has decided to permit limited access to Māla Wharf pursuant to the Governor’s Emergency proclamation, taking into consideration public health and safety, impacts to commercial vessel operators, and the concerns raised by the Lāhainā residents.”

Commercial permittees are being informed by letter of commercial vessel operations opening of Monday, Oct. 16. The following rules apply until further notice and only for current Māla Wharf permit holders.

- Existing Māla Wharf commercial permittees in good standing may access the Māla ramp on weekdays only. It is closed to commercial activity on weekends and all holidays.
- Commercial operators will be required to shuttle their passengers to the facility in order to reduce vehicle traffic in the surrounding area and minimize visitors traveling through fire-impacted areas.
- All permitted shoreline commercial activities will be prohibited due to water quality concerns.
- Shoreline commercial permittees will be notified when their operations can resume.

Any Māla Wharf commercial permit holder who violates any of the conditions could face revocation of their permit.

The safety zone implemented by the United States Coast Guard, which limits ocean access near Māla, and the County of Maui land-side access restriction in and around Māla Wharf will be lifted Saturday.

Chang said, “We appreciate everyone’s patience and understanding as federal, state, and county agencies worked to reopen Māla facilities. We do reserve the right to close Māla down again based on health and safety considerations.”

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RESOURCES

(All images and video courtesy: DLNR)

HD video – Māla Wharf reopening preparations (Oct. 12, 2023):

<https://vimeo.com/873887135>

(Shot sheet/transcriptions attached)

Photographs - Māla Wharf reopening preparations (Oct. 12, 2023):

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/e5l6p2s0t7tgfub4fyqic/h?rlkey=12jv5vecidceqprlrqto7mzrm&dl=0>

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