

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

December 12, 2003

Chairperson and Members  
Board of Land and Natural Resources  
State of Hawaii  
Honolulu, Hawaii

Land Board Members:

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO RELEASE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW  
SAFE HARBOR AGREEMENT FOR THE REINTRODUCTION OF  
THE NENE TO PIIHOLO RANCH, MAUI

Submitted for your consideration is the approval to initiate the public review process, as required by law, for a draft "Safe Harbor Agreement for the Reintroduction of the Nene to Piihola Ranch, Maui." (Attachment I) and accompanying Incidental Take License (Attachment II). This will be the second such Agreement for the reintroduction of nene in Hawaii. In 2001 the Board approved the Safe Harbor Agreement for the reintroduction of nene on Puu O Hoku Ranch on Molokai. That reintroduction effort is proving to be very successful and the same methods will be used to establish a population on Piihola Ranch. Under this Agreement Piihola Ranch will maintain or improve approximately 600 acres of nene habitat on the Ranch for a period of 10 years by continuing cattle ranching operations, thereby maintaining open, short-grass habitat; establish and maintain a nene release pen; control predators around breeding and release sites; and outplant native plant species known to be nene food sources. DLNR will conduct the actual reintroduction of nene raised at the Maui Bird Conservation Center and Ranch staff will provide food and water to the nene while they are in the release pen and assist DLNR in monitoring the population on the Ranch. We anticipate that the available habitat on the Ranch will provide the core areas for nene to become established with a long-term recovery goal of 75 nene on the Ranch.

The Endangered Species Recovery Committee (ESRC) has reviewed the proposed Safe Harbor Agreement and Incidental Take License and their comments are submitted as Attachment III. The ESRC was involved in the development of the Agreement and their comments were incorporated into the document. The ESRC believes that implementation of the agreement will provide a net conservation benefit and did not identify any major issues of concern with the management activities outlined. The Department also concurs that this Agreement will result in a net conservation benefit to the nene.

This request is to start the state public review process. With Board approval, a notice of the availability of the draft Safe Harbor Agreement, ESRC comments, Incidental Take Permit and Board Submittal will be published in the OEQC Bulletin. The Department will solicit public input and hold a public hearing on Maui during the next 60 days. Following the public review process, the Department will revise the Safe Harbor Agreement to make any changes necessary and submit it to the Endangered Species Recovery Committee for their final review. The Committee will provide a recommendation to the Board to accept, amend, or reject the proposal. After that time the Safe Harbor Agreement will be resubmitted to the Board for final consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board authorize the release for public review of the Safe Harbor Agreement for the Reintroduction of the Nene to Piiholo Ranch, Maui and accompanying Incidental Take License.

Respectfully submitted,

MICHAEL G. BUCK  
Administrator

Attachments

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL:

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PETER T. YOUNG, Chairperson  
Board of Land and Natural Resources