

## Iao Valley State Monument – Public Workshop Meeting: March 14, 2019

### Project team summary notes:

1. State Parks stated in a September 2017 public meeting on flood repairs from the Wailuku Stream, it would provide a follow-up presentation to the community after immediate repairs were completed and the next phase of improvements were to start. Accordingly, a follow-up meeting was held on Thursday, March 14, 2019, from 5:00 to 7:00 PM, at the Velma McWayne Santos Community Center in Wailuku. The meeting was intended to be an informational workshop where attendees could review and discuss details on the next phase of proposed improvements for the park. Several stations were set up to provide information to those who may be interested in specific topics such as:
  - Environmental planning;
  - Archaeological and cultural resources;
  - Infrastructure improvements;
  - Slope repairs;
  - Long-range planning for Iao Valley; and
  - Park management.
2. State Parks announced that the workshop format was to provide a means to utilize the meeting time where detailed discussions can occur at the stations with project team members. An opening presentation was given to summarize the next phase of proposed improvements planned for the park, which included: completing the slope stabilization of the parking area along the Wailuku River with soil nails and sculpted shotcrete; undertaking additional slope stabilization to address bank erosion along Kinihapai Stream; improving the parking layout; reopening of the comfort station using a holding tank vault system to contain sewage waste; upgrading the existing water system and utilities; and enhancing the walkway entrance. It was noted that concurrent with the planned improvements, a master plan for Iao Valley was on-going and will provide an opportunity for concerned community members to be involved with the future management of the valley.
3. Some expressed strong concerns that the workshop format was meant to “divide and conquer” the audience whereby preventing their opportunity to question the project; State Parks reiterated that the workshop format was to provide everyone with accurate information about the project and have detailed discussions at the stations to make better use of the limited time. At one point during the meeting, a packet envelope was given to State Parks from a community member who stated that inside the envelope was a signed petition with 1,600 signatures opposing improvements at the park. Upon opening the envelope after the meeting, State Parks noted that the envelope contained a letter to DLNR Chairperson Case, dated July 29, 2018, along with information on the cultural history of Iao, and a collection of printed names and addresses and pages of hand written signatures, but no signed petition. The letter requested Chair Case to conduct a public meeting to discuss the closure of the comfort station and spiritual significance of Iao Valley State Monument prior to any construction. State Parks reached out to this

individual for clarification and it was clarified that the letter packet was the petition. We note that this was the first time seeing this letter to Chair Case. It appeared that the March 14, 2019 meeting resulted as the forum to discuss this issue, as requested by the letter.

4. The main issue of contention at the meeting was the reopening of the comfort station as a symbol of desecration. Discussion centered on the pros and cons of having a comfort station in the park:
  - Some expressed strong concerns that the comfort station in the Iao Valley State Monument desecrates the sacredness of the valley. They believed the State park is located within a sacred area in the valley. They expressed that the County's Kepaniwai Heritage Park location, about one mile downstream, is not in a sacred area and more appropriate for comfort station use.
  - The desecration discussion continued as State Parks explained that the comfort station provides a means to contain human waste, whereas people will urinate and defecate anywhere in the park and adjacent streams if no restrooms were provided. State Parks believed this was more of a desecration and it creates a public health and safety issue; and people will use the bathroom anywhere they have to if none is available.
  - Some attendees stated that visitors should be informed of the cultural value of Iao in the context of its sacredness and the desecration from the comfort station. One attendee stated he knows of kupuna willing to dismantle the comfort station because of this belief.
  - State Parks proposed to reduce and eliminate any impacts to environmental and cultural and archaeological resources in the park by using underground sewage holding tanks designed not to leach any contaminants onto the ground. In 2018, State Parks consulted the State Department of Health on this type of containment system and they agreed it was appropriate due to the proximity to Wailuku Stream. The pumping of holding tanks will be pricey, but State Parks is committed to reduce and eliminate any foreseeable impacts from the comfort station.
  - Those opposed to reopening the comfort station were asked if they had other options besides closure of the facility to address the impacts from continued visitors and park use. No other options were provided.
  - Some stated that portable toilets at the park should be continued as they would be acceptable options to the reopening of the comfort station.
  - Some felt that the improvements only cater to the visitor industry with no regard for local needs. Others remarked that the amount of funds that are used for this project is a waste of money and those funds should be paid to them directly to service their needs as native Hawaiians.
  - Others felt the funding should go to the County to improve and maintain the Kepaniwai comfort stations, which they felt should be the only area in the valley to have comfort stations.

5. Other opinions and concerns that were raised during the meeting are summarized below:

- It was noted that the park is used by visitors, neighbors and locals. Activities in the park have included sightseeing and enjoying the natural ambiance as well as the seedier side of drinking and drug use. Some felt that the only type of activity at the park should be quiet meditation. They continued that the area has suffered from invasive flora and fauna as a result of human activity and disrespect. Unless access can be controlled, any activity in the park even, without a comfort station, will result in “disrespectful” behavior.
- Others felt that the only reason for the proposed project is to get money from tourism. Some believed that the park improvements are motivated by the revenues that will be made from visitor fees currently charged at the park. It was noted that at the 2017 public meeting, Iao has been a visitor destination from the early 1900s and parking and a comfort station have been provided since then. Early visitor promotion referred to the park as the Yosemite of the Pacific.
- Some felt that the temporary shotcrete of the parking area slopes was unsightly and unnecessary. Also, the Kinihapai Stream banks should be stabilized with vegetation (aesthetically more pleasing) instead of rockwall revetments and shotcrete layers.
- A question was raised on how much more will be improved to protect previous improvements, “nature will always take back in the long run”. State Parks reiterated that the slope stabilization and facility and infrastructure improvements are proposed to ensure the health and safety of park users and visitors. Regardless of whether improvements are made, people will continue to come to Iao. Therefore, State Parks has a responsibility to keep park users and visitors safe to the extent possible.

6. After the discussion, only a few of the 30 -40 attendees stayed to visit the information stations. Some visited the long-range planning station which provided a sign-up sheet for future involvement in the master plan. Others were interested in the historic photos of the park facilities at Iao Valley State Monument and the changes in the surrounding areas.