

MANAGEMENT POLICIES
of the
NATURAL AREA RESERVES SYSTEM

Natural Area Reserves System Commission

Division of Forestry and Wildlife

Department of Land and Natural Resources

State of Hawaii

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**MANAGEMENT POLICIES
of the
NATURAL AREA RESERVES SYSTEM**

INTRODUCTION

The policies of the Natural Area Reserves System (NARS) were produced by the Natural Area Reserves System Commission in consultation with Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) staff, to help guide management activities within the NARS. Appendices containing (1) a glossary of terms, (2) relevant statutes, (3) the Reserve designation process, and, (4) Special Use Permit criteria are included.

Required by law (HRS Chapter 195-7), the policies recommend required controls and permitted uses of areas which are part of the Reserves System. The policies will serve as an institutional memory for staff and commission members, and a guide for rulemaking and management plans. Individual management plans for each Natural Area Reserve will be site-specific. Any exceptions to the policies will be articulated in the management plans or by approval of the Board of Land and Natural Resources.

PURPOSE OF THE NATURAL AREA RESERVES SYSTEM

The State of Hawai'i possesses unique geological and volcanological features, and aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals. Many of these resources occur nowhere else in the world and are vulnerable to threats and disturbance. As the State's population grows and more lands are modified, these distinctive natural resources could be lost.

The Natural Area Reserves System was established by Chapter 195 Hawaii Revised Statutes (Appendix B) in 1971 to preserve and protect, in perpetuity, examples of Hawai'i's unique terrestrial and aquatic natural resources, in order that present and future generations may be able to learn about and appreciate these natural assets. In addition, these Reserves were created to provide baselines against which changes to other native ecosystems can be measured. The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) has a mandate to protect Natural Area Reserve lands so that the natural resources remain as unmodified as possible. The process and criteria by which state owned lands are designated as Natural Area Reserves, are outlined in Appendix C.

The Natural Area Reserves System is a program administered by the Division of Forestry

and Wildlife, one of the divisions of the Department of Land and Natural Resources. Members of the Natural Area Reserves System Commission act in an advisory capacity for the Board of Land and Natural Resources, which sets the policies of the Department.

PRIORITIES WITH REGARD TO PUBLIC USE AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

The Department of Land and Natural Resources' highest priority is conservation of natural resources. Only if an activity can be carried out in a way that it does not unduly damage the resource, will it be allowed. Use or activity by the general public will have higher priority than commercial use or activity. Commercial activity will be considered only if its impacts do not impinge on the natural resources and use by the general public. If restrictions or controls need to be imposed, these will first be levied on commercial operators. If limits on commercial operations are insufficient to conserve the resource, general public use will also be curtailed.

Definitions:

Activity - An action that does not involve the changing or alteration of land or water areas, or existing structures on those land or water areas.

Commercial Activity - The collection by a party or their agent of any fee, charge, or other compensation shall make the activity commercial. (Nonprofit status of any group or organization under Internal Revenue or Postal Laws or regulations does not in itself determine whether an event or activity arranged or managed by such a group or organization is noncommercial).

Undue damage or impact would include permanent damage, or those impacts which cannot be economically remedied, given a managing agency's resources.

The policies are divided into Administrative dealing with people, rules, and permits, and Management dealing with on the ground management of plants and animals.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES
for the
STATE OF HAWAII
NATURAL AREA RESERVES SYSTEM

AIRCRAFT USE

- **Official NARS aviation missions in and over Reserves shall be limited to flights needed to support or carry out essential management, research, and educational activities and emergency operations.**
- **Aircraft use by holders of NARS Special Use Permits will comply with all restrictions specified in the Special Use Permit and all applicable FAA regulations.**
- **No use of Reserves for landing and take off by unofficial aircraft will be allowed.**

COLLECTING

- **Collecting will be allowed only if it contributes to knowledge applicable to NARS goals and objectives and only if a Special Use Permit has been obtained.**
- **Collecting for traditional Hawaiian cultural purposes will be allowed only to the extent permitted by law and only if a Special Use Permit has been obtained.**

Scientific collecting is discouraged if specimens may be obtained elsewhere. Deposition of live and preserved specimens will be outlined in the Special Use Permit.

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

- **Commercial activity is prohibited, except by Special Use Permit.**

EDUCATION

- **All organized educational trips require a Special Use Permit.**
- **Areas within the NARS that are appropriate for use in educational activities, such as field trips/outdoor activities, shall be identified in each Reserve Management Plan.**
- **The NARS Program will facilitate and encourage the development and establishment of cooperative environmental education initiatives by various state agencies, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions.**

ENFORCEMENT

- **The Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement (DOCARE) and Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation (DOBOR) shall be primarily responsible for enforcing the laws and rules which fall under their jurisdiction pertaining to the NARS (Chapter 195 sec. 5; Title 11 and 12; Title 13, Chapter 209-sec 1-6).**
- **As appropriate and where feasible, boundaries shall be adequately posted and maintained so that the public is aware of Reserve boundaries.**

SOCIAL CONCERNS

a. Public Access

- **Public access may be controlled, regulated or prohibited in order to manage the impacts of public use of sensitive resources.**

b. Native Hawaiian Rights

- **Native Hawaiian gathering rights will be allowed to the extent permitted by law and only if a Special Use Permit has been obtained. A Special Use Permit helps monitor amounts collected in specific areas and protects gatherers from any public concerns as to why they are conducting such an activity in a protected area.**
- **Consultation with native Hawaiian groups and individuals will be maintained in order that management decisions will reflect a knowledge and understanding by incorporating their concerns in the treatment of affected resources.**

- **NARS Visitation and use of religious and historic sites, and burial places within is permitted. Disturbance of these sites is strictly prohibited.**
- **To the extent consistent with legislation and agency capabilities, the location and nature of sacred sites and resources shall not be disclosed to the general public.**

Native Hawaiians are those persons who are "descendants of native Hawaiians who inhabited the islands prior to 1778". Under Hawai'i's laws and constitution, native Hawaiians possess rights with regard to land and water access and uses that are unique to their group. Since the full extent of these rights and who is entitled to them is not fully defined, policies with regards to native Hawaiian rights are subject to revision. The NARS will need to keep informed of evolving definitions of who is a "Native Hawaiian" and what unique rights he/she is entitled to, in order to comply with the law. Policies with regards to native Hawaiian rights shall be governed by existing laws, as interpreted by the courts.

SPECIAL USE PERMITS

- **Any exception to established policies or rules requires a Special Use Permit. Exceptions include, but are not limited to, the following activities:**
 - A. Education**
 - B. Research**
 - C. Scientific collecting**
 - D. Gathering, including Native Hawaiian Religious and Customary Gathering Rights as permitted by law**
 - E. Exclusive use for Native Hawaiian ceremonies.**
 - F. Commercial**
 - G. Any other activity involving disturbance of the natural environment**

MANAGEMENT POLICIES

for the STATE OF HAWAII
NATURAL AREA RESERVE SYSTEM

AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS MANAGEMENT

a. Freshwater

It is recognized that in some cases a decline in native flora and fauna caused by non-native plants and animals may be noted, but no known or realistic control technology is available or feasible. However, the intent is to ensure that a review and serious consideration of control options is undertaken when a deleterious effect is demonstrated. In all cases priorities for research and/or possible control will be given to habitat-modifying organisms.

- In Reserves, strategies to reduce non-native freshwater plant and animal populations to the lowest possible levels will be employed, unless otherwise indicated (e.g. the possibility that one alien species may prevent more damaging alien invaders).
- Once designated a NAR, the degradation of water quality or non-natural reductions of fresh or brackish flow to streams, wetlands, anchialine pools, or other aquatic ecosystems must be avoided.

b. Marine

- In Reserves, strategies to reduce non-native marine plant and animal populations or other threats to the lowest possible levels will be employed.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

- All wild fires within a Natural Area Reserve, regardless of origin, are to be promptly suppressed.
- Fire control in Reserves shall consist of measures that result in the least amount of impact or disturbance to natural and archaeological resources.
- Fires on State land adjacent to a Reserve shall be suppressed in order to minimize potential effects on the long-term integrity of the Reserve's natural area values. Although minimum impact suppression measures shall be employed to reduce future threats to the Reserve (e.g. weed establishment and seed sources) whenever possible, the overriding primary objective shall

be to keep the fire out of the Reserve.

- A fire management plan based on these policy guidelines shall be part of an overall Management Plan for each Reserve.
- NARS areas are given green designations on fire maps, which trigger a heightened level of suppression response by DOFAW.

While some native species recover well and may even increase their cover after a fire (e.g. pili grass, koa, a'ali'i, sandalwood), the overall effect of fire on native vegetation is disastrous. Even for those that have the ability to regenerate relatively quickly, post-fire vegetative sprouting or seed germination is more likely to be overtaken by faster growing, eventually dominating non-native species. Fire may be used as a management tool and will be addressed on a case by case basis.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) shall review all management plans for a Reserve prior to Board approval.
- SHPO shall review any NARS Special Use Permit application for activity in areas with known historic sites.

TERRESTRIAL NON-NATIVE ANIMALS

It is recognized that in some cases a decline in native flora and fauna caused by non-native animals may be noted, but no known or realistic control technology is available or feasible.

However, the intent is to ensure that a review and serious consideration of control options is undertaken when a deleterious effect is demonstrated. The removal of feral ungulates is an overriding consideration in the management of NARS ecosystems. Terrestrial non-native animals include but are not limited to feral or ranch ungulates (e.g. pigs, goats, deer, sheep, cattle, horses, and donkeys); introduced small mammals (e.g. mongoose, rats, mice, rabbits, cats, dogs); birds (e.g. introduced forest birds, game birds, chickens or jungle fowl); introduced invertebrates (e.g. insects, arachnids, snails, worms); reptiles and amphibians (e.g. Jackson's Chameleon). In all cases priority for research and/or possible control will be given to habitat-modifying organisms.

- In Reserves, strategies to reduce populations of non-native animals to the lowest possible level will be employed.
- Sustained yield management of animals for hunting is contrary to the intent of the NARS.

- **Where practicable, regulated public hunting will be used to control these animals.**

Other control methods (including fencing, trapping, snaring, and aerial shooting) may be used if public hunting does not afford adequate control to achieve population/activity levels, as specified in Management Plans.

TERRESTRIAL NON-NATIVE PLANTS

It is recognized that in some cases a decline in native flora and fauna caused by non-native plants and animals may be noted, but no known or realistic control technology is available or feasible. However, the intent is to ensure that a review and serious consideration of control options is undertaken when a deleterious effect is demonstrated. In all cases priority for research and/or possible control will be given to habitat-modifying organisms.

- **In Reserves, strategies to reduce populations of non-native plants to the lowest possible levels shall be employed.**
- **Managers shall employ a bioregional management strategy.**
- **Strategies to prevent introduction of new non-native plants shall be part of all management activities.**

MANAGEMENT PLANS

- **Management Plans incorporating biological, social, and cultural concerns will be drafted for each Reserve.**
- **Public concerns and input will be obtained through public information meetings and through the Environmental Review Process.**
- **Management Plans will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, as needed, including a checklist of criteria against which any proposed activities in the NAR can be evaluated.**

MONITORING

- **Status of Reserves shall be monitored regularly utilizing DOFAW monitoring protocols. This type of monitoring will provide a basis for tracking overall**

status of the resources and to measure changes over time.

- **Specific management activities shall be monitored to document their effectiveness.**
- **Whenever possible, the local community, including schools and universities, should assist in the gathering of monitoring data.**

The use of standardized monitoring protocols will help provide for comparison between Reserves and of resources that occur in more than one place. Utilizing community members will help information exchange between Division staff and the general public.

RESTORATION

- **The primary approach will be to remove non-native species and let native species regenerate naturally.**
- **In Reserves, strategies to encourage the growth of native plants shall be employed.**
- **Native species may be reintroduced only when it is determined that the Reserve is within the historic range of the species.**

Restoration activities pertain to both plants and animals. Community input and assistance in the restoration of a NAR will be sought where possible.