

Appendix C - Reserve Designation Process

PROCESS FOR DESIGNATION OF NATURAL AREA RESERVES

BACKGROUND

The Natural Area Reserves System Commission is responsible for establishing criteria for selecting Natural Area Reserves. The Commission acts in an **advisory** capacity to the Board of Land and Natural Resources, which makes the actual designations, followed by an Executive Order (EO) signed by the Governor to officially add the reserve to the system. In doing this, the Commission must interpret the purposes of Chapter 195 that establishes the Natural Area Reserves System.

CHAPTER 195-1 Findings and declaration of necessity. The legislature finds and declares that (1) the State of Hawaii possesses unique natural resources, such as geological and volcanological features and distinctive marine and terrestrial plants and animals, many of which occur nowhere else in the world, that are highly vulnerable to loss by the growth of population and technology; (2) these unique natural assets should be protected and preserved, both for the enjoyment of future generations, and to provide base lines against which changes which are being made in the environments of Hawaii can be measured; (3) in order to accomplish these purposes the present system of preserves, sanctuaries and refuges must be strengthened, and additional areas of land and shoreline suitable for preservation should be set aside and administered solely and specifically for the aforesaid purposes; and (4) that a statewide natural area reserves system should be established to preserve in perpetuity specific land and water areas which support communities, as relatively unmodified as possible, of the natural flora and fauna, as well as geological sites, of Hawaii.

There are currently 19 Natural Area Reserves protecting approximately 110,000 acres of Hawaii's most valuable natural heritage. The first, Ahihi-Kinohi'o on Maui was designated in 1973; the latest, Kanaio, also on the island of Maui, was designated in 1991.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING NATURAL AREAS

Adopted by Natural Area Reserves System Commission February 25, 1971.

The Commission asserts that the word "enjoyment" used in the act does not mean on site recreation use, but does mean cultural or scientific enrichment or satisfaction. The Commission has determined that the Natural Area Reserves System shall have the objective of preserving in as natural a condition as practicable, and in perpetuity, areas of land and/or water in the State of Hawaii which (1) form representative units of ecosystems containing the diversity of terrestrial or aquatic biota of the islands, (2) have unique geologic or physiographic significance, or (3) are necessary for preserving endangered species of Hawaiian fauna or flora. Such areas are to be used, as feasible for research in natural sciences, as teaching laboratories, for reservoirs of natural genetic materials (gene pools), or for preserving valuable illustrations of original natural heritage. Resources within Natural Areas are not to be subjected to consumptive use or to experimentation

other than that specifically approved and judged not to be deleterious to the area.

The following criteria are adopted as important guides for the Commission in selecting areas for the Natural Area Reserves System. However, the Commission shall exercise its prerogative of judgment with regard to these criteria and other criteria in selecting and recommending areas to be included in the Natural Area Reserves System.

Representativeness: Each selected Natural Area shall be representative of one or more major, natural, relatively unmodified ecosystems, geologic or physiographic features, or habitats containing endangered species of fauna or flora. The description of a proposed area shall include details of the features that make the area distinctive, unique, significant, or representative. The term representative as applied to ecosystems, shall be interpreted in relation to macroclimatic zonation to ensure a balanced geographic distribution of natural areas as representative ecosystems.

Scientific Value: Each Natural Area shall have significant potential for scientific study, for teaching, for preservation of distinctive biota or other natural features, or for preserving natural genetic material. The description of a proposed area shall include details of the scientific attributes of the area.

Administrative: Each Natural Area shall be identifiable on maps and on the ground. It should be reasonably protectable from pests and from physical damage and, legally, from encroachment. Access to the area should be in conformance with the nature and purpose of the area. Utilities, communication facilities, and other right of way developments should be avoided as much as possible. Administrative or management factors should be detailed in the description of each proposed area.

Size of Areas: Each Natural Area shall be large enough, but no larger than necessary, to accomplish the particular purpose of establishing that Natural Area. A desired size is that which will provide essentially unmodified conditions in the interior portion. The cost and feasibility of protecting the area will have a bearing on the size. Some areas may be less than an acre while others may exceed 10,000 acres, where a special need is demonstrated.

Number of Areas: As many as possible of the major terrestrial and aquatic plant and animal communities and distinctive geologic features on each island should be represented in the Natural Area Reserves System. However, the Natural Area Reserves System shall not include unnecessary duplications of ecosystems or geologic features already protected in Federal Wildlife Refuges, National Parks, or private conservation groups.

Ownership: Natural Areas shall be composed of lands owned or legally controlled by the State in perpetuity. Privately owned areas desired for the Natural Area Reserves System may be obtained by gift, devise, purchase, or eminent domain as specified in the Act. Federal lands shall not be designated as Natural Areas under Act 139.