

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Division of Forestry and Wildlife
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

August 22, 2019

Chairperson and Members
Natural Area Reserves System Commission
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii

Commission Members:

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO RESTRICT ACCESS IN PORTIONS OF THE WEST MAUI NATURAL AREA RESERVE, LIHAU SECTION (TMK (2) 4-8:001:002, por), AS SHOWN IN EXHIBIT 1, FOR A PERIOD OF UP TO TWO YEARS.

BACKGROUND:

Rock climbers are installing hardware and footholds into cliffs in the Lihau section of the West Maui Natural Area Reserve. These activities are impacting threatened and endangered plants such as *Achyranthes splendens* and *Schiedea menziesii*. Some individuals of these species are actually growing under the metal holds and steps pounded into the dry cliff walls of concern. The only known *Hibiscus brackenridgei* West Maui population is in danger of trampling or breakage during the hike to the vertical walls for climbing.

The dry cliffs where this climbing is occurring is an ecosystem defined by USFWS's Critical Habitat designation:

The dry cliff ecosystem is composed of vegetation communities occupying steep slopes (greater than 65 degrees) in areas that receive less than 75 in (190 cm) of rainfall annually, or are in otherwise dry substrate conditions.¹ This ecosystem is found on all of the main Hawaiian Islands except Niihau, and is best represented along the leeward slopes of Lanai and Maui.²

Modifying geological features (such as chipping away rock for footholds) is a prohibited activity under Section 13-209, Hawaii Administrative Rules. The continued use of these walls for rock climbing is further exposing these rare plants to damage.

ANALYSIS:

¹ The Nature Conservancy, 2006. An Ecoregional Assessment of Biodiversity Conservation for the Hawaiian High Islands. <http://www.hawaiiiecoregionplan.info/home.html>

² *Ibid.*

While Natural Area Reserves are generally open to the public, the very close proximity of these climbing routes to rare plant species warrants a closure to prevent further harm to these critically endangered plants. The Division of Forestry and Wildlife recommends closure of cliff areas in the Lihau section of the West Maui Natural Area Reserve, as shown by the attached map which roughly corresponds to areas with slopes greater than 65 degrees. The Division will also install signage explaining to the rock climbing community why these activities threaten the rare plants whose only habitat are dry cliffs.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the NARS Commission recommends approval to restrict access in portions of the West Maui Natural Area Reserve, Lihau Section (TMK (2) 4-8:001:002, por), as shown in Exhibit 1, for a period of up to two years.

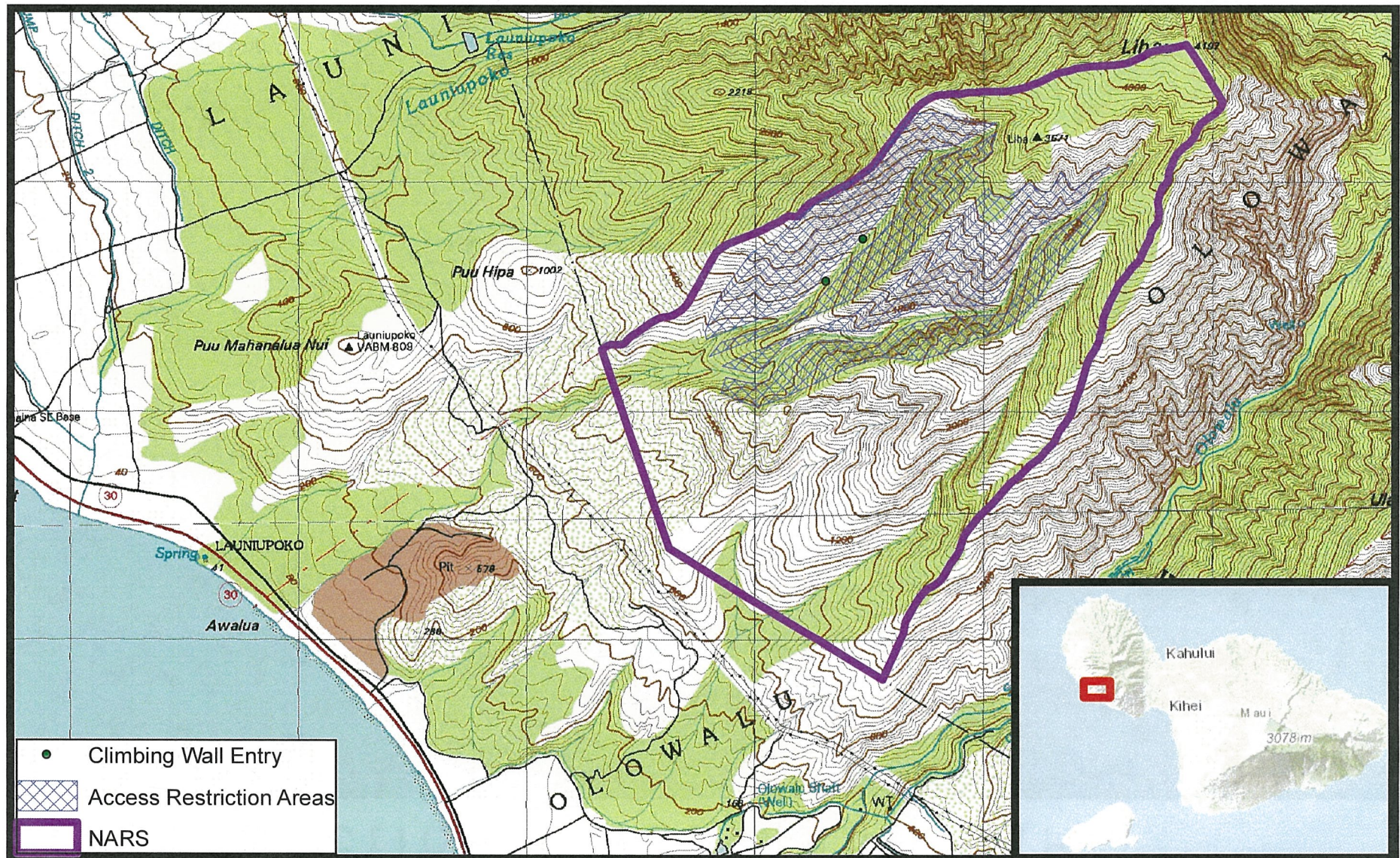
Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. G. Smith', is written over a horizontal line.

for DAVID G. SMITH, Administrator
Division of Forestry and Wildlife

Exhibit 1: Map of Restricted Access Area

Temporary Access Restriction Lihau Section West Maui NAR

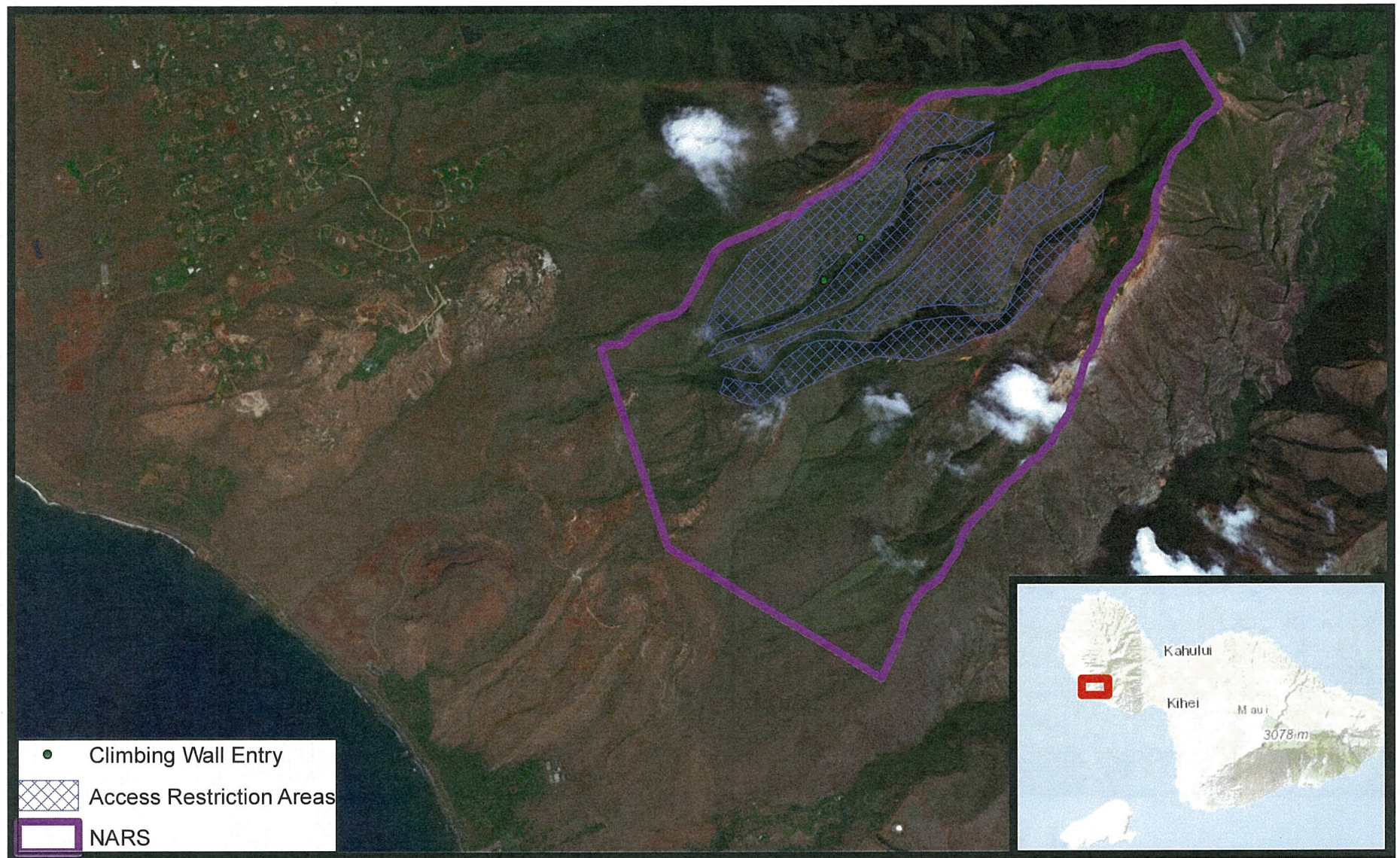


0 0.5 1 2 Miles

DOFAW (808) 587-4170. August 2019. Features approximate and subject to change.



Temporary Access Restriction Lihau Section West Maui NAR



DOFAW (808) 587-4170. August 2019. Features approximate and subject to change.