

Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting

July 7, 2021

Present: Janet Britt (Chair), J.B. Friday (Chair-Elect), Michael Walker (Ex-Officio), Trae Menard, Bart Potter, Seana Walsh, Mathew Cocking, Nicholas Koch, Malia Nanbara, Kalena Blakemore

Staff: Marissa Chee, Tanya Rubenstein, Kylee Wideman, Jade Rhodes, Katie Friday (U.S. Forest Service)

Guests: Jeff Dunster, Raquel Dow, Nicklos Dudley

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00am.

2. Welcome and Introduction of Members

Members were welcomed and introduced.

3. Welcome and Introduction of Guests

Guests were welcomed and introduced.

4. Review and Approval of February 11, 2021 Meeting Minutes

- The Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee (FSAC) reviewed the meeting minutes from the February 11, 2021 meeting.

Motion to approve the February 11, 2021 FSAC meeting minutes. Moved by Member Koch; seconded by Member Potter.

**Approve: Britt, J.B. Friday, Koch, Blakemore, Potter, Nanbara, Walker, Cocking;
Oppose: none; Abstain: Menard, Walsh.**

Motion Passed.

5. FSAC New Chair-Elect

- Member J.B. Friday is current the Chair-Elect and will automatically become the next chair.

Member J.B. Friday nominated Member Menard for the position of Chair-Elect.

**Approve: Britt, J.B. Friday, Koch, Blakemore, Potter, Nanbara, Walker, Cocking,
Walsh; Oppose: none; Abstain: Menard.**

Motion Passed.

6. Forest Stewardship Program

- Staff Rubenstein and Staff K. Friday gave a presentation on the state Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) versus the federal FSP.

- Staff K. Friday explained that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) provides grants to DOFAW that can be used to support FSP, or work on nurseries or state forest lands.
- Both the federal and state programs support planning assistance, as the number of management plans are the most important reportable metric on how successful states are. Federal funds cannot be used for cost-share implementation since other federal agencies, such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), have this role. The state program can provide cost-share assistance for both planning and implementation.
- The state spends approximately \$15-20K/year for planning. The implementation budget is approximately \$250K/year. There are currently 15 projects receiving cost-share support for implementation. The state also spends funds on general administrative costs and travel.
- Some of the metrics the federal program reports on include the number of plans, landowners educated, landowners given technical assistance, and acres treated. Implementation of the FSP varies between states. Hawai'i has a low number of plans since most plans are intensive and require a long approval process.
- The committee's role is to review the Forest Action Plan, Forest Legacy Program proposals, and provide DOFAW with advice on the strategic direction of the program. The federal program does not require the committee to review each proposal and management plan. This is unique to Hawai'i because of the state statute and use of state funding.
- Staff Rubenstein summarized recent and upcoming program changes. The state statute was recently revised. Before any changes can be implemented, the administrative rules must be revised. The program handbook is also being revised. A competitive process for implementation funding was recently put into place due to limited funds. Staff is seeking committee input on the direction of the program and how the application process for landowners can be revised.
- Staff Rubenstein said it has been difficult for staff to provide consistent messaging to applicants on what the committee is looking for. Although projects vary greatly in size, scope and public benefits, the committee has been evaluating all plans with the same criteria.
- Member Nanbara asked if the next step down from a FSP plan would be a conservation plan. If so, the Soil Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) already have the capability to prepare these. If the next step down is even less comprehensive than SWCD plan, she asked if that would provide enough guidance for landowners.
- Member J.B. Friday felt that the level of detail provided in plans are appropriate. He said that proposals have become much more complicated, and the committee can get caught up in the details. He recommended that proposals be simpler and that the committee should be evaluating if the project will develop into something they can support.
- Member Menard felt that smaller projects could have simpler plans that may not necessarily require a professional consultant. He suggested having a cutoff, such as funding or acreage, to distinguish between these two types of plans.
- Member Koch agreed that planning should be appropriate to project scope, and that funding would probably be the easiest way to determine that.
- Staff Rubenstein said that it is sometimes difficult for smaller plans to be approved by the committee since they do not have the same level of impact or public benefit. Although DOFAW is not currently providing cost-share support for implementation, and these

smaller plans would likely not rank high enough if there was funding available, management plans are still valuable for landowners to have. Staff or a subcommittee could pre-review plans to separate plans into different groups or tiers.

- Staff K. Friday said that the committee should also think about the strategic direction of the program, and if there are any initiatives the program can undertake. The program could also address severe natural resource issues or close gaps in what other agencies are unable to do. The issue being tackled will help inform what tools are best to use.
- Staff Rubenstein recommended creating a permitted interaction group (PIG) at the next FSAC meeting to focus on making recommendations on a new strategic direction for the program.

7. Forest Stewardship Management Plans

7.1 Dow, Puna District, Hawai'i County

- Staff Rubenstein stated that this project was reviewed and deferred by the committee at their meeting on February 11, 2021. The project is 23 acres within the Volcano Farm Lots on Hawai'i Island. The landowners are interested in restoring the hapu'u forest. The property is adjacent to Pu'u Maka'ala Natural Area Reserve, near Ola'a Forest Reserve and the National Park. The property is currently forested but heavily impacted by feral pigs. In this version of their plan, the landowners have added information on management units, herbicide alternatives, soils, and implementation.
- Chair Britt was concerned about the goal of removing pigs to eliminate Rapid 'Ohi'a Death (ROD). She also felt that driving pigs out will cause problems for their neighbors. Member Rubenstein explained that there are studies showing that areas without pigs have less incidence of ROD, so protecting trees will decrease vulnerability. Their neighbors are also hunters. Member J.B. Friday added that ROD is much more prevalent in unfenced areas with pigs. The main way ROD is coming into areas is likely when pigs dig up 'ohi'a roots.
- Member J.B. Friday said he did not see the soil series names in the plan. The trail in Pu'u Maka'ala would be a good reference point with intact native forest.
- Member Walker said that fencing will help protect remaining trees from further damage through wounds. He asked why the landowners wanted to use Garlon 3a instead of Garlon 4, and that Garlon 3a has some safety issues.
- Member Menard asked Member J.B. Friday if they should implement sanitation protocol for ROD, and if removing ROD infected trees would help. Member J.B. Friday said he does not think felling trees will help prevent spread, though he recommended felling hazard trees. Sanitization protocols are not necessary if equipment will stay within the property. Fence contractors should adhere to sanitization protocols.
- Member Walker was concerned about the fencing cost being too low since some projects are estimating \$40 per foot. Member Koch said he was involved in fencing projects where the cost ranged from \$7 to \$19 per foot.

Motion to approve the Dow Management Plan, contingent upon comments from the committee being addressed. Moved by Member Menard; seconded by Member Walker.

Approve: Britt, Nanbara, Walker, Koch, Cocking, Blakemore, Potter, Menard, Walsh; Oppose: none; Abstain: J.B. Friday.

Motion Passed.

Continued discussion:

- Staff Rubenstein added that there was another landowner near this property who was interested in applying for FSP but has not developed their plan yet. She asked the committee for ideas on how to address native restoration and feral pig issues in the Farm Lots area through other grants. The Landscape Scale Restoration grant could be a possibility.

7.2 Kamananui, Waialua District, City and County of Honolulu

- Staff Wideman introduced the Kamananui Ranch FSP project, which was previously brought to the committee for review in February 2020. The project vision includes native species restoration, reforestation, creating opportunities for recreation, and mitigating resource concerns including wildfire threat, invasive species, and watershed degradation. The FSP area is 957 acres in the Waialua District on O‘ahu. The revised plan includes more details on fire response, ungulate control, recreation, and activities outside of the intensively managed areas.
- Member Nanbara asked if other management activities will be done outside of the enclosures within the restoration area. Guest Dudley said the topography in this area is complex and that there are a number of threatened and endangered (TE) species. After conducting ground truthing of the topography and presence of TE species, they decided it was more strategic to place fence enclosures in accessible areas with high biodiversity.
- Staff Rubenstein added that landowner is looking at options for long term protection and has begun discussion with the Army and Trust for Public Lands about the potential for a conservation easement through military funding or potentially the Forest Legacy Program (FLP).
- Member J.B. Friday said the names of the community groups they want to work with on recreation should be included in the plan if possible. He felt that thinning at year 2 or 3 is early for koa. He was also concerned about naio thrips on O‘ahu, so any naio should be carefully monitored. The trails for mountain biking and hiking may be too steep.
- Chair Britt agreed that the trails may be too steep and was concerned that hikers and bikers would bring in invasive species. She questioned if the trails were worth installing. Guest Dudley said that 95% of the property is already dominated by invasive species, and that the trail system can provide an opportunity to access areas to manage the invasives.
- Staff K. Friday commented that if the landowner applies for FLP in the future, the plan will need to include more information on the current forest condition and cover, how 75% forest cover would be achieved in 10 years, and project climate change such as changes in rainfall to be approved as a management plan for FLP.
- Member Potter said if Callitris and Australian toon are intended to be removed, there may be some forest industry interest if the trees are a decent size. Guest Dudley said

there are some nice toon in the gulches. He added that the owners are interested in making material available for woodworkers and cultural uses.

- Member Walker had the state botanist review the plan given number of TE species. There is some disparity between the list in the plan versus the biological survey, as well as International Union for Conservation of Species redlist versus US Fish and Wildlife Service listed TE species. The botanist was concerned that the burned areas have not been surveyed, so some TE species may still be there. There was also concern about bat populations how that might impact weed control programs. Member Walker recommended quarterly fence maintenance instead of annual. He was also concerned that it would be difficult for Kamananui staff to keep up with mechanical control versus chemical. Guest Dudley said he agrees, but the owner has organic no-spray values, does not have much experience in Hawai'i. He thought it would be good if a hybrid model of chemical and mechanical control could be used.
- Member Menard felt that the weed control cost is high because of mechanical control, so chemical control would be more cost efficient. He asked DOFAW staff if there is an opportunity to combine the koa planting at Kamananui with reforestation efforts on Maui in their carbon project. He felt it could be an opportunity to combine efforts and integrate the state and private landowners into larger higher leverage carbon projects. Staff Rubenstein said she has not discussed the carbon potential with Guest Dudley yet, but the landowner would probably be open to that.

Motion to approve the Kamananui Ranch Management Plan, contingent upon comments from the committee being addressed. Moved by Member Menard; seconded by Member Walker.

Continued discussion:

- Member Walker reiterated that any activities in reforestation and restoration area need to consider impacts to TE species.
- Member Menard said multiple control methods for weeds should be included somewhere over the course of the plan if possible, especially if there is limited staff. He asked if the committee could review the plan again in a few years. Staff Rubenstein said that we cannot force the landowner to include use of herbicides. Landowners are encouraged to revise their plans around year 5, but it is not required. DOFAW can ask them to survey certain areas for TE species before doing intensive activities.
- Member J.B. Friday recommended they talk with Rich von Wellsheim who also did an FSP project without herbicide. They used mechanical control and visitors from Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms.

Approve: Britt, Nanbara, Walker, Koch, Cocking, Blakemore, Potter, Menard, Walsh; Oppose: none; Abstain: J.B. Friday.

Motion Passed.

8. Na Wai ‘Eha Forest Legacy Program Project Update

- Staff Chee explained that the Na Wa ‘Eha and Haloa ‘Āina Forest Legacy projects were previously approved by the committee a few years ago. Some changes have been made to the projects which require committee approval.
- The Na Wai ‘Eha project, located on Maui, received \$3 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 from the Forest Legacy Program (FLP). At the time of submission, DOFAW did not know that a 843 acre portion was sold. The project area has been reduced to 5,715 acres. The intent is to subdivide out this area. The 843 acre portion is somewhat degraded, therefore the project features remain the same.

Motion to approve the change in acreage to the Na Wai ‘Eha Forest Legacy Project. Moved by Member Menard; seconded by Member Nanbara.

Approve: Britt, Nanbara, Walker, Koch, Cocking, Blakemore, Potter, Menard, Walsh, J.B. Friday; Oppose: none; Abstain: none.

Motion Passed.

9. Haloa ‘Āina Conservation Easement Forest Legacy Program Project Update

- Staff Rubenstein explained that the FSAC reviewed and approved the Haloa ‘Āina FSP plan at last meeting. DOFAW has been in discussion with the landowner regarding the conservation easement (CE). The landowner would like to remove a 30 acre portion easement, which contains a ranch house, sandalwood processing facility, a landing zone, and education center. Removing this area would make monitoring more simplified.
- Member Potter asked if there was a downside to removing the 30 acres from the CE. Staff K. Friday said that although it would be beneficial in terms of monitoring, we will no longer have control of what the landowner does in this area. They will continue to be restricted by the agricultural zoning however.
- Member Blakemore asked who initiated the idea of removing this area from the CE, and if they did so out of concern for liability. Staff Rubenstein said the landowner initiated the removal during the course of negotiating the terms of the easement. She did not believe liability was a primary concern.

Motion to approve the changes to the Haloa ‘Āina Forest Legacy Project. Moved by Member Menard; seconded by Member Nanbara.

Approve: Britt, Nanbara, Walker, Koch, Cocking, Blakemore, Potter, Menard, Walsh, J.B. Friday; Oppose: none; Abstain: none.

Motion Passed.

10. Ongoing Forest Legacy Project Updates

- Staff Rubenstein updated the committee on the status of ongoing FLP projects. The FY17 Helemano project closed and DOFAW is now in the process of working on a management plan. A draft is available, which will inform the next phase of planning which will incorporate community engagement.
- The FY17 Ho‘omau project is in the process of negotiating the CE with the landowner, specifically regarding exclusions and improvements.

- The FY18 Kamehamehenui project closed in August 2020 and is entertaining proposals for a management plan. The process of withdrawing a portion of land from a ranching lease has also been initiated.
- For FY21, the Hawai‘i Koa and Na Wai ‘Eha projects were funded. DOFAW just received the grant awards and are working through the due diligence.
- For FY22 funding, the Hana Highway Coastal Rainforest project ranked very highly. The money has not been appropriated yet. DOFAW will need to raise additional funding.
- Staff K. Friday added that the FY21 Kealakekua Inholding project did not receive funding, however the Washington office is preparing to request that Congress reprogram funding from older failed projects to cover this project.

11. Announcements

- Staff Chee will send a doodle poll later to schedule the next FSAC meeting.

12. Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 12pm.