

HAWAII ISLAND GUIDELINES FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC HAWAIIAN TRAILS (SUBJECT TO REVISION)

(ADOPTED BY NĀ ALA HELE'S HAWAII ISLAND ADVISORY COUNCIL ON MAY 10, 2005. REVISIONS APPROVED ON MAY 23 and NOVEMBER 14, 2012 and JANUARY 16, 2013. PHOTOS UPDATED ON JANUARY 20, 2012)

PURPOSE: *The Nā Ala Hele Hawai'i Island Advisory Council recognizes the need to establish guidelines for consistent treatment of historic Hawaiian trails when developments occur adjacent to them (see attached "Ancient, Historic and Old Government Trails and Roads in Hawaii: A Summary of Pertinent Law"). While each situation poses unique circumstances and every case requires individual consideration, certain guiding principles can be agreed-upon. It is hoped that these guidelines will help with Council decision-making and take some of the guess work out of the process for the Council, developers, State and County agencies and the public. This is a working document that is subject to revision, as we find ways to improve upon it. Please check with the Nā Ala Hele Hawai'i Island program to make sure you are using the most current version.*

► If the Historic Hawaiian Trail Is Under State Jurisdiction, Consultation with the Nā Ala Hele Hawai'i Island Advisory Council Is Highly Recommended

The Hawai'i Statewide Trail and Access System, known as Nā Ala Hele, is part of the Department of Land & Natural Resources' Division of Forestry and Wildlife. The program is required to establish advisory councils to solicit advice and assistance in the implementation of the statewide trail and access system. See attached "Fact Sheet" for more information on the Nā Ala Hele program.

► The Assessments of Trail Values by Nā Ala Hele's Hawai'i Island Program & State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) Differ

SHPD's assessment of the value of a historic trail depends on its physical condition and archaeological integrity. While SHPD recognizes the cultural value of trails, a trail's archaeological value (and SHPD's preservation recommendation) is greatly influenced by its present-day state of preservation and whether it is an integral part of a larger complex that is to be preserved.

Hawai'i Island's Nā Ala Hele (NAH) assessment of the value of a historic trail involves more than its current physical condition. In its assessment of trail values, NAH also considers these factors:

1. evidence that the trail historically existed by examining archaeological reports, historic maps, historic accounts, early surveyors' notes, land deeds, boundary testimonies, and/or cultural impact assessments,
2. whether the trail potentially connects to other trails to form more lengthy routes, and
3. the public purpose served in preserving the trail.

NAH may also recommend "land banking" of trails deemed to have public value when resources are lacking to open them to public use.

► Trail Relocation and/or Destruction

It is the Hawai'i Island NAH Council's (hereinafter "Council") position that no relocation or destruction of historic trails be approved. Any such decision is done on a case-by-case basis, and many factors must be considered. Assessment of the trail's values (see previous section) is done, and council members may visit the subject area as part of decision-making. Council meetings are open to the public, and public opinion re: trail relocation and/or destruction is considered. Cultural experts, the State's Department of the Attorney General, and Nā Ala Hele's abstractor may need to be consulted. Planners, landowners and/or developers are encouraged to contact the Council early in the planning process. This can prevent misunderstandings and potentially costly delays.



► Trail Erosion

When the trail is located in an area vulnerable to potential erosion, provisions for trail relocation in the event of trail erosion should be included in all trail-related agreements and approvals. This is in order to ensure that the negotiated trail will be usable forever. Water diversion techniques, i.e. waterbars, may need to be employed if water runoff is occurring or potential for soil erosion is present. Information on “Best Management Practices” (BMPs) to prevent or correct erosion problems is available through Nā Ala Hele.

◀ Here the trail has been seriously eroded by wave action, and thorny vegetation makes walking precarious.



◀ Hikers are using the relocated trail. The original trail has been eroding away.

► Trail Width

Trail widths vary. There are no standard widths. Sometimes widths are apparent through direct trail observation and archaeological studies. Trail widths can change over time as they are used for different purposes or experience natural forces, such as erosion. Sometimes widths are specified in land deeds, historic maps, or in County permit documents when trail easements are required.



► **Breaches**

The number and width of breaches should be minimized. The original location of the trail should be restored within the breach, using materials that mimic the historic trail surface. In this manner the breached section will be connected to the original trail on either side. Review of planned breaches by the Council is recommended. Planners and developers are encouraged to request time on Council agendas for that purpose.

◀ **This is the recommended breach surface treatment. It resembles the authentic historic surface while enabling road use.**



◀ **The reddish, smooth cobblestone appearance of this surface treatment, does not resemble the historic Hawaiian trail surface as well as the previous example.**

► **Buffer Width**

Buffer widths vary. There are no standard widths. The council recommends widths of more than 15 ft., as measured from the trail's outside edges. This also applies to relocated and restored trails. Buffer widths are determined on a case-by-case basis and consideration is given to the archaeological integrity of the subject trail, surrounding environment, land uses, land ownership, and nearby natural and cultural features. The Council should be consulted early in the planning process.

► **Buffer Treatments**

Whether in its original historic condition or a realigned historic trail, no construction should be allowed within the buffers and the natural, existing terrain and grade should be maintained throughout the buffers. If the trail is in its original historic condition, only hand-clearing within the buffers should be permitted at any time. Roads should not

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be located within trail buffers.

In most instances, it is better to retain the existing vegetation, especially plants that provide shade. It is recommended that no landscaping be done within trail buffers. The trail itself should be kept clear of vegetation. Maintenance of the breaches and buffers is the responsibility of the landowner.



◀ Here are two examples of how open space and natural vegetation along trails have been protected in the midst of resort developments:





◀ Naupaka is a poor choice for landscaping next to the trail. It is difficult to control, requires regular maintenance, and commonly grows into the trail tread.



◀ This water line in a resort property is lying in the buffer of a historic trail. It is recommended that the trail buffer area be kept natural, clear of man-made, artificial features and plants that are not native to the area.

► Treatments Outside of Buffers

Surroundings immediately adjacent to trail buffers greatly influence the trail experience. When trails are near the shoreline, structures (including walls and fences) *ma kai* of the trails are discouraged to protect view planes and the historic ambiance. In some locations the natural lava “skin” may be the best choice if earth moving equipment has not already damaged the natural lava surface. Additionally certain plants can pose a safety hazard or result in undue maintenance requirements. Plants that drop large leaves and/or fruits (e.g., coconuts) or are likely to lean or encroach into the trail’s buffer should be avoided.

Avoid plants that could become invasive, i.e., extensive root systems, exotic ground covers, or prolific seed producers. Choosing native plants naturally growing in the area is likely to be the most practical approach, requiring minimal watering and special care. Be careful not to plant noxious weeds that are naturally occurring, such as fountain grass. Thorny and poisonous plants should also be avoided.

Plant surveys done prior to the area’s development can help to identify naturally occurring plants. Council members may be able to suggest resource people and sources for native plant materials.

► Adjacent Historic, Cultural & Natural Sites and Interpretive Signs

Opening a trail to public use can potentially impact sensitive historic, cultural and natural sites adjacent to the trail. State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) requires management plans showing how potential impacts of public use will be mitigated. In addition impacts to native Hawaiian customary and traditional rights and practices, and the alleviation of those impacts need to be addressed in the management plan.

Burials require special protection. Hawai`i Island’s Burial Council (through SHPD) should be consulted for guidance. Certain cultural and natural sites may need to be closed to the public. It is recommended that those concerns be brought to the Council for recommendations and referrals.

It is essential to educate people about the significance of and proper behavior around trails and sensitive sites nearby. Signage can be effective in this regard. Interpretive signage planned for trails and adjacent sites should be reviewed by the Council. Check if standardized signage has been adopted for the particular area.



◀ **Property pins (especially if set in concrete) that denote parcel boundaries, impact the aesthetic appearance, diminish the integrity of historic sites, and are a potential safety hazard. It is recommended (and is allowed under contemporary surveying practices) to place an offset “witness post,” at a nominal distance away from the actual boundary corner and indicate on the official survey map record, the distance and angle that the actual corner is located, away from the offset “witness post.” This practice meets the legal requirements of identifying the property corner, as well as protecting the integrity of the historic site.**



◀ Signage should be maintained, attractive and not confusing.

► Public Access Control

Historic Hawaiian trails are a special case because traditionally those trails were in use 24 hours/day. The Council supports continuing that practice for historic trails and routes that (1) are connected to a public road or other historic trails or (2) lead to or follow the shoreline. The Council recognizes that situations may arise in which control of public access is necessary.

Privately owned public accesses are commonly open during daylight hours only. In such cases, the Council advocates consistent hours: from sunrise or 6:00 a.m., whichever is earlier, to 1/2 – 1 hour after sunset (allowing time for people to pack up and leave after enjoying the sunset).

► How to Contact the Hawai'i Island NAH Council

The Division of Forestry and Wildlife - Nā Ala Hele office can connect you to whoever is the current chairperson of the Advisory Council (974-4217). You can request to be on the agenda for the Council's monthly meeting. Contact of specific council members is also encouraged.