

POLOLŪ TRAILHEAD MANAGEMENT PLAN

Final Report
SEPTEMBER 2024





Pololū Trailhead Management Plan

Final

September 2024

Prepared by:



Prepared for:



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Mahalo to the families of Pololū who devoted their time, collaborating with us to find a solution for the trailhead. We appreciate your commitment to sharing the stories of Pololū and protecting the valley for future generations.

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Photo by George Bacon, taken some time in the 1940s. William Sproat, the superintendent for the Kohala Ditch system, gazes into Pololū Valley from Kupehau Ridge. Sproat is riding his mule along the Pololū Trail.

Executive Summary

The Pololū Trailhead Management Plan aims to preserve the strong sense of place, scenic landscapes, and the historical and cultural resources of Pololū. The Plan proposes potential solutions for the trailhead with the goal of protecting the resources of this place while perpetuating the way of life that is essential to the people of Kohala, both for present and future generations.

Pololū is a cherished wahi pana located on the northeastern corner of the island of Hawai‘i, in the district of North Kohala, adjacent to the ahupua‘a of Mekanikahio. This place is deeply intertwined with Hawaiian heritage and legends, representing a connection to the ‘āina and to ancestors. Pololū also offers a place for spiritual reflection and an opportunity to reconnect with nature. It is a vital functional space for local families, serving as their backyard resource for subsistence and for grounding themselves through cultural protocols. Pololū is also one of many “overly loved” places by visitors, recognized as a “hotspot”¹ by the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority’s *Hawai‘i Island Destination Action Plan* in 2021. Visitors are drawn to this place to enjoy its stunning beauty and dramatic coastline, lush green cliffs, pristine black sand beach, and breathtaking vistas.

Various efforts and initiatives have been proposed to address the issues caused by the overwhelming number of visitors to this rural area—as many as 1,000 visitors in one day—but there has been no resolution as to what the “best plan” should be. In 2022, Townscape, Inc., Environmental and Community Planners, was contracted by the Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program under the State Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) to assist in developing a management plan for the Pololū Trailhead. This management plan has been developed with extensive input from families of the surrounding villages, individuals with intimate knowledge of the area, and residents from the broader community who share a connection to the place. Community consultations consisted of a range of one-on-one, small group, and general community meetings.

Once a hidden gem, the popularity of Pololū has likely been exacerbated by the influence of social media, drawing an increasing number of visitors to its picturesque cliffs and beach. Following a period of reduced travel during the COVID-19 pandemic and a subsequent noticeable surge in the number of visitors driven by the phenomenon of “revenge travel,” resulting impacts include illegal parking, degradation of cultural and natural resources, parking congestion, disregard for private property, and loss of sense of place.

The Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program within the State DLNR DOFAW is responsible for the management of the historic Pololū trail and the trailhead. Based on data collected by the trail stewards in 2023, the trailhead received on average 597 daily visitors, including both out-of-state visitors and Hawai‘i residents. The number of visitors to the trailhead is generally unmanaged, limited by the availability of parking spaces at the current trailhead/lookout that is within the State DLNR DOFAW’s jurisdiction and “available” parking found anywhere on both sides of the roadway on ‘Akoni Pule Highway leading up to the trailhead. The trailhead/lookout

¹ A “hotspot” is defined as an area “that attracts visitors due to its popularity, and may result in overcrowding, congestion, degradation of resources, safety hazards, and a negative experience for both the resident and visitor.” (Hawai‘i Tourism Authority, 2021)

is roughly 6,300 square feet—about 0.14 acres—that was originally designed as the “road’s end” of ‘Akoni Pule Highway, now a roadway under the jurisdiction of the County of Hawai‘i Department of Public Works.

Over time, the trailhead has been used as a “lookout” area with unofficial parking stalls that can accommodate up to 12 vehicles. However, up to 40 vehicles have been observed parking along both sides of ‘Akoni Pule Highway from the trailhead to as far as a quarter mile up the road. It is important to note that vehicles parked along the roadway near the trailhead are often on private property and not within the road right-of-way, making such parking illegal. Like many other places throughout Hawai‘i Island, the State of Hawai‘i, and worldwide, the period of reduced travel during the pandemic allowed communities and entities to reassess the impacts of tourism and to evaluate control measures such as visitor capacities, managed reservations, and visitor fees. While visitor control measures implemented at other popular places were reviewed, only some elements were deemed applicable for Pololū. There are also certain implementation challenges because of the limited land in the vicinity of the trailhead currently under the jurisdiction of the State DLNR DOFAW. Management actions funded by the State DLNR DOFAW can only be implemented on lands over which they have jurisdiction or with an existing agreement with the landowner.

Issues highlighted during community talk story sessions included trail and ocean safety and rescues, sanitation, resource degradation, lack of cultural awareness, roadway congestion and parking, overcrowding and impacts to the local way of life, trespassing and liability, commercial use, and various unpermitted activities. Townscape explored a range of possible solutions, including site planning/engineering improvements, educational measures, and enforcement strategies. While all of these potential solutions could address the issues, not all were applicable to Pololū. A preferred scenario, referred to as the Heritage Center, for the Pololū Trailhead area is presented in this management plan. It integrates the following elements to address the issues at the trailhead while protecting the valley’s resources, and is consistent with past community efforts to protect and preserve the natural, undeveloped character of this area:

- ◆ Develop and conduct targeted public educational outreach.
- ◆ Continue the trail steward program which has proven to be an effective management tool to educate visitors and reduce the number of emergency responses.
- ◆ Provide portable toilets to address sanitary concerns, as the closest public restrooms are more than two miles away at Kēōkea Beach Park.
- ◆ Re-designate the current lookout area for cultural/special access to honor this wahi pana and provide space for local families to engage in cultural practices.
- ◆ Provide parking for approximately 20 vehicles plus two designated stalls for on-duty trail stewards.
 - Parking for Hawai‘i residents will be available without fees or reservations. However, non-Hawai‘i residents will need to make an advance reservation, which will incur a fee. Reservations are open to everyone.
- ◆ Designate and enforce “No Parking” zones along ‘Akoni Pule Highway.
- ◆ Restore and maintain the historic trail, including restricting public use as needed to steward resources.

The implementation of the Heritage Center scenario requires DLNR DOFAW to acquire part of Tax Map Key 5-2-001:002 (42.02 acres), commonly referred to as the mule station. The

relatively flat area near the roadway within this parcel would serve as the designated parking area. The existing structure would be repurposed as a Heritage Center, intended to provide a gathering space for the community and an interpretive space to educate visitors on the cultural significance of Pololū. Furthermore, the scenic views from the mule station parcel would become the new lookout, thereby reducing the number of people at the current lookout and providing space for local residents to engage in cultural protocols.

Although the heritage center scenario would occupy less than an acre, the community has emphasized its longstanding commitment to preserving undeveloped coastal lands and open space. They wish to maintain these values for the remainder of the parcel. Note that the mule station parcel was sold in fee-simple from Surety Kohala Corporation (Surety) to a private landowner in May 2024, during the drafting of this management plan. Since Surety was not seeking to subdivide the property, initial community discussions included prioritizing community-led efforts focused on food sustainability, native plant restoration, and conservation for the rest of the parcel.

A rough order of magnitude cost estimate for the proposed heritage center scenario is approximately \$706,000 for land acquisition and site improvements, in addition to a recurring annual operating cost of \$292,000 for maintenance, portable toilets, and trail stewards.

The long-term oversight of this area involves adaptive management, given the potential for unintended consequences or shifts in residents' needs. Successful implementation and enforcement of proposed solutions require cooperation and partnerships with key entities, along with working closely with the community. It is important to note that the implementation of this management plan may result in increased use of other areas of Hawai'i Island, including sensitive wahi pana that could potentially experience adverse impacts if left unmanaged.

Many of the issues addressed in this management plan are discussed in the context of Pololū, but are also encountered in other locations across the island and the State. Certain issues, such as cyclist-vehicle collisions and speeding along the roadway, were outside of Townscape's scope of work and/or State DLNR DOFAW's jurisdiction and therefore were not included as part of the solutions presented in this Plan. Nevertheless, broader discussions about responsible tourism and environmental management are crucial and should involve various entities at both the State and County levels.

Upon completing the final management plan, an environmental assessment in accordance with the requirements of Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 343 will be conducted. DLNR DOFAW will need to acquire land for plan implementation and secure funding for professional services to plan, design and construct site improvements, as well as obtain necessary permits and approvals. As DLNR DOFAW seeks to acquire the land area required to implement the heritage center scenario, the interim plan should focus on increasing educational outreach and securing an area for portable toilets. Concurrently, securing funding for the trail steward program beyond 2026 is a priority, given the crucial role of the trail stewards in educating visitors about the cultural and historic significance of this wahi pana.

Figure 1. Project Location



PROJECT LOCATION MAP

Pololū Valley Trailhead
 North Kohala, Hawai'i
 January 2023



- Nā Ala Hele Trail
- Pololū Stream
- Streams
- 100ft contours
- Pololū Ahupua'a
- Ahupua'a Divisions
- Pololū Trailhead
- Parcel boundaries
- 'Akoni Pule Highway
- Kohala Forest Reserve
- State land

Prepared by:



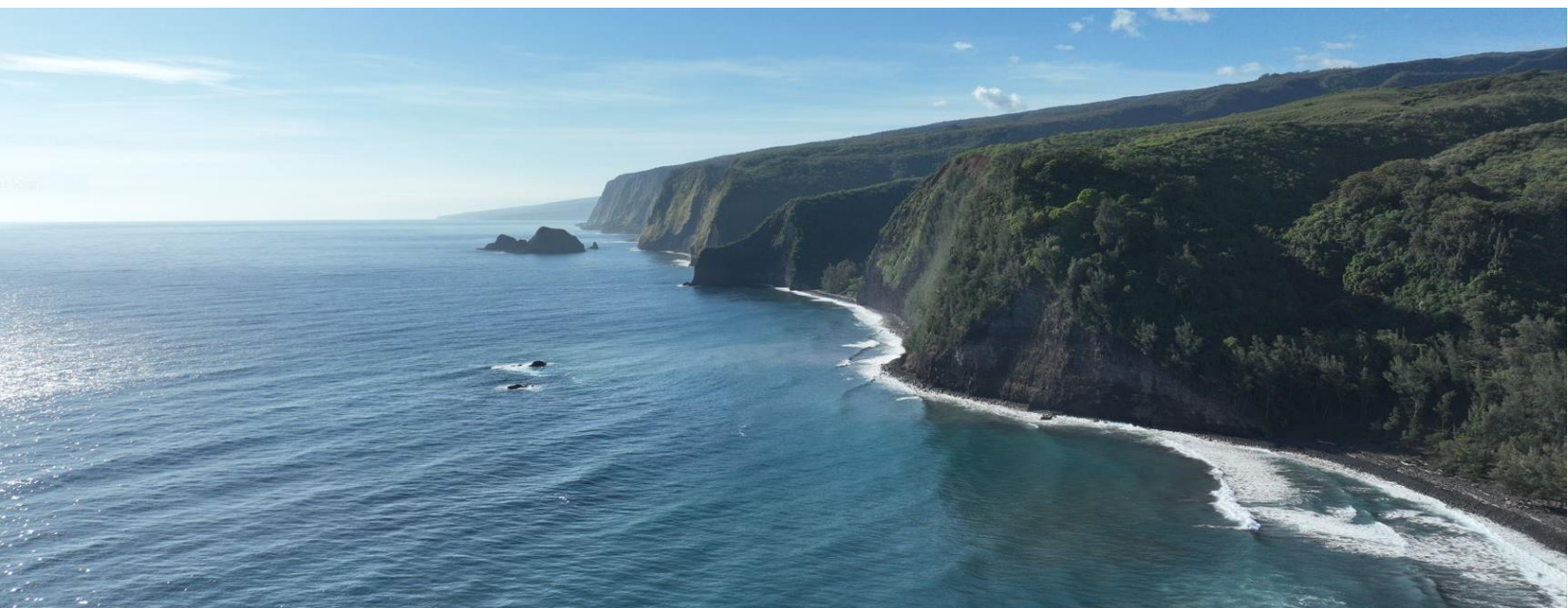
1 Introduction

Pololū Trailhead, located at the end of ‘Akoni Pule Highway, is situated adjacent to the ahupua‘a of Makanikahio, district of North Kohala, on the island of Hawai‘i. The trailhead consists of roughly 6,300 square feet that was originally designed as the “road’s end”, but over time has been used as a “lookout” area with unofficial parking stalls that can accommodate up to 12 vehicles. From the trailhead, one can access Pololū Trail, an unpaved historic trail, which provides access to Pololū and other valleys along this coast. Many people are drawn to this place to enjoy its stunning beauty and dramatic coastline, lush green cliffs, pristine black sand beach, and breathtaking vistas. Pololū Valley, one of many overly loved places by travelers, was recognized as a “hotspot”² by the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority’s *Hawai‘i Island Destination Action Plan* in 2021.

Besides its natural beauty, Pololū Valley has significant meaning for local residents as both a cherished wahi pana and a place rich in cultural and historic importance. This place is deeply intertwined with Hawaiian heritage and legends, representing a connection to the ‘āina and ancestors. These valleys played an important role in Kamehameha I’s childhood; its walls hid and protected him so that he could grow up to unite the Hawaiian Islands. Significant cultural sites including iwi kūpuna remain in this valley.

Pololū also offers a place for spiritual reflection and an opportunity to reconnect with nature. It serves as a vital functional space for local

“My favorite memory of Pololū is when I was younger the parking lot would be empty early in the morning and I’d walk down with my family to watch the sunrise, while my older cousins would be out there sponging and me and my other cousins would play in the beautiful black sand.”



² A “hotspot” is defined as an area “that attracts visitors due to its popularity, and may result in overcrowding, congestion, degradation of resources, safety hazards, and a negative experience for both the resident and visitor.” (Hawai‘i Tourism Authority, 2021)

families, serving as their backyard resource for subsistence and for grounding themselves through cultural protocols. The nearby coastal waters host a variety of marine life that supports gathering and fishing activities for families in the nearby villages, while the valley's forest serves as hunting grounds for wild pigs.

For other families, visiting Pololū Valley is an integral part of their morning routine. The view of Kohala's expansive windward valleys is a source of inspiration and tranquility; it serves as a reminder of the past. Pololū Valley continues to play an important role in supporting the traditions, practices, and way of life for generations of Kohala families.

Over the years, Pololū Valley, which was once a hidden gem, has seen an increasing number of visitors drawn to its picturesque cliffs and beach. The popularity of this place is likely exacerbated by the influence of social media, while the noticeable surge in the number of visitors following the COVID-19 pandemic driven by the phenomenon of "revenge travel" has been particularly felt by the rural community near Pololū. Increased numbers of visitors have resulted in impacts such as illegal parking, degradation of cultural and natural resources, disregard for private property, and loss of sense of place.

Like many other places throughout Hawai'i Island, the State, and worldwide, the period of reduced travel during the pandemic allowed communities and entities to reassess the impacts of tourism and to evaluate control measures such as visitor capacities, managed reservations, and visitor fees. For Hawai'i, the dramatic decrease in visitor numbers offered residents an opportunity to reconnect with their island "playground" and to reclaim many of the spaces that had been gradually overrun by crowds over the years.

Since the pandemic, several popular visitor destinations in Hawai'i (such as Hā'ena State Park on the north shore of Kaua'i) have successfully implemented control measures to better manage visitor levels. As a result, both residents and visitors enjoy an improved experience while maintaining space for residents to continue to visit their special places. Overall, there has been an evolving and emerging movement to place emphasis on educating visitors and minimizing their impacts, while protecting the quality of life of residents and the sensitive resources of the place.

The existing trailhead at Pololū lacks the appropriate infrastructure to support current visitor demands. In 2023, about 597 people visited Pololū daily, with the highest recorded count of 1,482 in January (according to data collected by the trail stewards). Several efforts and initiatives, including from the North Kohala Community Development Plan (CDP) Action Committee, have been proposed to address the issues caused by the high number of visitors to this area. However, there has been no resolution as to the "best plan" to implement.

In November 2022, the State Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program, who has jurisdiction over Pololū Trail and the trailhead, contracted with Townscape, Inc., Environmental and Community Planners, to assist in developing this management plan. This planning process, funded through the 2021 State Legislature, engaged kūpuna, descendants of the place, cultural practitioners, and residents, to explore alternatives and develop stewardship solutions to better manage the issues at the trailhead.

1.1 Planning Area & Agency Jurisdiction

For the purposes of this management plan, references to the “trailhead” includes the roughly 6,300 square feet of unofficial parking stalls that can accommodate up to 12 vehicles, which also functions as the “lookout”.

Pololū Trail is roughly half a mile long and descends quickly from an elevation of 420 feet mean sea level to the valley floor, where the Nā Ala Hele-managed trail ends near the river mouth (see Figure 2).

Jurisdictional boundaries are as follow:

- ◆ The trailhead and the majority of Pololū Valley (excluding parcels on the valley floor owned by several private landowners) fall within the Kohala Forest Reserve (Pololū Section), managed by the State DLNR DOFAW.
- ◆ The trail itself falls under the purview of the State DLNR DOFAW Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program.
- ◆ The roadway leading to the trailhead, ‘Akoni Pule Highway, is under the jurisdiction of the County of Hawai‘i Department of Public Works (DPW).

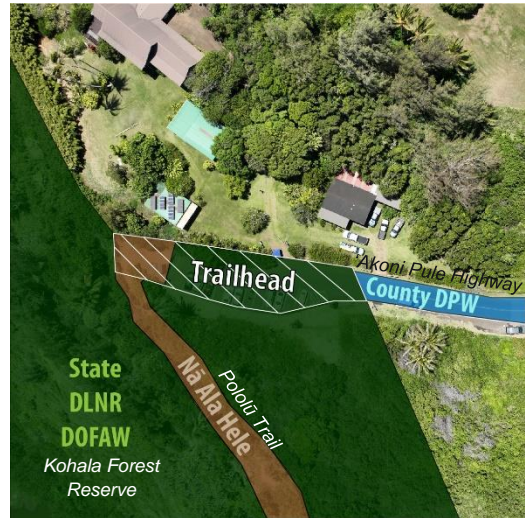


Figure 2. Conceptual illustration of jurisdictional boundaries near the trailhead

Management actions funded by DLNR DOFAW can only be implemented on lands over which they have jurisdiction.

State Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program

The State Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program was created in 1988 to manage public resources related to public access. As outlined in Hawai‘i Administrative Rules (HAR) §13-130-1, the purpose of the program is:

“to preserve and perpetuate the integrity, condition, naturalness, and beauty of the trails or accesses and surrounding areas; to protect cultural and environmental resources; to provide safety for trail and access users; to preserve the quality of the intended experience for trail and access users; to mitigate conflicts between competing activities and users; to ensure public access consistent with the above; and to regulate commercial activity that is consistent with the purposes above.”

The authority to limit use is established under HAR §13-130-19, Trail and Access Activity Restrictions. It states the following:

“An authorized representative may temporarily close a program trail or access, and may restrict the days and hours of public usage of, or numbers of persons allowed access to, or the types of uses or activities allowed on any trail, access, or segment and any such restrictions shall be posted on the trail access or portion thereof:

- (1) In the event of an emergency or public safety reasons;
- (2) In order to address imminent threat of harm to a trail, natural resource, or person;

- (3) To comply with the requirements of agreements made with private landowners or lessees who permit access to program trails through their land;
- (4) To mitigate user impacts upon the trail surface, historic and culturally sensitive areas, or environmentally sensitive areas;
- (5) To minimize incompatible uses in the same area, e.g., horseback riding and motorcycle ride, or hiking and bicycle riding;
- (6) To manage and control periods of use of a program trail.

An authorized representative may require a trail use permit for use of any restricted program trail access or portion thereof.”

Nā Ala Hele Designation

Program trails are classified as Urban, Rural, Wildland, Sensitive, or other similar classification based on the function of the trail, the type of trail, the actual or desired use intensity, the desired condition of the environmental or historical setting; the recreational setting, the quality and nature of the expected experience, the degree of physical modification to the environment, the accessibility of the trail, the mode of transportation for which the trail is intended, and the type of ancillary and complementary facilities (HAR §13-130-19). Under this classification, Pololū Trail has been designated as a “**sensitive**” trail.

The guidelines for trails designated as “sensitive” are described in the 1991 Nā Ala Hele Program Plan as follows:

Description: Trails or access which are sensitive to human disturbance due to natural or archaeological features.

Intent: To provide public access to important cultural and educational resources. While incorporation into Nā Ala Hele means a commitment to some form of public access, the primary concern in management of these areas and of the trails/accesses in them should be protection of sensitive resources, including native flora and fauna, historic trails, and other archaeological features.

Accessibility: Due to their educational potential, attempts should be made to provide access for all ages and abilities to at least some trails and accesses classified as sensitive. Access may need to be controlled via permits, number limitations, or restrictions limiting use to daylight hours only, and special provisions may need to be made for activities such as sport and subsistence hunting.

Facilities: These trails will not feature extensive recreational amenities and will generally incorporate only those facilities which are necessary to protect the resource (i.e., restrooms, boardwalks, signs, etc.).

1.2 Planning Process

The planning process for this management plan involved the major phases that have been or will be carried out by the planning team as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Planning Process



Information Gathering

The initial phase of this planning process included understanding the important resources of Pololū and completing a thorough analysis of issues and challenges that need to be considered for the place. Information was gathered to help the project team understand the current landscape, including planning, regulatory, historical, cultural, economic, and community elements. The planning team reviewed data based on existing publicly available documents and met with individuals knowledgeable about specific topics.

Community Talk Stories

Between November 2022 and April 2023, Townscape staff conducted talk story sessions with more than 100 individuals in one-on-one or small group settings. These discussions included families from the surrounding villages, individuals with intimate knowledge of the area, and residents from the broader community who share a connection to the place. Meetings were also conducted with adjacent landowners,

elected officials, and government agencies. Most of these talk story sessions were conducted in-person, except for some via videoconference. Through these community talk stories, the planning team was able to capture the community vision for Pololū and understand key community values critical in shaping the proposed stewardship solutions. Following the initial series of talk story sessions, Townscape staff worked closely with the residents of the villages surrounding Pololū to identify alternative scenarios to address the issues at the trailhead.

Community Meetings

Two general community meetings were held for this management plan. Meeting notes from the community meetings are available on the [Project Website](#) and in Appendix A.

◆ **Community Meeting #1:**

A general community meeting was held in-person and via videoconference. The in-person meeting was conducted on Thursday, April 27, 2023 at the North Kohala Intergenerational Center in Kapaʻau. The purpose of the meeting was to share a draft vision and issues for the trailhead and to gather input from the community on potential solutions to address these issues. A



Community members provide input during the first community meeting in April 2023.

total of 78 participants signed-in although many attendees who came as part of a larger group did not all individually sign in. The virtual community meeting was held five days later on Tuesday, May 2, 2023 via Zoom. Approximately 22 participants joined the meeting online or called in by phone. The virtual meeting followed the same format as the in-person meeting.

- ◆ **Community Meeting #2:** A second general community meeting was held in-person on Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at the North Kohala Intergenerational Center in Kapaʻau to present the Draft Plan and to gather input. A virtual community meeting was conducted a week later via Zoom. Approximately 100 participants attended either the in-person or virtual meeting.

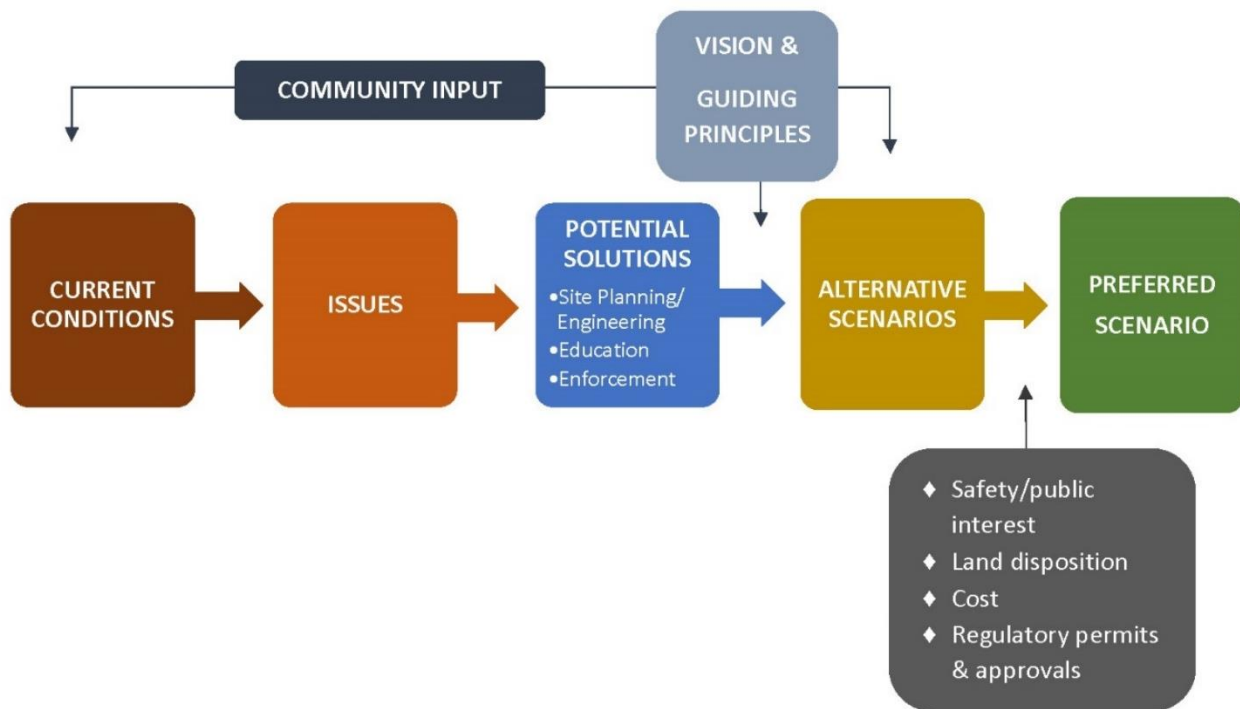
Chapter 343 Environmental Review

Upon completing the final management plan, an environmental assessment in accordance with the requirements of Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 343 will be conducted. The purpose of the environmental assessment is to disclose any impacts the proposed actions may have on the environment and any measures proposed to mitigate those impacts. The environmental review process will involve consultations prior to conducting the assessment and a 30-day comment period initiated after the publication of the Draft Environmental Assessment, during which the general public will have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the plan and its potential impacts on the environment.

1.3 Planning Approach

This management plan was developed following the planning approach illustrated in Figure 4. By engaging in community talk stories, the planning team gained a better understanding of the current conditions at the trailhead and identified key issues impacting it. Following the community talk stories, Townscape explored a range of potential solutions, including site planning/engineering improvements, educational measures, and enforcement strategies. While all of these options could address the issues, not all were suitable for Pololū. Therefore, several alternative scenarios aligned with the community’s vision and guiding principles were developed. Although the scope of this management plan is limited to resolving the issues at the trailhead, it is essential to adopt a holistic perspective when considering solutions. This approach recognizes the community’s longstanding commitment to protecting and preserving open space resources, as well as the broader sentiment to “Keep Kohala, Kohala.” The preferred scenario outlined in this report factors in considerations such as safety and public interest, land disposition, cost, and adherence to regulatory permits and approvals.

Figure 4. Planning Approach for the Pololū Trailhead Management Plan



1.4 Overview of Relevant Plans & Initiatives

This management plan considers existing plans that guide the long-range use of this area, including the County's General Plan and the North Kohala CDP. The County's General Plan guides future long-range development for the entire county based on the vision, values, and priorities of its residents, while the North Kohala CDP is tailored to the specific needs of North Kohala, articulating the vision and values of its residents for their community. Within the North Kohala CDP, priority issues are identified, and strategies and action programs are developed to address them.

County of Hawai'i General Plan

The County is currently updating the General Plan, which was adopted in 2005. In July 2024, the County released the Final Recommended Draft General Plan 2045.

Below is a list of goals and objectives from the 2005 General Plan that are relevant to the development of the management plan for the Pololū Trailhead. As part of the environmental review process following this management plan, a more detailed review of the proposed project in relation to the Final Recommended Draft General Plan 2045 (July 2024) will be conducted.

- **Economic**

- 2.2 Goals

- (a) Provide residents with opportunities to improve their quality of life through economic development that enhances the County's natural and social environments.

- 2.3 Policies

- (c) Encourage the development of a visitor industry that is in harmony with the social, physical, and economic goals of the residents of the County.

- **Environmental Quality**

- 4.2 Goals

- (a) Define the most desirable use of land within the County that achieves an ecological balance providing residents and visitors the quality of life and an environment in which the natural resources of the island are viable and sustainable.
 - (b) Maintain and, if feasible, improve the existing environmental quality of the island
 - (c) Control pollution.

- 4.3 Policies

- (a) Take positive action to further maintain the quality of the environment.

- **Historic Sites**

- 6.2 Goals

- (a) Protect, restore, and enhance the sites, buildings, and objects of significant historical and cultural importance to Hawai'i.
 - (c) Enhance the understanding of man's place on the landscape by understanding the system of ahupua'a.

- **Natural Beauty**

- 7.2 Goals

- (a) Protect, preserve and enhance the quality of areas endowed with natural beauty, including the quality of coastal scenic resources.
 - (b) Protect scenic vistas and view planes from becoming obstructed.
 - (c) Maximize opportunities for present and future generations to appreciate and enjoy natural and scenic beauty.

- 7.3 Policies

- (h) Protect the views of areas endowed with natural beauty by carefully considering the effects of proposed construction during all land use reviews.
 - (i) Do not allow incompatible construction in areas of natural beauty.

- **Natural Resources and Shoreline**

- 8.2 Goals

- (a) Protect and conserve the natural resources from undue exploitation, encroachment and damage.
 - (b) Provide opportunities for recreational, economic, and educational needs without despoiling or endangering natural resources.
 - (c) Protect and promote the prudent use of Hawai'i's unique, fragile, and significant environmental and natural resources.
 - (d) Protect rare or endangered species and habitats native to Hawai'i.
 - (e) Protect and effectively manage Hawai'i's open space, watersheds, shoreline, and natural areas.

- 8.3 Policies

- (a) Require users of natural resources to conduct their activities in a manner that avoids or minimizes adverse effects on the environment.

- **Public Facilities**

- 10.1. 2 Goal

- (a) Encourage the provision of public facilities that effectively service community and visitor needs and seek ways of improving public service through better and more functional facilities in keeping with the environmental and aesthetic concerns of the community.

- **Recreation**

- 12.2 Goal

- (b) Maintain the natural beauty of recreation areas.

- 12.3 Policies

- (c) Recreational facilities shall reflect the natural, historic, and cultural character of the area.
 - (d) The use of land adjoining recreation areas shall be compatible with community values, physical resources, and recreation potential.
 - (j) Develop local citizen leadership and participation in recreation planning, maintenance, and programming.
 - (u) Provide access to public hunting areas.

*North Kohala Community
Development Plan*

The North Kohala CDP, finalized and enacted as a County Ordinance in 2008, was created to express the visions, values, and priority issues of the North Kohala Community. It translates and implements the broad goals of the County's General Plan on a regional basis. The CDP was developed through an extensive public participation process from 2006 to 2008, which included over 1,000 participants through steering committees, focus groups, and general community meetings.

NORTH KOHALA'S VISION

We are a community that respects, preserves and honors our history, our land, and our diverse culture. We value access to our shores, our forests, and our streams.

We have a broad range of programs for our youth that includes work on the land. We have good social services, recreation, health, and education.

We are friendly and hard working people, which enables us to continue to build our small businesses and create jobs as part of our sustainable economic development.

We have a strong community voice in the development of affordable housing, the use of our land, and the development of alternative energy sources.

'Ohana and the Spirit of Aloha are the foundations of our community.

The Overall Goal of the North Kohala CDP is:

"To manage the future growth of the district in a manner that is consistent with the Kohala lifestyle and ideals of being a rural community with a strong cultural heritage, an agricultural base, and a small town feel."

The North Kohala CDP identifies four priority issues: Growth Management, Access, Affordable Housing, and Infrastructure and Community Facilities.

The general goal for Growth Management is to "direct North Kohala's growth to areas within and near existing town centers in order to preserve the district's open space and cultural resources; and to promote agriculture." Strategy 1.2 under Growth Management states to "acquire coastal lands that should be preserved as open space."

The general goal for Access is "to provide for community access to mauka and makai resources." Four priority public accesses are identified under Strategy 2.1, including from "Pololū to Kapanai'a." It states as an action item to: "Encourage the County to pursue shoreline lateral trail access from the Pololū lookout to Kēōkea Park and from Kēōkea to Kapanai'a by working with Kamehameha Schools and other private land owners."

Strategy 2.6 is to "Implement a long-range plan for achieving adequate public access to both coastal areas and to the mountains..." The North Kohala CDP describes several trails and accesses identified by the community. Most are either traditional, have been in existence for many years, or are newly created through easements as a requirement for permits or subdivisions. However, some of the trails identified by the community are not necessarily access ways that have been negotiated by the County Planning Department in their permit requirements. The following access ways were identified in the vicinity of the trailhead:

- *Coastline trail and drivable mauka-makai access – A trail that starts at the beach in Pololū Valley and follows the coastline of the district to Kawaihae. The trail*

would be for pedestrian access use except for the already existing vehicular lateral roads.

- *Mountain trail and drivable mauka-makai access – The North Kohala Access Focus group recommends a road (Wylie Blvd) that traverses the northern upper slopes of the district just below the forest reserve from Pololū Valley to the Kohala Mountain Road at the old Pu‘u o Kumau Reservoir and beyond be re-established for public use. This road was a well-used field road for the sugar plantation, was unrestricted and widely used to access hunting, gathering and recreation areas prior to the 1980s.*

The following **Key Policies for North Kohala** are applicable to Pololū:

1. **Cultural and Historical Preservation Community** – All future land use decisions for North Kohala shall be in keeping with the heritage and cultural significance of Kohala.
2. **Rural character** – Recognize North Kohala as a Rural Community that should not experience significant urban/suburban development that impacts population growth.
5. **Special Management Area (SMA) Rules** – Consideration of the cultural and environmental sensitivity of North Kohala shall be given to all proposed projects in the SMA areas.

The North Kohala community has an overall Advisory Group, with eight subcommittees, that meet monthly to implement the CDP and to identify new issues and concerns of Kohala residents.

Previous planning efforts

In the early 1990s, the DLNR Division of State Parks proposed establishing a major state park and wildlife sanctuary for the ‘Āko‘ako‘a Point-Pololū area due to the exceptional heritage and wildland recreation values of the Kohala Cliff and Valley. The proposed park was envisioned with three management areas: the ‘Āko‘ako‘a Point section, the Wai‘āpuka tunnel section, and the Pololū section. A series of scenic lookouts was proposed for the cliffside with signboards placed at the lookouts interpreting the cultural and natural history of the area. Additionally, there would be opportunities for picnicking and camping.

Based on a review of historical correspondence and memos at the DLNR Division of State Parks, it appears that the establishment of this major Kohala State Park was a recommendation from the Office of State Planning’s West Hawai‘i Regional Plan, completed in 1989. The Regional Plan identified the need to “establish more public parks or park reserves in places with high outdoor recreation resource potential.” Six sites were recommended for West Hawai‘i, including two areas in the vicinity of the Pololū Trailhead: 1) the Kohala Cliff and Valley and 2) ‘Āko‘ako‘a Point.

A preliminary concept plan dated 1991, proposed by the landowner at the time, also featured hiking and interpretive trails, numerous picnic areas and developed campgrounds spanning the area between the trailhead leading to ‘Āko‘ako‘a Point. Several potential parking sites were identified on the preliminary concept plan along with a dedicated viewing area. A roadway off of ‘Akoni Pule Highway provided direct access to a visitor center/restaurant near the cliff.

“Solution should honor the rural nature of the area and not be a substantial renovation with abundant parking, a fancy pavilion, a restaurant or sidewalks or curbs.”

Retrieved from notes from two preliminary meetings held by the North Kohala Community Development Plan Action Committee in 2011 and 2016.

The unwavering dedication of generations of Kohala families has been instrumental in identifying and preserving coastal lands for open space conservation. Through the North Kohala CDP Action Committee in the early 2010s, the Parks, Water, & Roads subcommittee group, held a series of meetings with stakeholders, including the State Department of Transportation and DLNR to address the issues at Pololū. The Action Committee identified the immediate need for restrooms, parking, and emergency communication at the trailhead. Another series of meetings were held by the Action Committee between 2016 and 2018 to identify possible alternatives for long-term improvements at the Pololū Valley lookout. Notes from some of these meetings are included in Appendix B.

In 2017, some community members sought to nominate two coastal parcels, encompassing some of the area near the trailhead, to be acquired by the County for land preservation using the County’s Public Access, Open Space, and Natural Resources Preservation Fund. However, the application was subsequently withdrawn due to opposition.

Around 2018, discussions with the private landowner, Surety Kohala Corporation (Surety), regarding the potential donation of the valley floor and five acres on the mauka side of ‘Akoni Pule Highway near the trailhead (TMK 5-2-001:003) to the State DLNR DOFAW were initiated. Although some community members expressed interest in using the five acres for a parking lot and comfort station, this concept did not garner full community support. The donation of the parcel was also tied to a proposed consolidation and re-subdivision request for lands along the Pololū ridgeline, a proposal that also faced opposition from many community members.

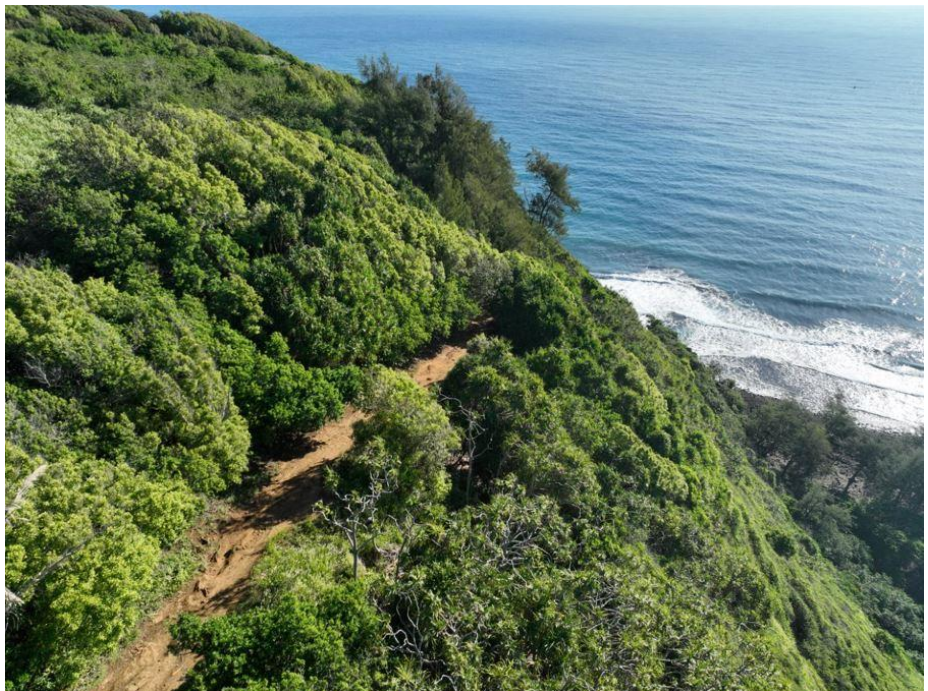
In early 2021, a community grassroots effort to “Protect Pololū” was initiated in response to the proposed parcel consolidation and re-subdivision. The efforts of Protect Pololū have been focused on protecting Pololū through public education and land stewardship, including facilitating several trail maintenance and restoration workdays each year at Pololū.

2 Pololū Trail

2.1 Description

Pololū Trail is roughly half a mile long and descends rapidly from an elevation of 420 feet, through a series of switchbacks, to where the trail ends along the valley floor. A mix of invasive and native vegetation borders both sides of the trail. Native vegetation include hala (*Pandanus tectorius*), kauna'oa (*Cuscuta sandwichiana*), and 'ūlei (*Osteomeles anthyllidifolia*). The trail is primarily unpaved, with historic cobble stones still embedded in sections of the trail. Another feature to note is the historic retaining walls that were constructed in the mid-1800s when the original foot trail was converted into a mule trail. The maintained section of the trail ends at the valley floor before the river mouth. While the trail continuing past the sand dunes and up to the next valley over is a public trail, it is not managed by the Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program.

(Top) View of the beginning of Pololū Trail with a rapid descent from the trailhead; (Bottom) A section of the historic trail after a switchback.





(Top) Historic retaining wall along the trail; (Bottom) Historic cobble stones embedded in sections of the trail.

2.2 Trail Right of Way

The Pololū Trail was originally part of the *ala hele* (or *ala loa*), the ancient trail system that ran parallel to the coast around most of the island. It connected communities and allowed for trading and gathering from different *ahupua'a*. Hawaiians have had a long tradition of using trails to access subsistence resources. Even today, residents of North Kohala still use the Pololū Trail to access valuable hunting and fishing grounds.

Traditionally, land in Hawai'i was not privately owned. Ali'i governed over the land and established laws and rules to protect the resources in perpetuity, but people could move freely among *ahupua'a*. This all changed with the arrival of Western influences, which led to a series of changes in land ownership, beginning with The Great Māhele of 1848. This transition to private land ownership brought the challenge of land fragmentation, often making it difficult for Hawaiian families to access subsistence resources. In 1892, Queen Lili'uokalani recognized the need to protect public access through private lands and passed a law to ensure that certain trails and roads would remain open to all. This Highways Act stated that "all roads, alleys, streets, ways, lanes, courts, places, trails and bridges in the Hawaiian Islands, whether now or hereafter opened, laid out or built by the Government, or by private parties, and dedicated or abandoned to the public as a highway, are hereby declared to be public highways" (Gulick, 1892). This legislation is upheld today under Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 264-1, Public highways and trails.

Regardless of whether or not a traditional trail exists on the ground physically, it still remains a public right of way. This right of way only applies, however, to the trail's original alignment and not to any realignments made over time.

3 Resources of Pololū Valley

3.1 Cultural & Historic Context of Pololū Valley

The information presented in this section is summarized from Schweitzer and Gomes (2003). A more detailed history of Pololū can be found in their book, *Kohala 'Āina*. Citations are provided for additional sources that supplement the writing below.

Early Inhabitants

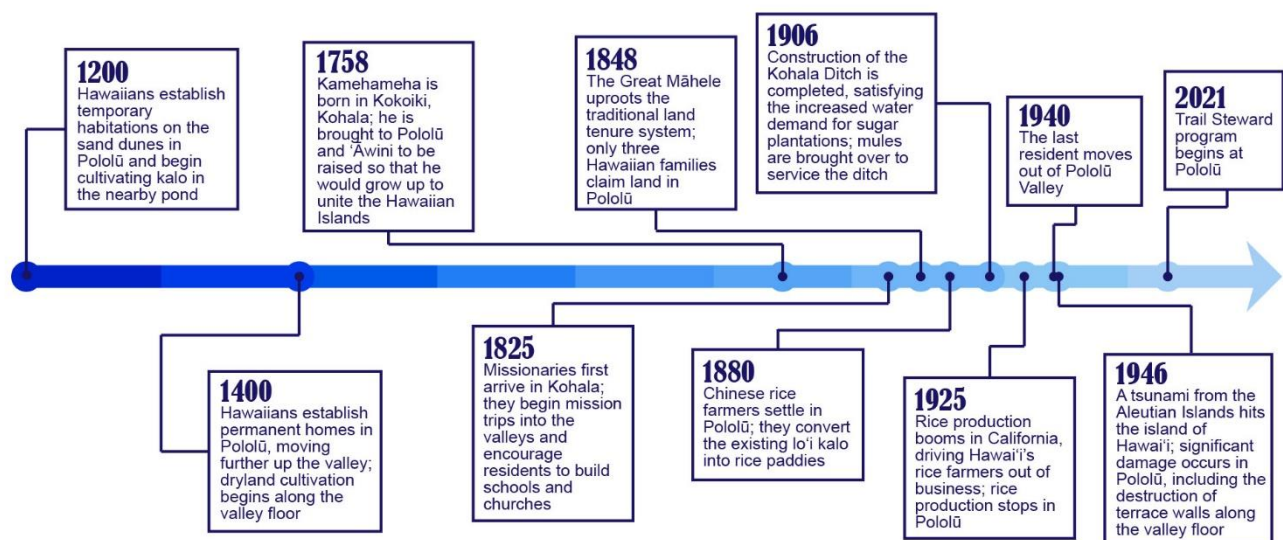
Pololū was first inhabited as early as AD 1200; temporary habitations were established along the mauka side of the sand dunes. Around this same time, kalo cultivation began in irrigated wetland terraces in the marsh area just inland of the dunes. About 200 years later, residents of Pololū began moving further up the valley, establishing permanent house platforms and a network of dryland terraces (Field & Graves, 2008). Hawaiians living in the valley thrived off of their fresh spring water, their supply of kalo, and the abundance of protein in the stream and ocean just offshore.

It was said that even Pa'ao, the priest from Tahiti, cultivated fields in Pololū (Schweitzer & Gomes, 2003). Pa'ao introduced Hawaiians to Kāne, Kū, Lono, and Kanaloa, and also to the Tahitian ways of worship, which included the kapu system as well as human sacrifice. Hawaiians would continue to worship these four main gods, and the thousands of others, until 1819 when the kapu was broken.

Kamehameha Pai'ea

In 1758, Kamehameha Pai'ea was born in the Kohala mountains and brought to Pololū to be raised. The residents of Pololū protected Pai'ea in his youth so that he would grow up to fulfill his prophecy of uniting the islands. He was later given the name Kamehameha, meaning “the lonely one,” as a tribute to his isolated childhood in the windward valleys of Kohala.

Figure 6. General Timeline of Major Cultural & Historic Events in Pololū



Missionaries

Missionaries first arrived in Kohala in 1825. William Ellis and Artemas Bishop were the first Christian missionaries to journey into Pololū. They would take trips into the valleys a few times a year in the attempt to convert Hawaiians living in Pololū, Honokāne, and 'Āwini, to Christianity. They encouraged the valleys' residents to build thatch hut schools and churches. At the time, there were less than 200 residents spread out across these three valleys. In 1841, Elias Bond, a Protestant missionary from Maine, arrived in Kohala. He spent the next ten years on mission trips throughout Pololū to 'Āwini. In his later years, he helped to establish and maintain the schoolhouse in Pololū.

The Great Māhele

In the traditional Hawaiian worldview, land was owned by the gods. No individual could possess private property rights; the concept of landownership was unknown. The Great Māhele of 1848 uprooted this system. For the first time in history, ali'i (chiefs) and konohiki (land managers) could claim ownership of ahupua'a and 'ili. The following year, maka'āinana (commoners) could apply for kuleana grants for lots that they were farming. However, because Hawaiians were so unfamiliar with the concept of landownership and the English language that was involved in the application process, only three families claimed land in Pololū. The remainder of the valley went to the Crown, except for a few small parcels that came up for sale on the valley floor (Schweitzer & Gomes, 2003). Over time, as the Kohala way of life switched from subsistence to one relying on commerce and cash, these few families slowly moved out of the valley. The last resident of Pololū left the valley in 1940; no one has since moved back.

Rice Replaces Kalo

Around 1880, Chinese rice entrepreneurs Chang Young Siu and Goo Tuck Ching Akina settled in Pololū. They converted the existing lo'i kalo area behind the sand dunes into rice paddies. They began with 18 workers farming 35 acres of land. Eventually by 1900, this grew to an expansive 72 acres of rice. To aid in the farm work, three water buffaloes were brought in through the trail. The Chinese workers also grew a variety of other crops, including squash, melons, and cabbage, and raised chickens, ducks, and pigs in the valley to supplement their diet. By 1925, rice production was booming in California and drove Hawai'i's rice farmers out of business. By the end of the 1920s, rice production had completely ceased in the valley.

Kohala Ditch

Sugar was introduced to the Kohala area in 1863 by Elias Bond in an effort to provide employment opportunities to the native population in Kohala (Morse, 2020). He founded the Kohala Sugar Company, which eventually purchased the five other sugar mills established along the Kohala coast. The success of this company led to an increased demand for water resources. In the 1880s, John Hind, head of the Hāwī Plantation, came up with the idea of transferring water from the wet mountain valleys to the dry lowland fields. Eventually after funding was secured and plans were drawn, construction of the Kohala Ditch began in January of 1905. The ditch was completed in 18 months and cost a total of \$694,231. It was 14 miles long and was made up of 45 tunnels, 20 flumes, and extensive ditching (Kohala Ditch Co-op, 2022). Currently, the ditch is not in use due to a large landslide in April 2021 that took out a flume in Honokāne.

Tsunami

In 1946, an earthquake in the Aleutian islands created a tsunami that significantly impacted the island of Hawai'i, including Pololū. Wave heights reached the highest in Pololū at 55 feet above mean sea level. Another tsunami in 1957, also caused by an earthquake in the Aleutian islands, had a runup of 32 feet above sea level in Pololū; this was again the highest in all of Hawai'i (Walker, 2004). Significant damage was caused by the tsunamis, including the destruction of terrace walls along the valley floor.

3.2 Mo'olelo

Numerous battles occurred in Pololū Valley and were recorded by Kamakau (1992) in his book, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i*; it is no wonder Pololū was given its name, "Pololū" being a long thrusting spear traditionally used by Hawaiians in battle. One particular battle occurred when Ke'eaumoku, chief of Kona, rebelled against Kalani'ōpu'u, the ruler of Hawai'i at the time. In doing so, he constructed a fort on top of the ridge between Pololū and Honokāne Nui. Kalani'ōpu'u climbed the mountain to attack him, but Ke'eaumoku escaped by boat, climbing down a rope hanging over the cliff. This battle is known as Pohaku-o-mane'o (Kamakau, 1992).

"Pololū" being a long thrusting spear traditionally used by Hawaiians in battle.

3.3 Significant Resources within Pololū Valley

Hiki aku la ma keia aoao o ka pali o Pololu, a nana aku la ialalo, he nana a maikai maoli; aia no ka i'a makai, a o ka ai no mauka, ua ola maoli no ka nohona.

-Kamau, 1923

The passage above comes from an article published in the Hawaiian language newspapers in August 1923. It describes what one sees as they arrive at the cliff of Pololū: *they arrived at the cliff of Pololū and looked down into the valley below, a sight that was very good indeed. There were fish in the ocean and food in the mountains; life in the valley was certainly thriving.*

To this day, Pololū Valley remains rich in natural and cultural resources. A Kohala student wrote in a news article that *"this valley holds an extraordinary amount of mana to the past and our ancestors. The Kohala community possesses a unique history and relationship to this special place."* Pololū is a wahi pana filled with rich history that is connected to families through their genealogy, kuleana to care for the 'āina, and mo'olelo. Pololū Valley provides a functional space for generations of North Kohala residents, serving a critical role in their cultural lifestyle and practices. Descriptions of some of the significant resources within Pololū are provided in the following pages.



Pololū Stream

A primary feature of Pololū Valley is its stream. Pololū stream has three tributaries: Kapoloa, Waiakalae, and a third with a name that is unknown. The Pololū stream once provided kalo, fish, and 'ōpae for families living in the valley. The stream itself does not connect to the ocean; it ends at a wetland pond that is located roughly 200 feet from the shoreline. The amount of water in the pond fluctuates depending on the amount of rainfall in the upper reaches of the valley. Historically, schools of young āholehole (*Kuhlia sandvicensis*) and 'ama'ama (*Mugil cephalus*) could be found moving with the tides from the ocean to the brackish water pond and back to the ocean.



Pololū Beach

The valley contains a black sand beach with a wide, shallow sandbar creating a surfing break just offshore. While the beach area is usually covered with black sand, high surf can bring rocks that cover the entire shore. The beach provides an occasional resting spot for honu (*Chelonia mydas*) and 'Īlio-holo-i-ka-uaua, or Hawaiian monk seals (*Monachus schauinslandi*).



Sand Dunes

There are tall historic sand dunes, running parallel along the beach for about 1,300 feet, covered in ironwood trees (*Casuarina equisetifolia*), which were planted on the dunes in the 1950s (Field & Graves, 2008). At their highest point, the dunes stand almost 100 feet above mean sea level. These dunes were created from eroded stream deposits and wind and wave action from shore. The sand dunes are roped off to keep visitors from trespassing and stepping over historic burial sites located on the dunes, as well as the buried remains of Ho'olonopahu heiau.

(Top to bottom) Pololū valley floor; Pololū Beach; Sand dunes in Pololū.

Heiau

Three named heiau are located in Pololū. The remains of **Ho'olonopahu**, an agricultural heiau, are buried under the sand dunes (Stokes & Dye, 1991). Field and Graves (2008) suspect that the heiau is on the highest point of the dunes, on the Honokāne side. Another heiau, **Pu'u-mane'o** is located on the ridge between Pololū and Honokāne on a hill known as Pu'u Kaua, or "battle hill" (Soehren, 2005). This heiau is thought to be the fort built by Ke'eaumoku in his battle against Kalani'ōpu'u.

Kalehilehikii is a third heiau that was said to be located in Pololū (Stokes & Dye, 1991); however, the exact location is unknown. It was an agricultural heiau built by Kamehameha. On the map, to the right, from Pierce (1914), a heiau is drawn makai of the sand dunes on the Honokāne side of the valley floor; no remains of this heiau exist today. Perhaps this is the location of Kalehilehikii.



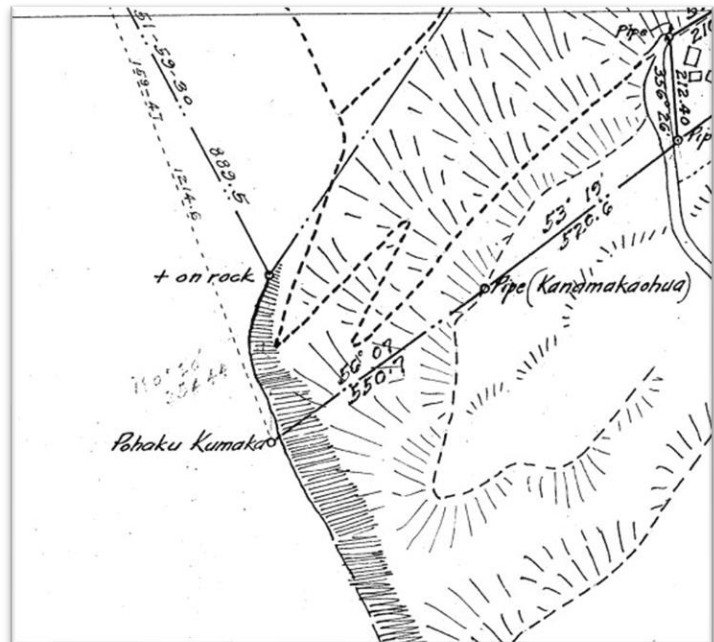
Map of heiau and Kapili rock (Pierce, 1914).

Kanamakaohua

Kanamakaohua is the name of a large stone that marks the boundary between Pololū and Makanikahio. It is said that after being carried around from place to place, Kamehameha's god was placed on this stone. This god is thought to be Kūkā'ilimoku, the war god of Hawai'i Island, given to Kamehameha from his uncle, Kalani'ōpu'u, just before his uncle's death. Kamehameha cared for Kūkā'ilimoku and was rewarded with success in battle, ultimately uniting the Hawaiian Islands.

Kapili

Kapili was the name of an ahu, or pile of stones, that marked the boundary between the ahupua'a of Pololū and Honokāne. No remnants of this ahu exist today. The former location of Kapili is denoted in Pierce's (1914) map.



Boundary between Pololū and Makanikahio (Murray, 1926).



Looking out at the ocean from Pololū Beach.

Adze Quarry

The adze was an important tool in traditional Hawai'i for its use in cutting, shaping, and carving wood and other materials. It was made from basalt, a heavy, fine-grained rock formed from the rapid cooling of lava. Adze quarries existed on all major Hawaiian islands except for Ni'i'hau. Hawai'i Island has three known quarries: one on Mauna Kea, one in the Keanakāko'i pit crater on Kīlauea, and the other in Pololū. The Pololū quarry is located almost a mile inland from the shore along Pololū stream. Stoneworkers used to gather loose stone cobbles from the stream then detach flakes for adze blanks (Lass, 1994). Adzes made from Pololū basalt were distributed throughout windward Kohala.

Marine Resources

Pololū had a rich variety of marine resources. From time to time, schools of akule (*Trachurops crumenophthalmus*) would make their way along the coast, stopping at Pololū. Huge moi (*Polydactylus sexfilis*), up to 18 to 24 inches long, were caught in the whitewash, where these fish prefer to hide. The wide sandbar at Pololū also made it a good spot for catching 'ō'io (*Albula vulpes*). Offshore of Pololū Beach was a small flat reef section that created a popular spot for catching he'e pali (*Octopus oliveri*), a favorite octopus that was eaten raw. On the Niuli'i side of Pololū Beach, one could find conch shells as well as a wide variety of other shells for eating. There were abundant 'ōkole (Hawaiian Mann's anemone, *Cladactella manni*) as well. The

women would frequent this area to catch small brown eels hiding in the rocks. Huge 'ula'ula koa'e (*Etelis coruscans*) were sometimes caught in about 65 feet of water; these are a species of bottomfish more commonly known today by their Japanese name, onaga. Bill Sproat, born in 1903 in Pololū Valley, recalled catching an ulua (*Caranx ignobilis*) that, when weighed the next day after cleaning the fish and removing all its guts, was 103 pounds (Rochers, 1990).



Native Vegetation

Historically, the walls of Pololū were covered in a vast array of native forest species. 'Ōhi'a lehua (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) was observed in full bloom along the steep valley walls, lauhala from the hala tree (*Pandanus tectorius*) was gathered and used for weaving, and pili grass (*Heteropogon contortus*) along the Niuli'i side of the valley provided a great surface for sledding, an activity enjoyed by the youth of Pololū. These plants still exist in the valley today but not nearly in the same quantities as in the past.



Spring Water

There were multiple springs throughout the valley, but their exact number is unknown. Families living in Pololū relied on these springs to provide water to drink and for their lo'i kalo as well, allowing residents to farm in the upper reaches of the valley away from the torrential Pololū stream.

Pololū Kalo

The valley is home to the Pololū kalo, one of the very few kalo varieties named after a specific location rather than after its characteristics. The Pololū variety is noted to be a resilient variety that can withstand diseases and pests. In ideal conditions, Pololū can hold in the ground for up to two years before turning rotten. For comparison, Hawai'i farmers typically harvest their kalo at 8 to 12 months.

(Top) 'Ōhi'a lehua blooming in Pololū Valley;
(Bottom) Hala bordering one side of the trail.

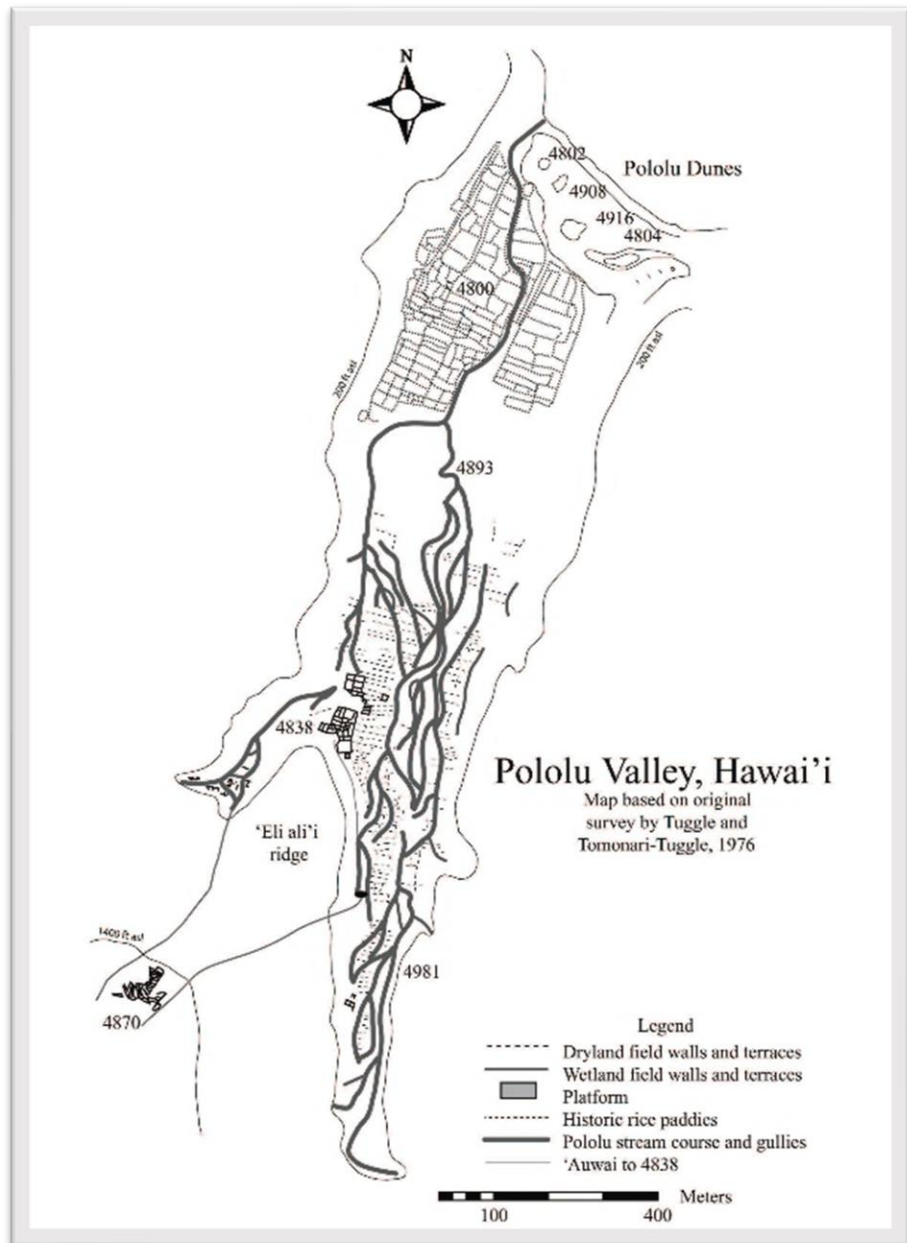
3.4 Archaeological Resources within Pololū Valley

Agricultural Walls and Terraces

Field and Graves (2008) described the vast array of agricultural features existing in Pololū Valley. Remains of stone-faced terraces and walls cover much of the valley floor, indicating how extensively agriculture was practiced in the valley. Agriculture in Pololū primarily consisted of dryland cultivation; dryland terraces cover more than 70 acres of the valley. Wetland cultivation occurred mostly in the marsh area behind the dunes, covering an area of 15 acres. Dryland cultivation was more suitable for Pololū due to its intermittent and torrential stream that easily damaged and destroyed irrigation systems.

School House Remains

An old schoolhouse once sat near the beach at the base of the Pololū Trail. It was probably constructed in the early to mid-1800s, likely appearing with missionary presence in the windward valleys. At one time, there were 31 students recorded attending this school (Kokua, 1868). An article published in the Hawaiian language newspaper describes how the students' parents were unhappy with the kingdom-appointed teacher, and that they essentially took control of the school and appointed their own teacher. The article established some new policies for the school as well, including cost for enrollment and school schedule (Kaneakala, 1869). All that remains of the schoolhouse are scattered stones from the rock wall that surrounded the structure.



Agricultural features and sites (Field & Graves, 2008).

4 Current Conditions at Pololū Trailhead

The trailhead receives on average about 597 daily visitors, including out-of-state visitors and Hawai'i residents (based on data collected by the trail stewards in 2023). The number of visitors to the lookout and trail is generally unmanaged, limited by the availability of parking spaces at the current “lookout” that is under the State DLNR DOFAW’s jurisdiction and “available” parking found anywhere on both sides of the roadway on ‘Akoni Pule Highway leading up to the trailhead. Up to 40 vehicles have been observed parking from the trailhead to as far as a quarter mile up the road. However, it is important to note that vehicles parked along the roadway are often on private property and not within the road right-of-way, making such parking illegal.

4.1 Signage

At the trailhead, DLNR DOFAW staff installed a large interpretive sign in 2022. The sign provides a brief summary of the history and geology of Pololū. The interpretive sign also describes the trail conditions and warns visitors about the dangers of the trail and the strong riptides in the ocean. Additionally, Hazard Warning signs are displayed throughout the trail. These warnings include Rock Fall Warning, Hazardous Cliff Warning, and Flash Flood Warning.



Interpretive sign at Pololū Trailhead.

4.2 Pololū Trail Steward Program

The Pololū Trail Steward Program was created in the summer of 2021 to help mitigate the impacts of increased numbers of visitors to Pololū. Trail stewards assist with visitor management and education at the trailhead.

At the time of this writing, there were two paid part-time stewards and one full-time steward in addition to several volunteers. The program is funded through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

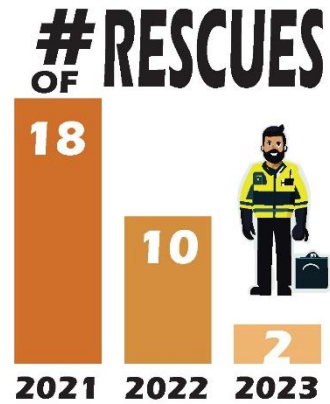


The objective of the program is to utilize local stewards “to assist in interpreting the historic nature of the area as well as mitigate unwanted behaviors and ensure safety.” Specific duties of the trail stewards consist of educating visitors on the historical and cultural context of the area and informing hikers about safety hazards and boundaries for public access; assisting in the management of vehicles at the trailhead as well as with safety incidents (as needed); and performing/reporting trail maintenance needs. The trail stewards carry a satellite phone to call for emergency help, since reliable cell service ends at the nearby town of Kapa’au. They are also responsible for taking daily visitor counts.



(Top) Trail stewards educate visitors on the historical and cultural significance of the place; (Bottom) Visitors arrive at the trailhead for sunrise before the trail stewards start their shift.

Since the implementation of the trail steward program at Pololū, there has been a reduction in the frequency of emergency rescues, according to the Hawai'i County Fire Department incident reports. In 2021, there were 18 rescues documented by the Hawai'i County Fire Department while in 2022, the number of rescues decreased to ten. In 2023, only two rescues were made for the year. The trail stewards enhance the safety and experience of visitors through education. They have been instrumental in informing hikers about crucial information such as the terrain, potential hazards, and safety guidelines.



“Since the trail stewards started...I hear less ambulances passing by here.”

(Top) Visitors check-in with the trail stewards before proceeding to the trailhead; (Right) Hikers occupy the trailhead parking early in the day, while several stalls are coned off for lookout visitors by the trail stewards who began their duties in the summer of 2021.



4.3 Parking and Circulation

Trail stewards have implemented a systematic approach to parking at the trailhead. Of the unofficial 12 parking stalls, several are dedicated specifically for ten-minute parking. When parking at the trailhead is full, trail stewards will direct visitors to find parking elsewhere. At times, the trail stewards assist with directing and guiding the flow of vehicles and pedestrians to reduce the risk of injuries.

“The trail stewards have implemented a good system of reserving some stalls at the lookout for those that just want to get out of their car and take a picture.”



(Clockwise from top left) Lookout visitors wait for the vehicle to reverse into the stall; trail stewards provide safety information to hikers; visitors park along the mauka side of 'Akoni Pule Highway when the trailhead is full; a line of vehicles park along the makai side of 'Akoni Pule Highway.

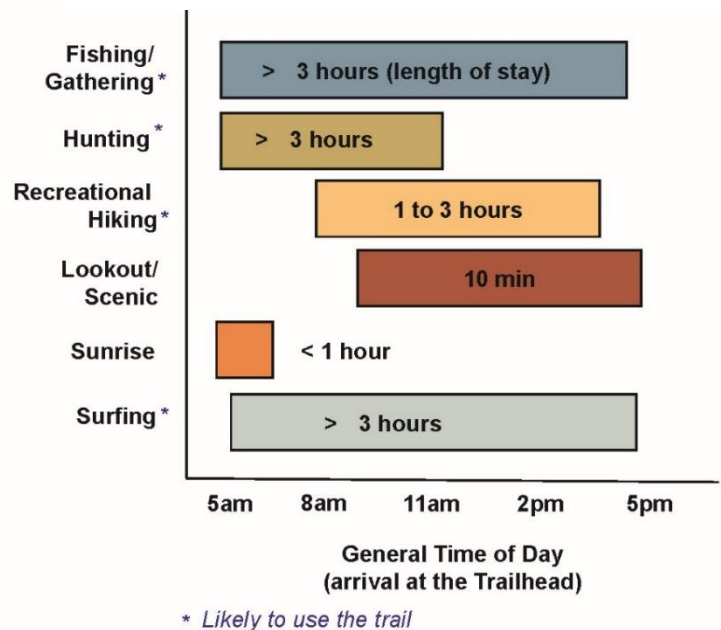
4.4 Trailhead User Demographics

Visitors to Pololū can be generally categorized as follows:

- ◆ Residents from villages near the trailhead
- ◆ Residents visiting from other districts of Hawai'i Island and neighbor islands
- ◆ Travelers visiting Hawai'i

While there may be some similar uses, these groups interact with Pololū Valley differently. Currently, the trailhead is overwhelmed by recreational hikers and those enjoying the scenic vistas, most of whom are first time or returning visitors to Hawai'i. Figure 7 illustrates examples of different uses (although not an exhaustive list) that may occur at Pololū Valley requiring access to the trailhead. The length of stay and general arrival time are provided.

Figure 7. Example of Different Types of Uses at Pololū



4.5 Visitor Counts

Consultations with community members have indicated that current visitor numbers greatly EXCEED acceptable limits.

The trail stewards conducted daily visitor counts for both out-of-state visitors and Hawai'i residents. Figure 8 shows the average and highest daily visitor counts³ for each month in 2023. The average daily number of visitors per month ranged from 497 to 709 visitors, including both out-of-state visitors and Hawai'i residents. On average for 2023, the trailhead received about 597 daily visitors. The highest number of visitors in a single day occurred in January with 1,482 people.

It is important to note that two significant events on the island might have impacted the number of visitors to Pololū during the period shown in Figure 8: 1) the County's Emergency Rule in February 2022, resulting in the closure of Waipi'o Valley Road to visitors for safety reasons due to the road's condition, and 2) the eruption of Mauna Loa in late November/December 2022.

³ Refer to Appendix C for the methodology used to calculate the daily visitors counts.

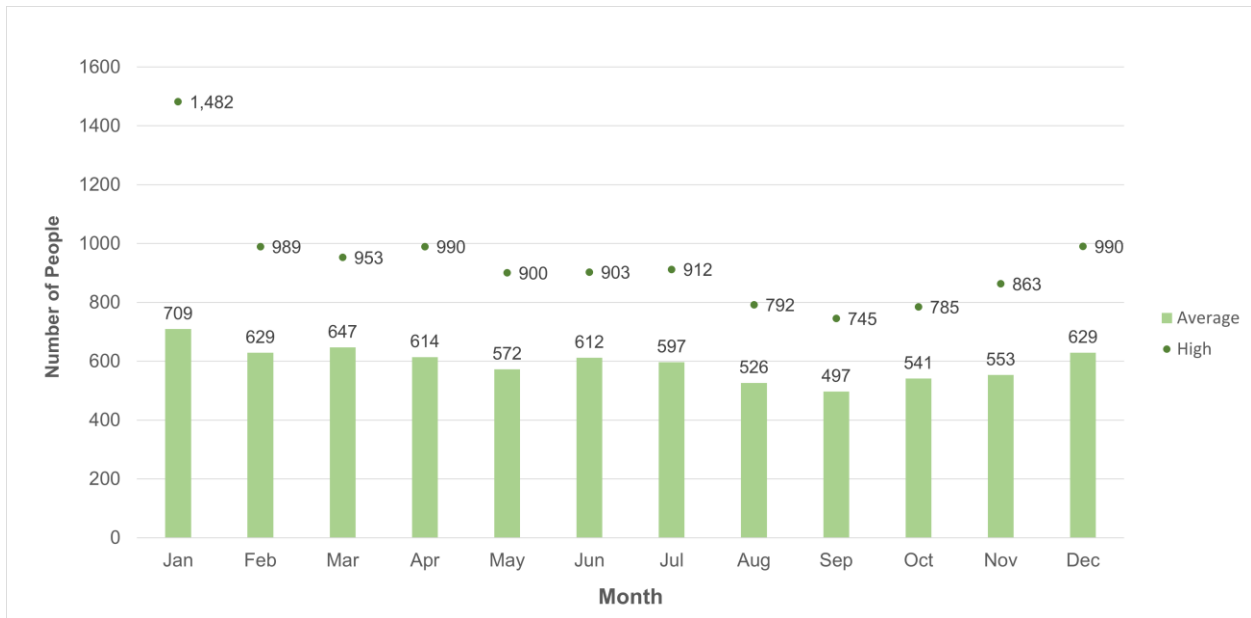


Figure 8. Average number of total daily visitors to the trailhead per month for 2023 (Source: DLNR DOFAW)

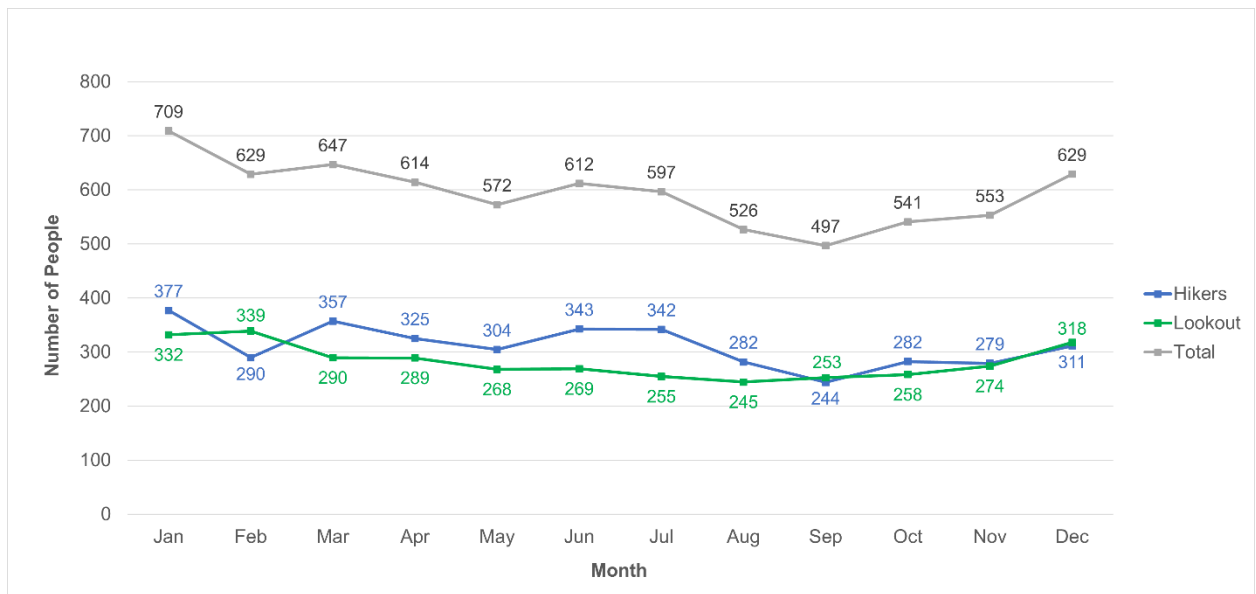


Figure 9. Average number of total daily visitors by hikers and lookout visitors for 2023 (Source: DLNR DOFAW)

The closure of Waipi'o Valley Road could have potentially increased visitors to Pololū, whereas the eruption of Mauna Loa might have decreased visitor numbers as people were drawn to other parts of the island.

Roughly 48 percent of visitors to Pololū stayed at the trailhead to enjoy the view, while the remaining 52 percent hiked down the trail. Figure 9 shows the average number of daily hikers and average number of lookout visitors by month for 2023.

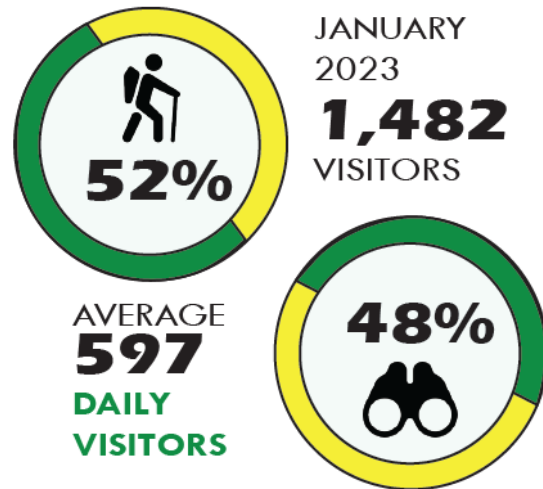
4.6 Existing Infrastructure

Roads and Parking

Vehicular access to the trailhead is via 'Akoni Pule Highway, a two-lane highway that begins near Kawaihae Harbor and runs east, parallel to the shoreline. In December 2021, a section of the road from an area near Hāwī Road to the vicinity of Pololū Valley Lookout was transferred from the State Department of Transportation to the County Department of Public Works.

A physical mile marker at Pololū Trailhead that reads "28.93" indicates the end of the 'Akoni Pule Highway. At the end of this County roadway is the beginning of the trailhead/Forest Reserve boundary which is under the jurisdiction of the State DLNR DOFAW.

There are four one-lane bridges along 'Akoni Pule Highway heading to the trailhead from Kapa'au. The primary mode of transportation to Pololū currently is via personal vehicles. The trailhead is inaccessible via public transit, as the County bus route terminates in Hāwī, about 7.5 miles away from the trailhead. While the "lookout" area was originally designed as the "road's end", over time it has been used for parking and as a lookout. The approximately 6,300-square foot area can accommodate up to twelve vehicles unofficially, which is generally available on a first come, first served basis. Other than this area,



View (from the trailhead) of 'Akoni Pule Highway under the jurisdiction of the County Department of Public Works.

visitors have been parking along both sides of the roadway, often on private property in front of residents' homes or on part of the road's travel way.

The road's right-of-way is only 20 feet; thus most of the visitors parking along the road are parking on private property. At the time of this writing, a private landowner owns the parcel abutting the makai side of the roadway and Surety owns the the parcel on the mauka side of the roadway where vehicles park when the trailhead is full.

Wastewater System

There is no existing restroom facility at the trailhead. The closest public restroom facility is located at the County's Kēōkea Beach Park, which is approximately 2.5 miles from the trailhead.

Water System

The County Department of Water Supply (DWS) provides potable water to the North Kohala District up to the village of Niuli'i. There is no public or private potable water system in the vicinity of the trailhead.

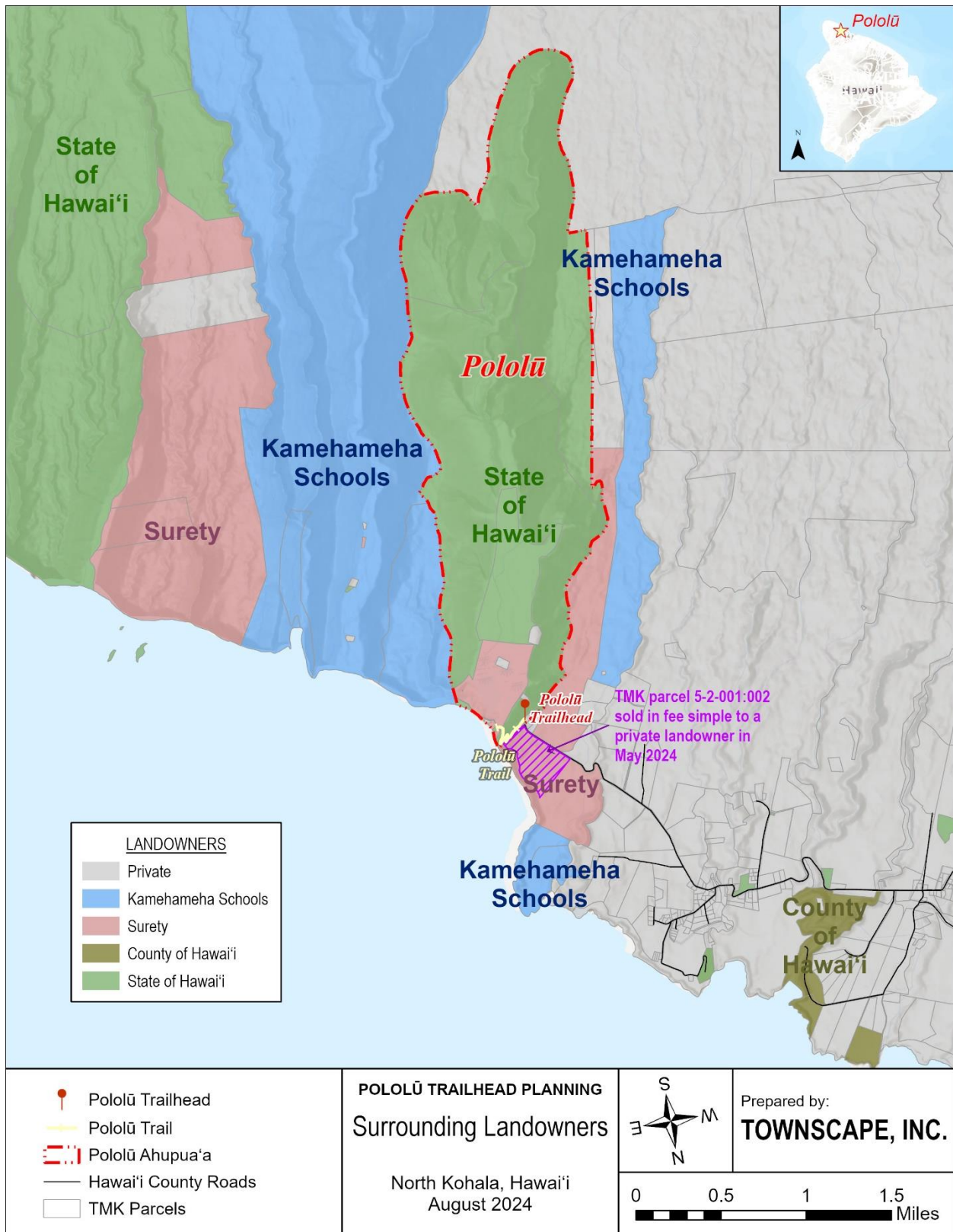
4.7 Surrounding Landowners

Two private residential homes are located on the mauka side of the trailhead. The driveway of one residence directly faces the "lookout" area, while the second nearest home's driveway is approximately 550 feet from the trailhead on the mauka side of 'Akoni Pule Highway. Adjacent to the second residential home is a vacant 23.4-acre parcel (TMK 5-2-005:012) owned by Surety near the trailhead.

On the makai side of 'Akoni Pule Highway, abutting the trailhead, is a 42-acre parcel commonly referred to as the mule station. This parcel was previously owned by Surety but was sold in fee-simple to a private landowner in May 2024. Surety owns a 91-acre parcel adjacent to the mule station. The two coastal parcels makai of Surety's property, which encompasses 'Āko'ako'a Point, are owned by Kamehameha Schools. Additionally, Kamehameha Schools holds both Honokāne Nui and Honokāne Iki Valleys in fee-simple.

Within Pololū Valley, approximately 1,723 acres, primarily consisting of the valley ridge and wall, along with several parcels on the valley floor, fall under the jurisdiction of the State DLNR DOFAW. Additionally, there are multiple parcels of varying sizes, ranging from less than a half-acre to 86 acres, spread across different parts of the valley floor that are held in fee-simple by private property owners, including Surety, who owns the 86-acre parcel. Figure 10 provides a map of the large landowners for the area.

Figure 10. Surrounding Landowners















5 Community Voices

This section summarizes the community perspectives gathered from the talk story sessions conducted for this management plan. Participants shared their memories and hopes, explaining why they love the valley and why it is important to them. It captures not only the tangible elements expressed by the community, but also the intangible sentiments. The following represents some of the insights shared by individuals who are deeply connected to and concerned for Pololū, including lineal descendants of Pololū, dedicated caretakers, the Pololū Trail Stewards, adjacent landowners and long-time residents.

The sentiments expressed by the community in this section also reflect those shared in the vision outlined for the Kohala community within the County's 2005 North Kohala CDP, which gathered mana'ō from over 1,000 participants. The community perspectives served as the foundation for developing principles used to guide the potential solutions presented in this management plan. While some of the ideas are not necessarily reflected in the Potential Solutions section, they are included in the summary below. The planning team felt that it was essential to highlight the community's thoughts and desires for Pololū, even if they could not be implemented as part of this planning process. Furthermore, some elements of these discussions fell outside of Townscape's scope of work and/or the State DLNR DOFAW's jurisdiction and therefore could not be included as part of the solutions presented in this Plan.

FROM CURRENT KOHALA STUDENTS

MY FAVORITE MEMORY OF POLOLŪ IS...

-  Waking up early in the morning to watch the sunrise. My grandma would wake my cousins, siblings, and me, and we would all go to Pololū. Sometimes we would hike halfway down but most times we would stay at the top. Then after we would go to the gas station for hot cocoa and then she would drop us off to school.
-  Going down with my family for the day and swimming. I just enjoy the surroundings.
-  Waking up at 3 in the morning to hike all the way to the first bench and watch the sunrise.
-  When I shot a fat sow/running my dogs.
-  Getting barrels in front of the trail in the early morning. I can remember seeing how good the waves were from the top, and immediately I sprinted down the whole trail in 5 minutes.
-  When I was younger the parking lot would be empty in the morning, and I'd walk down with my family to watch the sunrise while my older cousins would be out there sponging and me and my other cousins would play in the beautiful black sand.
-  Going down with my whole family, having a family day and spending time with one another.
-  Just going down there with family and enjoying our time.
-  Hiking down with my mom for her 57th birthday. What was so special about it is that it was my mom's very first time hiking Pololū in her life, and she got to do it for her friends and family on her birthday.
-  Catching wild cattle.
-  Watching the sunrise with my grandparents.
-  Pololū cleanup in 8th grade and visiting every weekend in elementary with my dad.

Direct quotes are shown using “quotation marks.”

To understand the **significance of Pololū** to the people of Kohala, participants were asked to share their personal connections to the place and explain why Pololū is important to them.

Some of the mana‘o provided include:

- ◆ Pololū is our backyard resource for subsistence.
- ◆ Star watches at the lookout at sunrise.
- ◆ Family ho‘oponopono at the lookout.
- ◆ Pololū was used by us [residents] for its function rather than just for a pretty picture.
- ◆ Gathering of resources to fish and hunt; hunt for wild pigs; pick ‘opihi, catch ‘ōpae, ulua, ‘ō‘io, and moi.
- ◆ Homeschooled our kids and used to take them into the valley a lot. Pololū was a big part of our children’s childhood and education.
- ◆ Pololū has provided food for my family for years.
- ◆ People in Kohala have used the trails for generations (going to Honokāne and beyond).
- ◆ *Used to walk to Pololū in the mornings.*
- ◆ Burials in the sand dunes.
- ◆ Hawaiian families, even today, went into the valley to gather resources, and also to hide resources; Pololū was used to hide Kamehameha.
- ◆ We always had to have a purpose when we went down there.

Participants were also asked to share issues impacting the trailhead and preliminary thoughts on how to address these issues.

Some **description of issues** raised include:

- ◆ “The place is very alive.” You used to be able to feel the mana of Pololū, but now with the number of people going into the valley every day, the energy is totally different.
- ◆ My family used to rely on Pololū for ti root, hala, taro, hunting, and fishing. Now we can’t get there anymore because of the high number of visitors.
- ◆ Something should’ve been done years ago to address the number of visitors.
- ◆ Pololū used to be our peace and quiet; you used to be able to come here and relax, now you cannot do that.
- ◆ The roads leading to Pololū are very small and wavy; they were not designed to accommodate the current amount of traffic from visitors’ cars. It’s really quite dangerous and people drive really fast. I don’t know if you guys can do anything about that but it’s a big concern for the community.
- ◆ Cyclist-car collisions occur frequently along Kohala Mountain Road. Cyclists also crash into each other right in front of my house. About twice a month I have to administer first aid to injured bikers.
- ◆ We need to address the issue of hotel concierges and travel guides promoting Pololū.
- ◆ It is dangerous to have so many people parking along the side of the highway.
- ◆ There is a huge human waste issue, people using the bathroom all over and leaving their toilet paper behind. People are also not picking up after their dogs.
- ◆ Hiker blogs promote Pololū; but it’s all hiker-based with no cultural ties to the valley.
- ◆ Social media is a big problem, especially because it spreads a lot of false information. People are saying it’s okay to do certain things that aren’t allowed in Pololū.

- ◆ There are a lot of respectful people that come to Pololū, but there are still a lot of disrespectful people too.
- ◆ Pololū is overcrowded with tourists. This invades the people that live near the trailhead.
- ◆ Kūpuna never get to go to the trailhead because of how crowded it is.
- ◆ These issues have been going on for years and nothing has been done yet.

Hopes for the future include:

- ◆ “Pololū is untouched, and that’s the way we want to keep it.”
- ◆ Pololū should be for the people of Kohala first; the people who access the valley for a function rather than just for recreation.
- ◆ We just want people to love and respect Kohala (and Pololū) as much as we do.
- ◆ We don’t want to see any change/development at Pololū. Leave things the way it is. When you make a change, it opens the door for other development.
- ◆ Pololū should be for the people of Kohala first, since they are the ones taking care of the place.
- ◆ I feel bad when Kohala people show up and there’s no parking for them. I wish the parking lot could be just for Kohala people. It hurts to tell them they got to park up the road.
- ◆ The existing structure at the mule station could be turned into a museum that shows a video of the trail. This would continue/enhance the historic significance of the mule station.
- ◆ We need portable toilets ASAP! We have a great operation right now with the trail stewards; we’d be good for the next couple years if we just had toilets.
- ◆ Access into Pololū should be for function (i.e., hunting, fishing, gathering hala, etc.) rather than recreation. Pololū should be for function/subsistence use only; visitors should not be allowed to hike into Pololū. Visitors should stay at the lookout only.
- ◆ Access should be prioritized for Hawai’i residents that come from rural communities since they are more likely to come for subsistence use.
- ◆ There is no need for a new lookout. I don’t want Pololū to look like a visitor destination because for us, it’s someplace really special.
- ◆ Kūpuna should be able to drive up to the trailhead.
- ◆ The wild cattle in the valley should be removed.
- ◆ The sand dunes should be fenced to prevent people from walking over the burial sites.
- ◆ The Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement (DOCARE) officers should have a greater presence at the trailhead to police visitors.
- ◆ The valley should be allowed to rest, like at Hanauma Bay how they close it two days out of the week.
- ◆ Acquire the mule station parcel to have more room and move the parking from the trailhead.
- ◆ I’d like to see the trailhead as a viewpoint only.

“That valley is sacred; Kamehameha was born and raised there...I used to hunt and fish down in the valley. Leave it alone, don’t change Pololū.”

Planning considerations include:

- ◆ There's a history in Kohala of putting up gates to keep people out; don't put up any gates at the trailhead.
- ◆ The goal is more about protecting the valley than dealing with the traffic situation at the top.
- ◆ Any money that is collected from visitors should be reinvested into Pololū.
- ◆ Do not "improve" the trail by making it easier for people to hike down.
- ◆ There should be no commercial activity (weddings and photography) allowed in Pololū.
- ◆ For the safety of hikers, trail stewards, and first responders, Pololū should be automatically closed in bad weather conditions. The trail stewards should also have the ability to close the trail if they determine it is unsafe for hiking.
- ◆ The Hawai'i Tourism Authority should work with the airlines to promote good visitor behavior. They could show a video on the airplane informing visitors what they should and shouldn't do.
- ◆ We can survive without tourists.



Illustration of what Pololū is envisioned to look like in 50 years. Developed as a planning exercise in 2023 with a group of Kohala students.

6 Summary of Issues

The multi-faceted issues for Pololū are related to cultural preservation and perpetuation, resource conservation and protection, and visitor management. Issues highlighted during talk story sessions include trail and ocean safety and rescues, sanitation, resource degradation, lack of cultural awareness, roadway congestion and parking, overcrowding and impacts to the way of

“People who live here, just don’t want to deal with all the people down there, so they don’t even go there. If they were raised here, and used to go to Pololū all the time, they’ve stopped.”

life, trespassing and liability, commercial use, and other unpermitted activities. Many of the issues were discussed in the context of Pololū but are also encountered in other locations across the island and the State. Additionally, certain aspects of these issues may extend beyond the purview of the State DLNR DOFAW’s jurisdiction. Thus, broader discussions about responsible tourism and environmental management should be considered among various entities at the State and County levels.

6.1 Trail and Ocean Safety & Rescues

The start of the trail can be slippery, especially after heavy rainfall. Visitors often arrive unprepared for the hike, without water and appropriate footwear, leading to injuries and dehydration. Additionally, the ocean current at Pololū is strong, posing an increased risk of drowning. Even local residents familiar with the area are cautious about the ocean dangers and avoid swimming there. Despite unsafe conditions (e.g., high surf, wind advisory, heavy rains, etc.), visitors are still likely to hike, as it may be their only opportunity to experience Pololū.



(Left) Travelers visit the trailhead and hike on a rainy day in July 2023; (Right) Hikers at the start of the trail on a rainy day.



Hikers walk towards the start of the trail on a rainy and windy day.

“The lack of restrooms is the big problem. People will use the bathroom in the driveway or in the bushes on private property.”

6.2 Sanitation

There are no restrooms at the Pololū Trailhead, but more importantly, visitors are unaware that there are no restrooms. After a one-to-two hour drive from Kona or Hilo, visitors are desperate to relieve themselves. This often occurs in neighbors’ yards, driveways, on the side of the road, and even on the burial sites down in the valley, all while leaving a mess of toilet paper behind.

6.3 Resource Degradation & Cultural Heritage Awareness

There are numerous significant cultural and archaeological sites in the valley, including the remains of an old schoolhouse, a heiau, and burial sites. Some families still access the valley to engage in their cultural traditions. It is important for these sites to be protected, as some have already been unintentionally disturbed or intentionally mistreated by hikers.

Many visitors arrive at Pololū without an understanding of the cultural significance of the place, posing a risk to the sensitive cultural and natural resources, especially considering the high number of visitors.

For local residents, Pololū serves as a place of cultural heritage, while for visitors, it often represents a recreational destination. The differing functions of the place can sometimes lead to conflicts. Some residents express feeling alienated by the influx of visitors, who often stare or take photos while they practice their cultural activities. This has discouraged many residents from visiting the valley. Contributing to this gap is the continual promotion of Pololū in blogs, travel magazines, and by hotel concierges as a tourist destination. Some are even profiting off Pololū, offering it as a beautiful backdrop to a “destination wedding.”

6.4 Parking Congestion & Safety

The parking area at the lookout fills up quickly; when this happens, trail and lookout users will park along both sides of the highway on private property. Often cars are parked incorrectly, either facing the wrong direction or with their tires on the road. In general, it becomes a safety hazard as people get into and out of their cars onto the highway and oncoming traffic, as well as walk in the middle of the roadway to reach the lookout and trailhead.



Vehicles parked illegally on private property along the roadway or within the roadway leading to the trailhead.
Photo Credit: DLNR DOFAW

“The lookout is just overcrowded with people walking and cars trying to turn around, it’s really, really dangerous.”

There is a conflict of use between vehicles and pedestrians at the trailhead and on the highway leading up to the trailhead. The small parking area, as well as the high volume of foot and vehicle traffic, makes it challenging for cars to turn around at the trailhead. The presence of trail stewards has helped to mitigate some of the hazards caused by vehicles and pedestrians.

Additionally, the overwhelming number of visitors not only contributes to congestion at the trailhead but also causes traffic along the ‘Akoni Pule Highway through the residential villages leading up to the trailhead.

6.5 Overcrowded Conditions

Pololū is an important Wahi Pana. Local families from Kohala, who grew up going to the valley, now avoid Pololū because of the number of visitors that occupy most of the available parking spaces and traffic chaos at the trailhead. Kūpuna and other families have expressed that the limited parking has impacted their cultural lifestyle, constraining practices such as fishing and hunting in the valley. This issue not only affects the current generation but also disrupts the perpetuation of family traditions to their children and grandchildren.

Many residents share memories of Pololū as a place visited primarily by local families, with very few people at a time. Today, the area is filled with visitors, compromising its unique sense of place. There is no parking available to engage in cultural practices. Local families are overwhelmed by the number of visitors and traffic congestion at the trailhead.

“We’re doing this to preserve the cultural lifestyle for future generations. That’s what Pololū is. Kūpuna shared with me knowledge that was passed down: how to gather food and how to call fish out from the deep. Kūpuna shared knowledge to preserve the cultural lifestyle for future generations. We cannot engage in our cultural lifestyle because there’s no more place to park...I taught my sons how to fish Pololū but they no can pass it down.”

6.6 Unpermitted Activities

Camping in Pololū Valley has been an issue. It is not a permitted activity in the Forest Reserve. However, it appears that the efforts of the trail stewards in raising educational awareness have helped to mitigate this problem. Another concern is hikers trespassing onto private property from the Pololū Trail. Only the trail, beach, and forest reserve are open to the public, while sections of the valley floor, as well as the adjacent valleys, are privately owned. There is also concern about commercial activities, including filming at Pololū, particularly those that promote the valley and may attract more visitors. Additionally, there is concern about weddings being conducted at Pololū, even if the ceremony is not being conducted on lands under the jurisdiction of the State DLNR DOFAW.

7 Vision and Guiding Principles

This management plan is guided by the vision and principles strongly articulated by the community during the talk story sessions, which included individuals that identified as lineal descendants, kūpuna, Kohala students, and Kohala residents.

7.1 Vision

The vision statement presented below was based on mana'o provided during the talk story sessions. Participants shared significant values and described how they envision Pololū now and for future generations. The resulting vision statement for Pololū is as follows:

“Pololū is a wahi pana that is respected for its historical and cultural values, where its strong sense of place, scenic spaces, and resources are protected, allowing it to continue to perpetuate the way of life for the people of Kohala for current and future generations.”



View of Pololū Valley (facing mauka).

“My favorite memory of Pololū is that one morning with my football team we hiked down to the beach, cleaned all the trash, and hiked it back up to throw it away at the rubbish dump.”



Illustration of what Pololū looks like now. Developed as a planning exercise in 2023 with a group of Kohala students.

7.2 Guiding Principles

In addition to the vision statement, this management plan is shaped by several principles that emerged from community talk stories, which guided the potential solutions described in this document.

Protect the place and its environment first.

Solutions should prioritize protecting Pololū Valley and its environment first, and not focus on improving people's access and use of the trail. Decisions on the use of the trail should not negatively affect the environment of Pololū.

Prioritize the needs of the local community.

Prioritize the preservation and protection of this cherished wahi pana for residents and for the many generations to come. Residents have deep connections to this 'āina and access Pololū for their subsistence and cultural lifestyle. Traditions and practices are perpetuated and shared with the next generation at Pololū.

Maintain the rural character of Pololū and Mākanikahio and keep it as a wilderness area.

Pololū has always been an area of limited human activity. The natural features of the valley have only ever allowed a small number of families to live there. The undeveloped, natural character of Pololū should be preserved. No significant improvements should be made to the trail or trailhead that would increase human activity within the valley that would negatively impact the environment, resources, and nearby villages.

Highlight the cultural significance of Pololū.

Pololū played a significant role in Kamehameha's childhood; its walls hid and protected Kamehameha so that he could grow up to unite the Hawaiian Islands. It is also shared that Pololū is a burial site for Nu'uanupa'ahu, a chief of Ka'ū, who died from a shark bite there. Stewardship solutions should focus on improving and increasing visitors' and residents' understanding of the cultural/historical significance of Pololū.

Educate visitors on the environmental conditions and cultural significance of Pololū.

Many visitors show up at Pololū not knowing what to expect; they are unaware of the hiking conditions and are often unprepared. Additionally, they are not familiar with the potential risks from poor weather or ocean conditions. The trail stewards are there to educate them about the dangers and how to behave appropriately in the valley around the numerous cultural/historic sites. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial to inform and engage visitors about the valley before they arrive to Pololū.

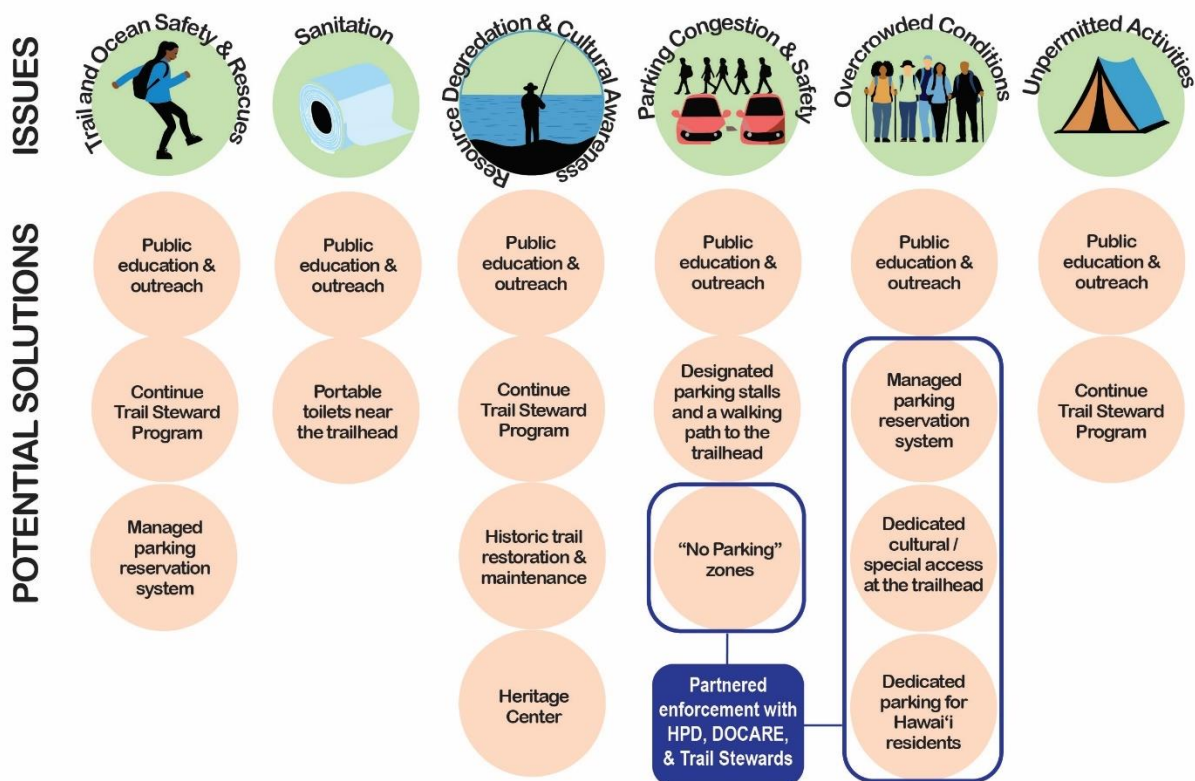
Minimize the development footprint.

The solutions proposed in the plan should, as much as possible, minimize their development footprint, particularly in the vicinity of the trailhead. Elements of the plan should not increase human activity within the valley.

8 Potential Solutions for the Trailhead

This section describes individual concepts that are then integrated into a proposed scenario presented in the subsequent section. Additionally, solutions that were extensively considered as part of this planning process but are not recommended at this time are also presented, as certain elements of these solutions may warrant future consideration. A review of visitor control measures implemented at other popular visitor destinations is provided in Appendix D.

Figure 11. Potential Solutions to address the issues at the trailhead



8.1 Public Education & Outreach

A crucial aspect and top priority in implementing this management plan is developing and conducting targeted public educational outreach. This outreach should aim to educate the public about the cultural significance of the place, foster responsible cultural and environmental behavior among visitors, and inform them about the constraints at the trailhead, including parking limitations. Online platforms should be leveraged to share engaging content, educating visitors about the place and any new policies related to Pololū prior to arriving at the trailhead.

8.2 Trail Stewards

The existing trail stewards play an essential role in raising awareness of the rich and significant historical and cultural resources of Pololū Valley. Their presence has organized the experience at the trailhead, resulting in better vehicle flow. They have also provided critical information about the historic, cultural, and physical conditions of the trail and valley so visitors can be better prepared for their experience, resulting in fewer emergency rescues. The success and effectiveness of the Pololū Trail Steward Program has been referenced as a model for other popular visitor destination sites where the presence of trail stewards could be beneficial.

This management plan proposes to continue the Pololū Trail Steward Program as a management approach. Following the current trail steward program's structure, the trail stewards would be on-site seven days a week. The following recommendations are suggested:

- ◆ Extend trail steward hours, particularly during the summer months when daylight lasts longer, for instance from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- ◆ A minimum of three trail stewards working at one time, two at the trailhead and one in the valley.
- ◆ Develop a digital map with the cultural features in Pololū for the trail stewards to use as they educate visitors.

The purpose of the trail stewards is to assist with interpreting the historic nature of the area and providing safety education to mitigate unwanted behaviors. The trail stewards should continue as paid positions, while volunteer opportunities should also be made available. The trail steward program is a critical component in the successful implementation of this management plan.

As described earlier, specific duties of the trail stewards would consist of:

- ◆ Educating visitors on the historical and cultural context of the area and informing hikers about safety hazards and boundaries for public access;
- ◆ Assisting in the management of vehicles at the trailhead as well as with safety incidents (as needed);
- ◆ Responding to/reporting trail maintenance needs; and
- ◆ Continuing visitor counts.

CHALLENGES:

Dedicated funding of current Trail Steward Program beyond 2026 is uncertain.

The Maui News

Applicants sought for land stewardship program

Animals · Wildlife
6 Oct 2023

A youth-focused conservation and sustainability nonprofit is partnering with the state to launch a program that will employ 24 people to help steward sensitive natural and cultural areas across the Hawaiian Islands.

Na Manu 'Elele Steward Program will expand on the success of the Pololu Trail Stewards program, which launched in 2021 as a pilot project with stewards educating visitors, enforcing safety measures and maintaining the increasingly popular Hawaii island trail. The program has helped increase visitors' awareness of the trail's hiking conditions and the valley's history and cultural significance, and has also helped decrease hiking accidents, illegal camping and parking infractions, according to the nonprofit Kupu, which is working with the state Department of Land and

Natural Resources to launch the statewide program.

Part-time and full-time positions are open on Maui, Molokai, Hawaii island, Oahu and Kauai. Sites will include trails, hunting areas, forest reserves, community-based subsistence fishing areas and other recreational lands overseen by DLNR's Division of Forestry and Wildlife and Division of Aquatic Resources. Stewards will receive hourly pay and health coverage for those working more than 20 hours per week.

The deadline to apply is Oct. 27. The start date is Dec. 4.

In traditional Hawaiian context, birds, or "na manu," represent messengers, guardians and beings of a particular place, while "elele" refers to individuals who act as

A formalized location to provide shelter for the trail stewards is proposed. The shelter provides protection from the natural elements for the trail stewards as well as for others, when needed. The current trail steward shelter is in the driveway of the adjacent landowner, permitted by the landowner as a temporary interim solution.

8.3 Designated Cultural/Special Access

The current lookout area is envisioned to be re-designated for cultural/special access. “Cultural access” is defined as being for those practicing cultural activities for the purposes of perpetuating traditional knowledge, caring for and protecting the environment, and strengthening cultural and spiritual

CHALLENGES:

Difficult to secure/manage cultural/special access area after-hours when trail stewards are not present (unless gated).

connections to the windward valleys from Pololū to ‘Āwini that have demonstrable benefits to the Native Hawaiian community. The designation of the space for cultural/special access removes the existing available parking stalls in the current lookout area from public use. Daily use of this space, including for vehicular access, would be at the discretion of the trail stewards and DLNR DOFAW. Residents seeking use of the cultural/special access area will need to check-in with the trail stewards upon arriving at the trailhead. Visitors will still maintain pedestrian access through this area.



Current parking/lookout area envisioned to be re-designated for cultural/special access.

8.4 Portable Toilets

Two portable toilets are proposed as there are currently no sanitary facilities at the trailhead. The nearest public restroom is located at Kēōkea Beach Park, approximately 2.5 miles away. Installation of the portable toilets would address sanitary concerns. Careful considerations about the placement of the portable toilets should include the following factors:

- ◆ Minimal impacts to the surrounding viewshed (and for adjacent landowners)
- ◆ Proximity to the trail steward shelter (e.g., siting it upwind from the trail steward shelter)
- ◆ The portable toilets need to be accessible from the designated stall for those with disabilities, and for maintenance.
- ◆ The portable toilets also need to be placed on a flat, hard surface, with a slope of no more than one percent.

8.5 Parking

Designated parking stalls

Twenty (20) designated parking spaces are proposed in addition to two spaces reserved for on-duty trail stewards. These designated parking spaces will address the lack of parking for trailhead users. Of the 20 parking spaces, at least one space is an accessible parking stall, designed for people with disabilities.

Currently, there are only twelve unofficial parking spaces at the lookout; when this area fills up, cars will park illegally along the highway on private property. More than 40 vehicles have been observed parking along the roadway and within the current lookout area at one time.

Some community members have articulated concerns that the proposed number of parking stalls, which is predominately utilized by visitors, is too low to accommodate current demand. Daily counts of hikers and lookout visitors (inclusive of both out-of-state visitors and Hawai'i residents) from 2023 have seen highs of over 1,400 people arriving at Pololū in one day, with an average of almost 600 people per day throughout the year. The lineal descendants and families of Pololū have expressed that current numbers exceed acceptable limits.

What happens if I arrive after hours? Where can I park?

Parking at Pololū will not be managed beyond the Trail Stewards' work hours. One goal of this management plan, as described to the planning team by the community, is to manage the number of visitors to Pololū to allow residents access to the valley. Visitors typically arrive during daylight hours when the Trail Stewards will be working. Vehicles arriving to Pololū after hours will be able to park in any available parking stall.

I am concerned about people getting dropped off at the trailhead, either as part of a commercial tour or visitors without a parking reservation.

Public outreach and coordination with key stakeholders regarding the required parking reservations for visitors are essential for successful plan implementation. Employing a multi-faceted approach to reach diverse audiences through various platforms and partnerships, including social media, will be crucial to effectively disseminate information.

Commercial activity requires an approved permit from DLNR DOFAW. Currently, only one commercial permit may be issued per day for Pololū for no more than ten people. Permits are not available for weekends and holidays.

Designated parking and a reservation system will help to better manage the number of vehicles accessing the area at one time. Rather than there being a concentrated influx of vehicles all at once, a managed reservation system can more evenly distribute the flow of visitors throughout the day, thus reducing the need for more than 20 parking spaces at any given time.

The community expressed concern for unmanaged drop-offs, alongside the possibility of unauthorized commercial shuttle services being initiated. DOFAW currently allows for only one commercial permit per day (restricted to groups of no more than ten people). The Trail Stewards would help to monitor permits for any groups that arrive at the trailhead and report any unpermitted activities if necessary.

Another issue raised by community members includes accommodation for school groups and horse trailers that may currently park along the side of the roads. School groups may continue to arrive in vans, as they currently do, with parking for vans accommodated within the designated parking stalls, while designated areas suitable for trailer parking will be provided. Larger groups visiting Pololū for educational or cultural purposes will need to coordinate with DLNR DOFAW staff.

Dedicated stalls for residents

To address community concerns about the lack of parking available due to the overwhelming number of visitors, a dedicated number of the parking stalls would be made available for Hawai'i residents, in addition to the designated cultural/special access at the current lookout for residents engaging in cultural activities. Residents may need to present a State-issued ID as proof of residency, but no fees or reservations are required. The trail stewards would be responsible for overseeing the administration of the parking spaces. Some community members also expressed concerns about driving a long distance to the trailhead and not finding parking. However, the managed reservation system described under Section 8.7 is open to everyone, although a fee would apply. Opportunities to provide real-time data on available parking spaces could also be further explored.

The intent of dedicating stalls for residents is to ensure their access to Pololū; therefore, adaptive management is important. The number of dedicated stalls for residents may need to change depending on demand, such as during peak times before or after work hours on weekdays and on weekends. Under the status quo, parking for residents is currently first come, first served.

“No Parking” areas

Only parking in designated parking stalls will be permitted. Parking along both sides of the highway will not be allowed, including areas previously used for parking. Those found parking in these “No Parking” zones will be subject to a traffic citation, with the rule applying to both visitors and residents. Installation of no parking signs or physical traffic delineator posts may be necessary to demarcate these zones. Any effort to demarcate no parking zones should aim to minimize visual impacts while effectively deterring drivers from parking in these restricted areas. Concerns have been raised by community members regarding potential impacts to viewsheds and the rural character of the area due to excessive installation of no parking signs.

Parking enforcement

The Hawai'i County Police Department is the primary entity responsible for traffic citations on County roadways, while the DLNR DOCARE is the primary enforcement entity for lands that the DLNR has jurisdiction over. Since Pololū is in a remote location at the end of the road, it may be difficult to consistently enforce the new “No Parking” regulations.

To ensure that the intended outcomes of the managed reservation system are achieved, there needs to be consistent enforcement of the “No Parking” areas as depicted in the scenario in Section 9.1. Close coordination with the County of Hawai'i Police Department and the State DLNR DOCARE will be required to enforce the “No Parking” areas, particularly in the initial stages of plan implementation.

The following measures are recommended to support this management plan:

- ◆ Secure funding to pay for special duty officers to regularly assist with enforcement during peak hours.
- ◆ Utilize provision in the Hawai'i County Code Section 24-202.2 that states the director of public works can “appoint one or more employees or may hire designated independent contractors” to enforce the traffic laws through issuing citations. Further review is needed to determine if this provision allows trail stewards to assist in issuing citations.
- ◆ Add a surcharge for those parking illegally in the “No Parking” areas along 'Akoni Pule Highway.

CHALLENGES:

Need cooperation/agreement with County Department of Public Works and adjacent landowners to designate “No Parking” zones.

How will the “no parking” zones be enforced?

Implementation of this management plan will require support from the Hawai'i County Police Department to strictly enforce “no parking” zones. In other examples examined by the planning team, such as Hā'ena on Kaua'i, no parking along the highway was successfully enforced in collaboration with the local police and the media.

I am a Hawai'i resident. Will I be able to reserve a parking spot?

Hawai'i residents will have the option to reserve a parking spot, along with the dedicated parking stalls for them. Non-Hawai'i residents, on the other hand, are required to make a reservation in advance for parking. Fees will apply for reservations.

8.6 Pedestrian Pathway

A new pedestrian pathway, running along the makai side of the highway, will connect the designated parking area to the trailhead, guiding hikers to the start of the trail. The purpose of this pathway is to minimize potential conflicts between hikers and vehicles accessing the cultural/special access area, as well as the adjacent residences. Minimal to no improvements may be required for this pathway, as the current area is already paved.

8.7 Managed Reservation System

A managed reservation system is proposed to address the challenges of overcrowding and congestion at the trailhead, with an emphasis on providing space for local residents to maintain their way of life and perpetuate cultural practices. In the newly designated parking area, parking will be available for Hawai'i residents. Non-Hawai'i residents will need to make a reservation in advance to park. Reservations will be made available to everyone, though a fee would apply.

Similar managed reservation systems have been implemented in several other popular visitor destinations in Hawai'i, including at Hā'ena State Park on Kaua'i and Diamond Head State Park on O'ahu.

The managed reservation system would allow the public to reserve specific time slots for the parking stalls that are not already designated for Hawai'i residents.

For example, parking stalls could be made available for reservation in durations of 15 to 30 minutes and two hours, which is similar to the usual time spent by lookout visitors and hikers, respectively. For visitors wanting to stay for longer than the two-hour time block, they could reserve two time blocks. Reservations for larger group reservations, intended for educational or cultural activities, would need to coordinate with DLNR DOFAW staff.

The reservation system offers a systematic approach to managing trailhead/trail capacity and distributing the flow of visitors throughout the day. Aside from promoting sustainable and safe use, it helps to organize the manner in which visitors arrive at this tight lookout/parking area. The reservation system also provides an opportunity to inform visitors prior to their arrival about the cultural significance of the place and trail conditions, including important safety details that will ensure that hikers arrive prepared with appropriate footwear and water.

Some individuals have expressed concerns that visitors may arrive at the trailhead without a parking reservation, potentially leading to more chaos than the current situation. Similar to

CHALLENGES:

Nā Ala Hele program rules need to be revised to allow for reserved parking fees (*currently in process*).

I am concerned that there will be congestion on the highway from cars waiting to go to the lookout.

Typically, lookout visitors only stay for 10 minutes or less at the current lookout. Reservations for lookout visitor could be offered in increments of 30 minutes which would allow for sufficient turnaround time for the next reservation.

Will I still be able to hike down the trail if I arrive by foot?

Yes, the Pololū Trail is a public trail and will remain open for anyone who wants to hike the trail.

reservation systems implemented at other popular visitor destinations, a robust information campaign to increase awareness is crucial.

The result of the reservation system will be a more enjoyable experience for both residents and visitors since the space is shared with fewer people at a time. While this approach will require advance planning for visitors, the advantage is that the reservation system allows people to plan their visits and experience the peacefulness that this place offers. The benefit to the community, particularly to the residents of the villages surrounding Pololū, is that it alleviates the overwhelming impacts of large crowds on traffic and the tranquil surroundings and reduces impacts on resources. Revenue generated from the parking reservation system could be utilized to supplement funding for the protection and restoration of resources at Pololū. If possible, ensure that all the fees are allocated specifically to support Pololū resource management efforts.

8.8 Historic Trail Restoration & Stewardship

In consultation with lineal descendants, repair and restore the historic trail in eroded areas to the original mid-1800s condition.

Under HAR §13-130-19, Nā Ala Hele has the authority to restrict days and hours of public use, or the numbers of individuals or types of uses or activities on the trail “to mitigate user impacts upon the trail surface, historic and culturally sensitive areas, or environmentally sensitive areas” and “to manage and control periods of use of a program trail.”

Restricting public use of the trail as needed is recommended to allow for trail restoration and maintenance, and for community mālama ‘āina efforts to protect the historic and culturally sensitive resources of Pololū.



Eroded areas at the start of the trail can be slippery especially when wet.

Table 1. Summary of Current Condition, Issues, & Potential Solutions

CURRENT CONDITION	ISSUES	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p><u>Trail and Ocean Safety & Rescues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hawai'i County Fire Department incident reports document a decrease in the need for rescues since the trail steward program began at Pololū. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2021 Eighteen (18) rescues* ○ 2022 Ten (10) rescues ○ 2023 Two (2) rescues The trail stewards enhance the safety and experience of visitors through education. They have been instrumental in informing hikers about crucial information such as the terrain, potential hazards, and safety guidelines. <p>*Trail Steward Program begins in Summer 2021.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The start of the trail can be slippery, especially after heavy rainfall. Visitors often arrive unprepared for the hike, without water and appropriate footwear, leading to injuries and dehydration. The ocean current at Pololū is strong, posing an increased risk of drowning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the Trail Steward Program and provide a shelter for trail stewards. The proposed managed parking reservation system can also provide trail safety precautions by informing visitors of conditions when they are making a reservation online prior to arriving at Pololū. Repair historic trail in eroded areas (to original mid-1800s condition). <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated funding of Stewards beyond 2026 is uncertain. Nā Ala Hele rules need to be revised to allow reserved parking fees (currently in process).
<p><u>Sanitation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no restrooms at Pololū. The nearest public restroom is at Kēōkea Beach Park, approximately 2.5 miles away. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some visitors are unaware that there are no restrooms and they relieve themselves in neighbors' yards or on the side of the road. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install and maintain two portable toilets on level pad, with one dedicated ADA parking stall and aisle.

CURRENT CONDITION	ISSUES	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p><u>Resource Degradation & Cultural Awareness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many historic and cultural sites in Pololū and some families still access the valley to engage in their cultural traditions. • Trail stewards educate visitors on the historical and cultural context of the area and inform hikers about safety hazards and boundaries for public access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many visitors arrive at Pololū without an understanding of the cultural significance of the place, posing a risk to the sensitive cultural and natural resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the Trail Steward Program and provide a shelter for trail stewards. • Restore and maintain the historic trail, and supporting community mālama ‘āina efforts to protect the historic and culturally sensitive resources. <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated funding of Stewards beyond 2026 is uncertain.
<p><u>Parking Congestion & Safety</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parking area at the lookout fills up quickly; when this happens, people will park along both sides of the highway on private property. • Often cars are parked incorrectly, either facing the wrong direction or with their tires on the road. • In general, this becomes a safety hazard as people get into and out of their cars directly onto the highway and into oncoming traffic, as well as walk in the middle of the roadway to reach the lookout and trailhead. • The small parking area, as well as the high volume of foot and vehicle traffic, makes it challenging for cars to turn around at the trailhead. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a conflict of use between vehicles and pedestrians at the trailhead and on the highway leading up to the trailhead. • Drivers have a hard time turning around at the trailhead due to the congestion. • Trail and lookout users park on private property along the highway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off street parking. • 20 stalls plus two stalls designated for on-duty trail stewards. • Designated pedestrian pathway to the trailhead. • A one-way ingress into and egress out of the new parking area and lookout at the former mule station property. • Repurpose the existing structure as a Heritage Center. <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance cost.

CURRENT CONDITION	ISSUES	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p><u>Overcrowded Conditions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pololū is an important Wahi Pana. • Local families from Kohala, who grew up going to the valley, now avoid Pololū because of the number of visitors and the resulting competition for available parking spaces and traffic chaos at the trailhead. • Kūpuna and other families have expressed that the limited parking has impacted their cultural lifestyle, constraining practices such as fishing and hunting in the valley. This not only affects the current generation but also disrupts the perpetuation of family traditions to their children and grandchildren. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no parking available to engage in cultural practices. • Local families are overwhelmed by the number of visitors and traffic congestion at the trailhead. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated cultural/special access at the current lookout. • Create dedicated parking stalls available to Hawai'i residents. • Move parking and congestion away from Pololū's rim. • Provide designated parking and implement a managed parking reservation system required for non-Hawai'i residents. • Establish "No Parking" areas outside of designated parking stalls. People parking in the "No Parking" zones will be subject to a traffic citation. <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nā Ala Hele rules need to be revised to allow for reserved parking fees (currently in process) • Need cooperation/agreement with County Public Works and adjacent landowners to designate "No Parking" zones. • Government can only differentiate between Hawai'i residents and non-Hawai'i residents. • Difficult to secure/manage cultural/special access area after-hours (unless gated).

9 Proposed Scenario

9.1 Heritage Center

This management plan proposes the acquisition of approximately one acre of the 42.02-acre parcel (also commonly referred to as the “mule station”, TMK 5-2-004:002) to address the issues at the trailhead. The relatively flat area within the mule station parcel near the roadway would provide a designated parking area. The existing structure would be repurposed as a Heritage Center to serve as a gathering space for the community and to provide an opportunity to educate visitors on the cultural significance of Pololū. The implementation of the managed reservation system for visitors is envisioned to help alleviate the overwhelming number of people at the trailhead. Furthermore, the vistas at the mule station parcel would serve as the new lookout, thereby reducing the number of people at the current lookout and providing space for local residents to engage in cultural protocol.

As shown in Figure 12, the following elements are incorporated to protect the valley’s resources for future generations and address the issues at the trailhead:

- ◆ A robust messaging campaign to educate the public about Pololū and to respectfully enjoy the area.
- ◆ Off street parking with twenty (20) parking stalls, plus two stalls reserved for on-duty trail stewards.
- ◆ Designated parking for Hawai’i residents, with no fees or reservations required.
- ◆ A managed parking reservation system, required for non-Hawai’i residents. A fee would apply for making a reservation.
- ◆ “No Parking” zones, on both sides of ‘Akoni Pule Highway, are marked and enforced for areas beyond the designated parking area within the mule station parcel.
- ◆ A designated pedestrian path along the makai side of the highway to guide hikers from the parking area to the trailhead.
- ◆ A one-way ingress into and egress out of the new parking area and lookout at the former mule station property.
- ◆ The existing structure is repurposed as a Heritage Center to highlight and raise awareness and appreciation of the cultural and historical resources of this area and as a gathering space for residents.
- ◆ Two portable toilets are proposed adjacent to the new Heritage Center.
- ◆ The trailhead area is designated for cultural/special access only; existing public parking stalls are removed from the lookout area.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- ✓ Emphasis on cultural learning and heritage preservation
- ✓ Provide space for cultural/special access
- ✓ Minimize conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles driving on the roadway
- ✓ Address sanitary needs
- ✓ Provide needed parking for trailhead users
- ✓ Align with community values of land conservation

CHALLENGES:

- Annual maintenance cost.

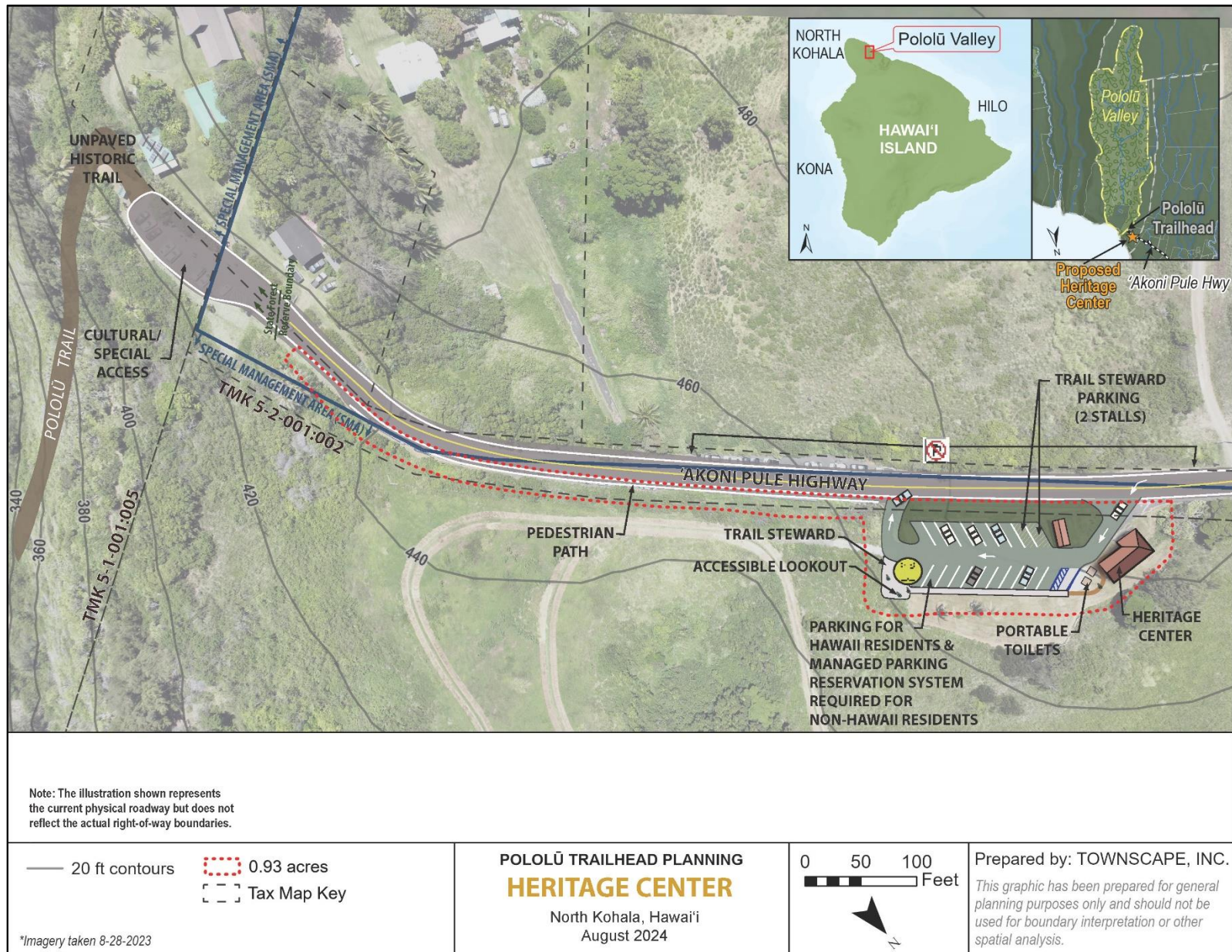
“Involve the community as much as possible. Have community volunteers run the heritage center. Promote a community sense of ownership.”

Although the heritage center scenario would occupy less than an acre, the community has emphasized its longstanding commitment to preserving undeveloped coastal lands and open space. They wish to maintain these values for the remainder of the parcel. Note that the mule station parcel was sold in fee-simple from Surety to a private landowner in May 2024 during the drafting of this management plan. Since Surety was not seeking to subdivide the property, initial community discussions included prioritizing community-led efforts focused on food sustainability, native plant restoration, and conservation for the rest of the parcel.



*(Top) View at sunrise from the proposed Heritage Center parcel;
(Bottom) Existing structure to be repurposed as a Heritage Center.*

Figure 12. Heritage Center Scenario



9.2 Maintain Status Quo

The alternative to the proposed heritage center scenario is to maintain the status quo. This option entails no changes to the unmanaged visitor levels, unmet sanitary needs, and lack of official parking beyond the current lookout area, which also marks the extent of DLNR's jurisdictional boundaries at the trailhead.

People will continue to park along both sides of 'Akoni Pule Highway, which is located on private property. It is important to note that the private landowner can enforce a no-parking policy at any time, potentially eliminating available parking for both residents and visitors. In such a scenario, available parking would be confined to the existing lookout area, leading to significant conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, and congestion.

Without any land acquisition, DLNR DOFAW would be limited to the roughly 6,300-square foot area that serves as the current lookout. This area would not be a feasible location for portable toilets due to the windy conditions, in addition to being an eyesore as one approaches the trailhead. Portable toilets would require a flat, hard surface, with a slope of no more than one percent, as well as accessibility to those with disabilities and for maintenance.

9.3 Other Solutions Considered but Eliminated

In addition to the heritage center scenario, other ideas were shared by some individuals and considered as part of the planning process for this management plan. The following concepts were eliminated from consideration for reasons that are provided below.

Parallel parking along the highway

This solution was presented as a scenario in the Draft Plan; refer to the graphic in Appendix E. The intent of this scenario was to provide a parking layout that closely aligned with the existing conditions while addressing safety and sanitary concerns. However, implementation of this scenario would require land acquisition involving two different parcels. Furthermore, some community members expressed safety concerns with parallel parking and preferred the off-street parking provided with the heritage center on the 42-acre parcel. The parallel parking scenario would also still present potential conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles turning around at the lookout.

Diagonal parking along the highway

This solution, also presented as a scenario in the Draft Plan, was designed to provide parking in areas that currently are utilized for parking with additional safety elements incorporated (see Appendix E). It featured reverse diagonal parking, which, while safer, is new to most drivers. Similar to the parallel parking scenario, implementation of this scenario would require acquisition of two parcels. Community members preferred the off-street parking with the heritage center on the 42-acre parcel over this solution due to the number of improvements that would be required to implement this scenario and the lack of opportunities to promote cultural awareness with the heritage center.

Shuttle system for visitors only

A shuttle system was suggested to transport visitors to Pololū. In this scenario, visitors would need to reserve a seat on a shuttle that would bring them from either Hāwī or Kapa'au to the trailhead. The shuttle service could be operated by a community non-profit organization, thus providing employment for residents and generating revenue that could be reinvested into the

stewardship of Pololū. Other benefits include reduced traffic, minimized environmental impact, support for local businesses, and opportunities to inform visitors about Pololū during the shuttle ride.

Parking for Hawai'i residents would be restricted to the current lookout with the twelve unofficial stalls since the illegal parking on private property along both sides of the roadway would be eliminated. A properly-sized turnaround area and drop-off/pick-up area would need to be developed near the trailhead, as well as an area for the portable toilets and a shelter for the trail stewards would have to be sited.

While the shuttle system did present potential benefits, a key concern shared by many residents is that the primary goal of resource protection could potentially be replaced by the need for financial viability to cover operational costs. Thus, decisions may include increasing daily passenger numbers to maximize revenue since each shuttle seat would be reserved with a fee. Therefore, many individuals strongly felt that this scenario did not align with the vision for Pololū. Other concerns included:

- ◆ **Identifying and securing a suitable Pick-up/Drop-Off area for the shuttle:** For example, the pick-up point could be in Hāwī or Kapa'au. It would need to be accessible with sufficient available parking. Ideally, the area should have an established parking lot that is currently underutilized to ensure that visitor parking does not conflict with existing uses or add to traffic congestion. The shuttle service schedule would require thoughtful planning to accommodate the significant time difference between lookout visitors (~15 minutes) and hikers (~2 hours) at Pololū.
- ◆ **Required Infrastructure Development:** A properly sized turnaround area for the shuttle, along with a safe drop-off area at the trailhead, would need to be established. Acquiring adjacent land would be necessary to construct the turnaround area and to ensure regulatory compliance.
- ◆ **Operational Capacity:** A critical aspect of the shuttle service is that it would be organized and operated by a community non-profit organization. Therefore, establishing an agreement with a community organization that possesses the financial and personnel capacity to carry out the shuttle service operation is crucial. There may also be large upfront start-up costs required.
- ◆ **Safety:** A safety concern raised with the shuttle service is that, during emergencies, hikers would lack immediate access to their personal vehicles at the trailhead.

Re-locate lookout and parking on the parcel mauka of the highway

To minimize conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles driving on the roadway, a new lookout and parking area was proposed on a 23-acre parcel (TMK 5-2-005:012), located across from the mule station parcel. However, this scenario did not align with the guiding principles established for this management plan, particularly with minimizing the development footprint. Implementation of this scenario would require significant improvements relative to the heritage center scenario to meet safety and accessibility standards due to the existing topography of the parcel.

Expand the existing trailhead area

An alternative scenario that would not require land acquisition is the expansion of the existing trailhead area within the Forest Reserve jurisdiction. This concept could include a perched boardwalk that leads to a viewing platform offering a spectacular view of the coastline. However,

this option was eliminated because of the steep terrain, Conservation District designation, proximity to cultural sites and the valley, and significant development required. This scenario did not align with the overall vision and guiding principles established for this management plan, particularly with maintaining the rural character of Pololū and Mākanikahio, keeping it as a wilderness area, protecting the place and environment first, and minimizing the development footprint. Additionally, issues related to sanitation, parking congestion and overcrowded conditions would not be addressed.

Establish a new lookout near 'Āko'ako'a Point

This scenario would establish new viewing area(s) closer to 'Āko'ako'a Point, adjacent to the cliff, offering more breathtaking and dramatic vistas than the current trailhead/lookout area. One or more trails would lead to these viewing area(s), providing additional opportunities for passive recreation for both residents and visitors. While this approach could help alleviate some visitor pressure on Pololū by offering an alternative lookout, the issues at the trailhead may still persist. This new lookout area could potentially become a supplementary visitor destination in addition to the Pololū Trailhead; however, it would require a willing seller.

Special designation for Pololū

To recognize its unique history and wahi pana, some community members proposed a special designation for Pololū. This designation was intended to restrict access to Pololū exclusively to Hawai'i residents or solely to 'ohana (lineal descendants of Pololū). After further consideration, this approach would not adequately address the concerns regarding impacts on resources that may be caused by Hawai'i residents. Additionally, restricting access to only Hawai'i residents presents some challenges with implementation. For example, Hawai'i residents or Native Hawaiians from the area that moved away who no longer possess a State ID would encounter difficulties with accessing Pololū. It would also be challenging to limit access solely to lineal descendants since many families who may not be lineal descendants but who call Kohala home also engage in subsistence and cultural practices at Pololū and have done so for generations.

Prioritize access for residents with rural zip codes

Another suggestion was to give priority access to Pololū to individuals residing on Hawai'i Island with a rural zip code. This concept acknowledges that local residents often access Pololū to engage in cultural practices, such as subsistence or gathering of resources. The objective was to enhance or maintain access to important resources for individuals living in the neighboring villages and rural communities. Similar to restricting access to Pololū solely for Hawai'i residents or lineal descendants of Pololū, this concept would be difficult to implement.

Remove Pololū Trail from the Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program

The suggestion to remove Pololū Trail from the DLNR's Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program was proposed to protect the resources of Pololū. While this action could potentially address some environmental and preservation concerns, it is important to recognize that several ongoing challenges would likely persist even if the trail were removed from the program. The Pololū Trail is historically significant as it forms part of the ala loa and is considered a public right of way (see Section 2.2), which means that public access is required even if it is removed from the Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program. Nā Ala Hele's rules are a mechanism to help alleviate these issues through management.

10 Implementation

This section outlines a list of recommended administrative tasks primarily to be carried out by the State DLNR DOFAW. Collaboration with various entities and agencies, as well as close work with the community, will be crucial to achieve the preservation goals for Pololū. The actions presented below are not intended to be executed in isolation but rather to be part of an integrated approach. As the elements of this management plan are implemented, adopting **adaptive management** becomes essential considering the potential for unintended consequences or shifts in residents' needs.

Furthermore, many of the issues raised in this report are encountered in other wahi pana across the island and the State. Broader discussions about responsible tourism and environmental management are needed to address certain aspects of issues that extend beyond the purview of the State DLNR DOFAW's jurisdiction or the scope of work for this management plan.

Table 2. Tasks and General Timeline to implement Management Plan

Implementation Action Item <i>Agency/Entity Responsible</i>	Timeline			
	Near-term	Mid-term	Long-term	Ongoing
LAND ACQUISITION				
Initiate discussions with the landowner regarding land disposition of land area required. <i>DLNR DOFAW, Parcel Owner</i>				
Acquire land. <i>DLNR DOFAW, Parcel Owner</i>				
SITE ENGINEERING & PERMITS				
Procure professional services to plan, design, and construct capital improvements, including seeking required permits and approvals. <i>DLNR DOFAW/Engineering</i>				
Coordinate with County DPW. <i>DLNR DOFAW, County DPW</i>				
OPERATIONAL & SUPPORTING MEASURES				
Procure services for portable toilets. <i>DLNR DOFAW</i>				
Continue to revise Nā Ala Hele rules & seek BLNR approval. <i>DLNR DOFAW</i>				
Seek funding for trail stewards beyond year 2026. <i>DLNR DOFAW, State Elected Officials</i>				
Add a parking violation surcharge for illegal parking along 'Akoni Pule Highway through County Ordinance. <i>DLNR DOFAW, County Council</i>				
Coordinate enforcement efforts; secure funding for partnered enforcement among entities. <i>DLNR DOFAW & DOCARE, County Police Department</i>				
Support community initiatives to steward resources. <i>Community, DLNR DOFAW</i>				

10.1 Land Acquisition

To implement the heritage center scenario described in this management plan, the State DLNR DOFAW will need to initiate discussions with the landowner about acquiring land within TMK 5-2-001:002, a 42.02-acre parcel designated as Agricultural (A-20a) under County Zoning.

Although A-20a zoning requires a minimum building site of 20 acres, the Hawai'i County Code allows for the subdivision of a parcel for "public use" even if it is below the minimum zoning lot size (Section 25-4-11). Therefore, subdividing one acre for the required area, as described in Section 9, would be permitted and would not affect the zoning of the remaining parcel.

10.2 Site Engineering & Permits

The following components will require some degree of planning, designing, permitting, and construction:

- Designated parking area: installation of grass paver and stall demarcation
- Accessible parking stall and lookout: installation of pavement and signage
- Pedestrian pathway: minor improvements, if necessary, to designate a walking pathway from the parking to the trailhead
- No parking zones: implementation of traffic control barriers/devices

Agency Coordination with County DPW

Since 'Akoni Pule Highway falls under the jurisdiction of the County Department of Public Works, the State DLNR DOFAW will need to coordinate with the County to implement the traffic control measures, including the placement of signage, as needed, to identify the designated no-parking zones along the roadway as well as any barriers to deter the public from parking outside of the designated parking area.

Special Management Area Use Permit

The purpose of the Special Management Area (SMA) is to "preserve, protect, and where possible, to restore the natural resources of the coastal zone of Hawai'i" (HRS §205A). The heritage center scenario proposes improvements within the SMA. Pursuant to HRS §205A-22, any action defined as "development" will require a SMA (Minor or Major) Use Permit, which is administered by the County Planning Department, before commencement of development. An SMA (Major) Use Permit, required for development with valuation exceeding \$500,000, consists of a public hearing and approval from the Planning Commission.

Grading Permit

A Grading Permit from the County of Hawai'i is required when excavation or fill exceeds 100 cubic yards or vertical height or excavation of fill measured at its highest point exceeds five feet.

10.3 Operational & Supporting Measures

Continue to amend Nā Ala Hele Rules & seek Board of Land and Natural Resources approval

The DOFAW Nā Ala Hele program is currently in the process of revising their rules and has been working on developing a proposed fee schedule. The fee schedule will allow the Nā Ala Hele program to implement the reserved parking fees, as described earlier. Once the fee schedule is drafted, it will be available for public comments and then presented to the Board of Land and Natural Resources for final approval.

Secure trail steward funding beyond year 2026

The trail steward program is currently funded through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration with funding secured for trail stewards through 2026. The Nā Ala Hele program will need to seek additional funding to continue these positions, including seeking an appropriation from the Hawai'i State Legislature.

Add a parking violation surcharge

Implement a parking violation surcharge for illegal parking along the County roadway near the trailhead. A similar measure was enacted for state highways in 2019. The law was established through State legislation in response to illegal parking on Kauai's north shore near Hā'ena State Park. A \$200 surcharge was added to the existing parking fine of \$35 to further deter drivers from stopping or parking illegally along the roadway. Fifty percent of the surcharge is allocated to the respective police departments of the county from which the surcharge is collected.

To implement a similar measure for 'Akoni Pule Highway, the County Council would need to pass an ordinance stating it is illegal to park along the section of 'Akoni Pule Highway from Makapala to Pololū, and to implement a parking violation surcharge. Appropriate signage and enforcement would be required if/when the surcharge is implemented.

Agency coordination on enforcement

DOCARE

DLNR DOCARE plays an important role in protecting Hawai'i's limited resources. While there are staffing constraints, DOCARE officers at Pololū would help to ensure compliance with rules established by DLNR DOFAW, particularly those outlined by the Nā Ala Hele Program. The need for increased DOCARE officers is evident, especially during peak hours, as elements of the management plan, such as the managed parking reservation system and designated "No Parking" zones, are implemented. In 2024, DOCARE officers will have the ability to write civil citations for rule violations on land under the jurisdiction of the DLNR DOFAW, Division of Aquatic Resources and Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation.

County Police Department

To support enforcement initiatives, funding to pay for the special duty officers to regularly assist with enforcement of no-parking zones during peak hours will need to be secured. In addition, the Hawai'i County Code Section 24-202.2 states the director of public works can "appoint one or more employees or may hire designated independent contractors" to enforce the traffic laws through issuing citations. Further review is needed to determine if this provision allows trail stewards to assist in issuing citations.

Support community initiatives to steward resources

The people of Kohala, as well as the broader community, play an integral role in the successful implementation of this management plan. Community-driven initiatives to support the measures presented in this report are equally important. For example, community leaders could engage directly with the tourism industry, such as hotels, airlines, social media platforms, and travel blogs, to convey appropriate messages about Pololū. Volunteer stewardship efforts, such as Mālama Pololū Day, promote a sense of stewardship and responsibility within the community. Other community endeavors that tell the history of the place provide synergistic opportunities to educate about the cultural and historic significance and resources of Pololū. For instance, the restoration of the old Bond Memorial Library in Kapa‘au as the future Kohala Heritage Center offers an opportunity to educate about Pololū before visitors physically arrive at the trailhead. Where possible, DLNR DOFAW’s support of these community initiatives is encouraged.

10.4 Rough Order of Magnitude Cost Estimate

Table 3 provides a rough order of magnitude cost estimate to implement the heritage center scenario, including a one-time capital cost of approximately \$706,000 and a recurring annual operating cost of \$292,000.

Table 3. Rough Order of Magnitude Cost Estimate

Capital Costs (One-time)	
Land acquisition	\$55,000 ¹
Site engineering & permits/improvements	\$650,600 ²
TOTAL CAPITAL COSTS	\$705,600
Annual Operating Costs	
Alternative parking surface maintenance	\$13,000
Portable toilets	\$6,000
Trail stewards ³	\$262,800
General maintenance	\$10,000
TOTAL ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS	\$291,800

¹ High-level “ballpark” value estimate for ~1 acre, provided by CBRE (December 2023).

² Includes alternative parking surface, such as reinforced grass pavers.

³ Assumes three trail stewards during each shift for 12-hour days @ \$20/hr.

10.5 Interim Plan

As DLNR DOFAW seeks to acquire the land area required to implement the heritage center scenario, priority actions should focus on increasing educational outreach and securing an area for portable toilets.

This outreach should aim to educate visitors about the wahi pana, the sensitivities of adjacent residents and the local community, and how to respectfully visit Pololū. Highlighting the cultural significance and encouraging responsible behavior can help address some of the issues at the trailhead. This effort will also provide an opportunity to inform visitors about constraints at the trailhead, such as parking and bathroom limitations.

This public education campaign, which complements the trail steward program, should be conducted collaboratively with various stakeholders, including the community, youth, the County, and entities that interact with visitors. Engaging a diverse range of partners will help to effectively reach visitors before they arrive at the trailhead.

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Appendix A

Community Meeting Notes



Date: April 27, 2023
To: Project Files
From: Townscape, Inc.
Re: Pololū Trailhead Planning – Community Meeting #1

Meeting Attendees: Meeting attendees were asked to sign-in via a sign-in sheet prior to entering the meeting venue. A total of 78 participants signed-in. Participants from the consultant team included Gabrielle Sham, Rachel Kapule, and Sherri Hiraoka (Townscape, Inc.). The State Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) staff (Jackson Bauer and Steve Bergfeld) also attended the meeting.

This memo documents the in-person community meeting held on Thursday, April 27, 2023 at the North Kohala Intergenerational Center. The purpose of the meeting was to share a draft vision and issues for the trailhead and gather input from the community on potential solutions to address these issues.

Gabrielle Sham started the meeting at 5:00 p.m. She and Ms. Kapule provided a [slideshow presentation \(dlnr.hawaii.gov/recreation/files/2023/05/Pololu-Trailhead-Planning_Slideshow-for-Community-Mtg-No.01_Apr_May2023.pdf\)](https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/recreation/files/2023/05/Pololu-Trailhead-Planning_Slideshow-for-Community-Mtg-No.01_Apr_May2023.pdf) that introduced the project and shared the draft vision and issues.

Questions and/or comments from participants are provided below. Comments were shared verbally as well as written down on the “Comment Form,” which were collected immediately after the meeting. Responses from the community meeting are shown in *italics*.

- Whose kuleana is it to manage the Pololū trailhead?
 - *The highway was transferred from State to County last year, so the County has jurisdiction over the highway. The parking lot is part of the forest reserve, so it falls under the State’s jurisdiction.*
- Pololū is a quiet place to observe nature. There are many other parks you have to get a permit to go to; this could be an option for Pololū. I noticed a big increase in traffic on ‘Akoni Pule Highway; I would hate to see it get worse.
- This is a County and a State issue. Whatever falls under State jurisdiction is their kuleana and County’s jurisdiction is their own kuleana. Someone from Kohala could have a designated area on their property to host the traffic and get concession from that. They could also transport visitors from one site to another.
- Great idea above. Could State DOFAW acquire land further up the road to create a designated parking area and transfer people to the trailhead? The parking lot at the trailhead would not be a parking lot, it would be a turnaround area. You could also have designated trash bins and regular pick-ups and some kind of bathroom facility. I think it

would be beneficial to reduce littering. The amount of time a family spends hiking down and back, people will need to go to the bathroom.

- Pololū is a very special place. Could there be a reservation system where X amount of locals could go and X amount of tourists and limit that per day? There would be fees for the visitors which would cover the costs to manage that area, for example to repair or take care of parking area and trail. And you could hire local resource managers.
- It would be beneficial to have some sort of information or sign that visitors are required to read so that they understand the cultural significance, ocean dangers, that there's no bathroom, and the current weather conditions. I think this would solve a lot of issues with people coming unprepared and prevent a lot of accidents. Visitors should be informed before they arrive, before they are even on the road to Pololū. Currently a lot of the educational work the stewards are doing is right on site.
- I'm nervous about the idea of permitting for people who are born and raised here.
- My vision of Pololū is to stay as is; leave it a wilderness area and don't fix the trail. The \$500,000 should go to the stewards and the rest to Waipi'o Valley. Pololū should stay as is for cultural reasons; Kamehameha was born and raised in there. Everyone talks about tourists but we should talk about the environment first. The sunscreen is damaging the reefs. Pololū should be respected. Leave it alone. Don't put money on the trail, only a porta potty.
- Pololū was our playground. If you're going to change it, Uncle Bill Sproat wouldn't like that. It's not right to change that place. Should've done [something] years ago [to address the number of visitors]. The trail is dangerous. Pololū is supposed to stay as it is. I used to go fishing and hunting there.
- What we need to focus on is the Sproat homestead. Anything decided here directly affects them. Pololū should be left as is. There's always finger pointing with the State and County. It should be left to Big Island residents only for the trail. Visitors can spend 15 minutes at the lookout and take pictures.
- If we limit access that's the only way to maintain the environment. If it becomes a tourist trap and easy to go to then lots of people come. Then we find ourselves in a tourist circus. There's plenty of other places for them to go, they don't have to go to Pololū.
- I've witnessed the changes at Waipi'o. I am very much in agreement with the last few people who have spoken. Pololū is too small and delicate an area to change it for large groups. On special occasions, permits should allow people to go down. This is great looking far ahead but what about the immediate and the obvious. You should put a sign at Kēōkea saying "Last Bathroom." Let people know what to expect. This would help the residents that live out there.

- Everyone else (tourists) should not be allowed to go down into the valley. They can only come to take pictures.
- In court, a wahine from Florida brought out photos of when she was little there were big open spaces in Florida. Then as she got older, she lost these spaces to “urban sprawl.” Our community is small. We should meet and WE implement a plan, nevermind people from the outside. The community implements the plan. If there’s any concessions, have it enrich the community. When you have someone responsible for the mitigation factor, they will go ahead and educate the visitors, that’s the first point of contact. Only ‘ohana can go into the valley. There can be a spot where visitors get picked up, go to the site, then go back. This way education will happen before getting to the site.
- Most of us have our own access in and out of the trailhead. We’re not going down there just to cruise; we’re going for a purpose. We use the bathroom before getting there. If you can’t make it down, don’t go down. Things are changing to accommodate for those who have no business going down there. Who are we protecting? The people or the place? To me, it’s all about liability. No one wants to get sued. No one wants to rescue someone down there. We don’t go somewhere and ask people to fix it because we can’t go. Who is going to read a liability form? Mostly people won’t. I prefer to have you watch a video before you can go. Education is great. Educate people! Everyone needs to be educated. I tell my ‘ohana from the mainland not to go to Pololū, there’s no bathrooms and you can get injured. No one from Kohala tells their visiting family to hike down to Pololū because they know the conditions. Why are we changing Pololū for someone else to come in and they get hurt. Leave it how it is. If you can make your way down, go. If you cannot, don’t go.
- Educate visitors. If we don’t put money into Pololū to make it better, then people won’t want to come out. If we educate them on what could happen to them, like their children getting hurt and that there’s no service, then that could stop them from going. There’s too many people taking pictures of residents doing cultural activities and posting it on the internet. It’s like a broken car, eventually you don’t want to put money in it. Forget a bus and make visitors walk. Make it to where visitors don’t want to hike. Who are we protecting? What are we protecting?
- One suggestion on limiting access, put up no parking signs on the side of the highway from Makapala to Pololū with \$200 parking tickets and tow aways. And have a facility in Hāwī that would operate half a dozen buses to take people to Pololū.
- We’re doing this to preserve the cultural lifestyle for future generations. That’s what Pololū is. Kūpuna shared with me knowledge that was passed down: how to gather food and how to call fish out from the deep. Kūpuna shared knowledge to preserve the cultural lifestyle for future generations. We cannot engage in our cultural lifestyle because there’s no more place to park. I’m not going to park a mile away and walk with my fishing poles. The plantation days took away a lot from the people of Kohala. No can go ocean, no can go mountain. Lands were sold to people who put up fences and gates. Pololū trail was built by Hawaiians. I taught my sons how to fish Pololū but they no can

pass it down. The parking lot at Pololū should be for Kohala people only. So that they can continue to preserve their cultural lifestyle. They're not going down there to look at the black sand or the rocks. They're going down for a purpose, to get food. Tourists can park wherever they like (besides lookout).

- Every idea has equal weight. People in this room have kuleana and they will pass it on and on. Why does my idea have any weight [as a newcomer]? Because I love Pololū doesn't give me a relationship to it. I wish people would look at it through this context.
- Can the State hire someone to be in the valley to watch all the people and make sure they're staying where they should stay? I've seen people going all over the place, off the trail. Who's going to follow up on that? Not the police. We need a park ranger. Those are the worst people, the ones who think they can go all over the place. Who can be in control of that?
 - *There is a grant to expand the trail steward program, and the State plans to hire an additional trail steward for inside the valley. There are also 13 new DLNR enforcement officers which should hopefully increase enforcement.*
- That valley is sacred; Kamehameha was born and raised there. My granddaughter had a good solution, you should follow up with her. I used to hunt and fish down in the valley. Leave it alone, don't change Pololū.
- You could issue parking stickers and reserved stalls for residents. You can't stop tourists from going down there but you could fence off all the sacred areas, maybe has to be 12 ft high.
- Pololū has become a sacred place for our family. The best time was during COVID when there were no tourists, and it was empty and beautiful. Is it possible, is it legal to keep tourists from coming down? Is it legal to do the permitting system? I like the idea of them watching a video or reading something. Maybe visitors can take a quiz so that they have to pay attention and they aren't just signing something. How can we go about restricting the access? With the \$500,000 budget, instead of using it to build a giant parking lot, could those funds be used to restore inside the valley, remove invasive species and plant native canoe plants?
 - *The \$500,000 is not for the parking lot. It's for figuring out the solution and what the community wants. It was appropriated by the Legislature to create a plan. The funding is not for constructing anything. It will also be used to complete an Environmental Assessment. If there's a need for construction the State will have to seek additional funding.*
- Thank you to the trail stewards, they've done a great job up there. Pololū needs porta potties and a spot for stewards to have an educational area instead of using the Sproat's property. Provide more money to the stewards to do more education. Have an area for the trail stewards to store things. Adding more parking will just add more traffic. Mahalo to the stewards, they're giving away their time away from their families to take on all that kuleana up there.

- Who's responsible will influence the solutions. My mother would go down into Pololū even up to an older age. In a park in Arizona, there's one road with a check in area, you have to buy a parking permit to go to the top and park. They had something where it costs \$5 and then as a resident you could buy a year pass for \$20 and you can go whenever you want, that worked very well. Pollution and litter went down, crowd went down after just implementing a \$5 fee. I could envision something similar for Pololū, with a check point. There's potholes where people park on the side of the highway, it's dangerous. I could envision a stand and charging visitors for parking, which allows for revenue for the person manning the check in. With bathrooms, trash cans, and vending machine for water.
- Pololū is sacred. You can't go running around a cemetery. Most artifacts in the Hawaiian Hall at Bishop Museum come from Pololū. You shouldn't fence off sacred sites because you're showing people where to go. A similar issue happen somewhere else where they told people that there were ali'i burial caves, and after all of it was dug up and stolen. People come in and help themselves to the valley and have no regard. There needs to be an officer down there, there are people that hunt down there with guns. If you give out too much information about Pololū to the public, they're going to come and see what they can find.
- We got to focus on our kūpuna that are buried down there. Cattle are walking all over that area. Should plant native plants on grave sites and fence it off. It feels like nobody cares about the place. I think we should focus on the environment and burials before any tourists go down there. We must protect our ancestors. Cattle is walking all over the place. Should fence the area or do something about the cattle. Sunscreen shouldn't be used down there at all. Anything man made is not good for the environment. Kūpuna first, the graves must be protected. Know that somebody has been there before.
- We're talking about how to protect Pololū. Got to start from the root, which is protecting the environment there. It's been a cultural practice site since way before us. I would like to see the parking area only for Kohala residents. Tour companies need to be educated, maybe hire someone to educate visitors and lead them on a guided tour down there. I don't like to see my community against one another. We all live on the same planet. We would respect other cultures, so we're asking the same of everyone else. If visitors want to partake, then come learn and let us educate you. Visitors are not entitled to make changes. Can you imagine someone walking all over your grave? I cannot. What that tells people is that those people that were here before us, who fought hard so that we can live how we live today, don't matter; we don't think like that. Take the money and put it back into the schools and give the youth a purpose to protect their land.
- The more I listen to what's being said, Pololū needs to have some sort of wilderness designation. Which means it's a different kind of space than just to visit. We need to back up and change our context on how we look at Pololū. It's an important indigenous place where the indigenous values need to dictate what's going on there.

- For us Hawaiians there's this challenge, the State and County doesn't care about us. Article 12 Section 7, the State shall protect traditional and customary rights, but it says "subject to the right of the state to regulate." That's the pilau part. How can the government regulate someone's religion? Until that changes, everything we find sacred cannot be trusted to the State or to the County, such as the burial treatment program. Hawaiian identity is being destroyed. We cannot rely on the State Burial Council because it's broken, and the State is determined to keep it broken. The visitors will still come, and it's up to us, the community, to look at how the revenues will be distributed. It should go to our community first to help us protect what we find sacred; the money should not go to the State. We don't need to wait for this \$500,000 plan.
- It seems like we're headed to restricting the number of people entering the valley; that's going to be a challenge. Hawai'i's dealing with increasing tourism all over the State. One thought is to come up with an optimum number of people that can be below the lookout at one time. From 8am to 5pm, once that number is reached, no one else can go down until someone comes back up. I walk the valley and I'm back up by 8am and there's not too many people there. By 10am there's more people.
- I haven't been down there in many years because of the crowd. The feral human colony, people living the valley, has that been corrected?
 - *Nobody lives there anymore.*

The following comments were received via the "Comment Form" from meeting participants.

- Do not want to be so straightforward selfish knowing most of the tourists are so hungry for the warm air and a place like Pololū Valley to hike with T-shirts and shorts, without heavy clothing/footwear for children. But as I hear the resident's voices I came to settle that Pololū should be kept as original as possible. I would like those many restrictions that came to be placed last few years to be lifted for Kohala residents and their guests to be able to explore the valleys freely again.
- Address the lua situation and place for porta potties on the mauka side just before the stone pillar. Cut the embankment back 8 feet from the stone pillar to the paved shoulder (100 ft approx.). Re-instate camping on a limited basis (10 to 12 campsites); our keiki deserve to be able to camp in Pololū.
- Buy the Mule Station to have more room and move the parking from the trailhead.
- Parking at the lookout should be for Kohala residents only, with stickers for the residents. Add signage at Kēōkea saying it's the last stop to use the toilet. Don't add more parking at the trailhead. Visitors should be allowed to go by signing up and paying for a tour. Tour guides need to be educated and be responsible for protecting and educating the tourists. Pololū should be designated as a Hawaiian Heritage place or "wilderness area." This should be used to protect the Hawaiian cultural and heritage. Keep stewards at trailhead and increase the number of stewards.

- Rather than increasing parking, decrease parking. Use some existing parking spots for stewards, info, etc. No vending machines with plastic water bottles please! They will stay in the bottom of the valley, water fountain/tap only. I'm not sure about the wilderness designation; it should be a people first, Hawaiians first designation. Should have permits to limit access.
- I'd like to see the trailhead a view point only.
- I wish the intro included exactly what the stewarding program is and is doing. Most in this room have no idea. They seem to not know the current problem of too many tourists is what is trying to be "changed." Not to change Pololū.
- Another thought is that if people had access only by van, the driver could be the educator.
- Why on your Project Location Map have you not noted the burial and other cultural sites?



Date: May 2, 2023
To: Project Files
From: Townscape, Inc.
Re: Pololū Trailhead Planning – Community Meeting #1 via ZOOM

Meeting Attendees: Meeting attendees were asked to sign-in via a Google Form. Only 13 participants signed-in, but approximately 22 participants joined the meeting online or called in by phone. Participants from the consultant team included Gabrielle Sham and Rachel Kapule (Townscape, Inc.). The State Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) staff (Jackson Bauer and Steve Bergfeld) also attended the meeting.

This memo documents the community meeting held on Tuesday, May 2, 2023 via Zoom for the Pololū Trailhead Planning project. Similar to the in-person meeting held on Thursday, April 27, 2023 at the North Kohala Intergenerational Center, the purpose of this virtual meeting was to share a draft vision and issues for the trailhead and gather input from the community on potential solutions to address these issues.

Gabrielle Sham started the meeting at 5:00 p.m. She and Ms. Kapule provided a [slideshow](https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/recreation/files/2023/05/Pololu-Trailhead-Planning_Slideshow-for-Community-Mtg-No.01_Apr_May2023.pdf) presentation (https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/recreation/files/2023/05/Pololu-Trailhead-Planning_Slideshow-for-Community-Mtg-No.01_Apr_May2023.pdf) that introduced the project and shared the draft vision and issues. A recording of the meeting is available [online](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sY_fRXINBs&feature=youtu.be) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sY_fRXINBs&feature=youtu.be).

Questions and/or comments from participants are provided below. Responses provided after the meeting are shown in *red*.

- Well, let's see. I'm a longtime resident of Kohala. I built my house here in 1977. I've been going down to Poloū, quite regularly since the early years I used to see Hamo down there a lot who was a gentleman who lived in the area who's not with us anymore. In the last year I've been going down there a whole lot because it's very good exercise for me. I find that the people at the top, your hosts, who are taking care of the parking and they're keeping things quite orderly. I'm going down almost all the time between nine in the morning and noon. And it's very not crowded at nine in the morning when I go down. When I'm coming back up, there's a lot of people coming down so I can see what you're talking about with crowds. Just a couple of things brought forward on the safety going down, I have not seen any real problems. But it does seem like the after rain where it's slippery it's obviously especially difficult, especially right at the beginning of the trail where it's just sort of smooth, compacted dirt, so if some kind of a better gripping surface could be in place for just like the first 30 or 40 yards that would be helpful. I find the people, the tourists, who come quite respectful. I picked up a little bit of litter but very little littering going on. One of the things that does concern me is I numerous times have seen people come down with small children and they have the small children play in the water of the little

pond in there which I feel has got to be dangerous health wise because of the stagnancy and pigs and cows around. There are a couple old bulls I've seen around in the last six months, but they are so old and they have no energy in them for even moving out of the way or doing anything. So that doesn't seem a problem. There have been a few dogs I've seen down there. And that can be an issue if the monk seals are on a beach. But that is very infrequent and I've seen monk seals there a couple of times. I think the real issue an overall perspective is you know visitors and locals. I'm certainly a local by now but generally there's always that trade off and that issue about how much do you want to share with visitors and how do you make that? So I don't have anything new to say to that respect. It's clearly a valid issue that has to be resolved in some way and of course, Cherri Sproat and those who live up there should have a lot of say about whatever you do. I also feel like the imperative I've kept over all these years is we don't want any tour buses out there and so if there's no way of restricting on the roads, then if you make an easy turnaround that would be kind of an opening. I think it's very important to be sure that that doesn't happen. I guess I've said enough. Thank you.

- I live on a farm on the way to Pololū. And I think that one thing that you guys did not address is the traffic, you know, the going into Pololū. The roads are very small and it's very wavy. And it's really quite dangerous and people drive really fast. I don't know if you guys can do anything about that. But it is a big concern for the community. I used to run towards Pololū on a regular basis and I no longer do that because I don't want to get run over by cars, you know. And we've seen a big increase in traffic on the road. So that's a big concern. Just thought I'd throw that out there.

Yeah, well, in addition to everything else that you have already captured, you know, the lack of infrastructure at the trailhead. You know, you guys need to consider the safety of the traffic getting there. You know, the condition of the roads, it's very small. And there was an accident the other day where, you know, I think the cars ran into each other because, you know, they were going too fast and they didn't make the turn or something like that. I mean, it's very dangerous.

- I just want to touch up on what she said because I live right down where the road forks to Pololū and Kēōkea, just where Waikāne and Niuli'i bridge. It's probably one of the most unsafe place to try to have traffic merge through that, you know, really got to take in consideration the roads as the woman said, because, yeah, you can do everything you want to do for make changes at Pololū but it's getting there. And what she said it's true. There's going to be a lot more accidents. And not only that, you got bicyclists coming up and bicyclists company. You know, I get it. It's a tour guide. But a lot of it is unsafe. And so, you know blind spots are probably the worst thing can happen with the drivers here. And if this is going to be exposed out that this development is happening, and more people coming in, not only will accidents occur more often but I fear that families who live in there going to be affected not because of the cars parking anything, but if they got children. You know if something happened, who's going to be responsible? You know, and I get it safety's first, the family's got to watch the children. But you've got to consider these roads. No, no, this is my opinion. We're not designed to hold big traffic. It is not okay. And I think

that living here now over the last 33 years you know, just trying to park my truck down to get to my carport. You know, it's you got to wait for a lot of tourists to pass over or locals to pass before I can do anything to park my car. So I just thought that, you know, that's something that got to consider.

- Hello everyone. I've been living on island since 2002. I actually live in Kona, so I don't live in Kohala. But I go to Pololū really regularly because it's shaded and it's a long trail and I have a dog so I really appreciate that I can get exercise and my dog can get exercise. I hear the community's concerns. But I guess I'm just concerned because there are very few trails of any length that you can actually kind of get exercise on. So Pololū is one of my favorite places to be. It seems to me maybe you could put in a shuttle service from I don't know, grocery store, kind of some common hub and hope that might be a solution to increased traffic or a composting toilet for sanitation. I also went there last week, and I met the stewards, they were amazing. But I do notice that when people are kind of parking on the side of the road, there's a lot of people walking through the road and if you're kind of coming in and trying to turn around, it becomes an issue. So maybe if there was a third steward that could guide people to the end so that they're staying out of walking back and forth through the middle of the road that might be also a good solution. That's all I got.
- So I'm born and raised on O'ahu. And I'm in my 80s and I have seen like a lot of local people over the years, many, many changes. I disliked going to O'ahu and going to my native Pālolo valley where I was born and raised because of all the changes. What I feel I'm also a kupuna at the national park here. And I have family that are born and raised on this island and I think that Hawai'i Island is kind of like our last hurrah, so to speak. I love it here because of the peace and tranquility and I consider the valleys like Waipi'o on one side of the island and Pololū on the other as being naturally cut off by the roads and by its location. I think that the land is therefore speaking to us and saying you know you need to limit it by the environment that has been naturally created. I believe in managed tourism because I've seen what's happened on O'ahu and I'll just give Hanauma Bay as an example. When I was a kid, we would catch a bus and then we would have to walk a very long way to get to Hanauma Bay. There was no way to get there by bus. And but we could go there freely and we did that. Then it got so ridiculously crowded with no, no rules and you know, people were scattering bread on the water and you've heard all of those. I don't need to go into that but what was created was a terrible environmental situation for the fish for the people that were there and I haven't been there for at least 35 years, which makes me very sad because it was a place that I enjoyed very much. The end of the road in Kaua'i goes to Hanakāpī'ai and the Kalalau trail. And so what happened with all the parking when people were trying to create a situation where they could allow people to go in, enjoy the end of that road the beautiful beaches there. And, uh, you know, I think the county the community in that area took the bull by the horns and literally had to, like our stewards at Pololū are doing right now, was to educate the people to get them not to be parking all over the road because if you were there during that time, it was horrible. People parking on both sides of a very small road. Bicycles and walkers going in between the cars. And I'm an emergency nurse by background. And that just gave me fits because I thought Oh God, and then I look at Sacred

Falls and what happened there and the result of that was you know, the State getting sued for the people that were in there not obeying the signs. And really, to me not common sense. We were not allowed to go there as kids because it was very dangerous. And then you know what happened when they had that big rain and the rain came down and then the water flooded the area. A lot of people got hurt, and then they ended up suing the State. To me, that's just utter stupidity. And so, I think it's our responsibility as adults and I think we should be stewards of our land and protect people from doing stupid things. And you know, I'm not referring to everybody. I'm referring to the few that do stupid things no matter what you tell them and use the guidelines we already have naturally. Like I see the end of the road that's very narrow, I think you should limit the traffic to only those parking spaces. You should have a reservation system like they do in Kaua'i, you have a reservation system. And yeah, it's a sad thing. But you know, if we don't protect our environment, and the beautiful places that we have in Hawai'i, then the footprint will get larger because when you look at economics, economics becomes the driving engine. And, and then it just gets and it appears to me when I look at O'ahu it makes me so sad. And I just heard on the radio this morning about what's happening at Kailua and Kailua Beach and Lanikai. Anyway, I could go on and on and for those of you who have been here a long time, you know of what I speak. So I really believe that the road is narrow, the road is windy, and I think we need to balance people being able to look at our beautiful places with the narrowness of the road, the smallness of the parking lot, talking to people that want to exploit our land and saying no, you can't because you know, then it will allow everybody to enjoy the place. People that are lucky enough to be able to visit it will enjoy it and and keep it controlled and managed, I guess is the right word, that I'm trying to express. I am very sad at what has happened to my island. And I don't want it to happen to my adopted Island, which is this one now. I just don't want it to happen. So anyway, that's my take on it.

- Hi I'm Sarah Pule-Fujii. I am one of the stewards at Pololū. And I just wanted to touch on what [someone] had said about the bikers that bike tours that come up, back roads. The road to Niuli'i is already narrow. It's already with no shoulder. And this they say share the road but the bikers are not sharing the road with us. We have to wait. You know they're going around the turning, we have to wait until we finish the whole turning to get back to the speed that we normally do. These guys should be stopped from coming to Niuli'i and Niuli'i to Pololū. We need to have a solution to stop these guys. The shoulder is not wide enough. They speed, what [he] is talking about, I live across of [him], we have the two bridges with a yield sign. People don't yield. The car is coming down from Pololū, an accident to happen anytime I walk on the road and especially when I'm walking with my grandchildren, I stop and I stare at the vehicles so they get eye to eye contact with me because there's too much traffic we got. We got to limit Pololū. I don't know how we're gonna do it but stop the bikers from coming to Pololū. Thank you.
- Aloha. I grew up on the Big Island in Hōlualoa, lived there about 21 years and Pololū was very special to me. And so I love these ideas that are coming out. I believe that limiting the number of people who come into Pololū is a fantastic idea. There are plenty of parks where I live in Oregon where you have to sign up and you have to sign up six months to a year in advance in order to get some of the spots. Now do I love that I might have to do that anytime I come back and visit

where I grew up? No, I don't. But I believe that the place is worth saving and worth keeping as it is. I got to see Kua Bay absolutely destroyed because they paved the way out to it. You give people easy access to something there, you're going to invite the wrong type of people in, so I loved the registration. I also honestly believe that there should be a day that only Native Hawaiians should be allowed to go maybe a week, this is their place. You know we white people just get to share it. So I strongly believe that Hawai'i should be kept for Hawaiians for kanaka maoli, that's it.

- Aloha mai kākou. I was raised in Kohala. My 'ohana is from Kohala. So as a little girl I used to sleep at Auntie Cherri's house, right there on the lookout. We never really went down in the valley when we were kids. And I do think part of it is because it was, it's very dangerous down there. And the other part is, we knew there's a sacredness to that space. That's what we grew up knowing. And I just wanted to pop on and kāko'o what our kūpuna have said already, and then mention a couple other points or so. I do agree about the road that the road was not built to handle the amount of traffic that is going in and out of there. The other thing I wanted to mention is when the weather is really bad down there. People should not be going there. I know we talked a little bit about when flash floods happen on island that we talked about wanting to close the access to the valley because we all know there's been several rescues down there. Like not just on days where there's really bad weather but also on days where there's good weather. And the other thing I wanted to mention is I know the 'ohana had talked about commercial photography and not wanting commercial photography down there or weddings and that's been kind of a big issue. And the reason why is because we all know that people are going down there because of social media. And once you start, I actually recently went to my cousin's wedding at Waimea Valley. And it broke my heart when I was there because the amount of wedding that they had there that day, it was...it was terrible. I don't want to ever see this valley turn into that. So I mean, I wanted to bring up those two points, the point about closing the valley during flash floods, and also about not allowing commercial photography or weddings down in the valley. I love the valley very much. I'm part of the Protect Pololū hui so most of you who are from Kohala already know me. You probably see me posting a lot of stuff online, or our group but really, I don't live in Kohala right now. But that is where my na'au is. That is where my 'ohana lives. So I do the work that I do from California and I have been home a couple of times. I came home for Auntie Patty Ann's huaka'i, I just wanted to share that mana'o. Mahalo.
- Being at the lookout every day, and when it rains, it's slippery. We see people fall. We need to stop them from going down. And Pololū is a sacred place. When you see visitors come and they're going down with footballs with balls to play down there...my last line to our visitors when I'm giving them my safety speech is, "please remember that this is all a sacred land to us Hawaiian people. So please, have respect for the land." And there are people that I know I have touched their hearts that they will respect but then when you have people that come with footballs and stuff like that, they're not going down there to respect anything. They don't know how special the place is. And if we limit the people, but my wish is not let anybody go down, they can come and visit at the lookout I have no problem with that. But when they going go down, if they have respect for the place because it's so sacred and limit the people. If we have

to let them go down, limit the people but we don't have to do any improvements there. Leave it the way it is because 99% of the people who come say they have never seen any place so beautiful. It's stunning. The most beautiful place on the islands we need to keep it that way. Thank you.

- My father led the restoration of Ahu'ena Heiau at Kamakahonu, the capitol site, the kingdom of Hawai'i, personal temple of Kamehameha the Great. The history of the lands of Kohala. If we took a gathering of all the people, 'ōiwi, koko, you're going to find that per capita there's more relationships to all of the lands of Hawai'i than there are the newcomers here. I would like to thank everyone who's testified tonight for I feel the essence of what is important to be said for you. I succeeded my father as kahu of Ahu'ena Heiau and we have had many changes happen recently and at this time I have this to share. Greetings this day. I am Lamakū Mikahala Roy, of Ahu'ena Heiau at Kamakahonu. Kamakahonu is the capitol of the kingdom unified by Kamehameha the Great in 1810. Kamakahonu is the capital of the restored Kingdom of Hawai'i, but Ali'i Nui Mō'ī Edmund K. Paki Silva II, the kahu of Ahu'ena Heiau at the time. Since 2010, we've been receiving sacred spiritual conveniences, guidance from the ancestors, 'ōiwi, we uphold the highest light of Akua at Kamakahonu for the planet. This news has spread throughout Hawai'i populations. In 2021, I sent the attached letter to the legislature of Hawai'i to inform all in the government positions near and far about this amazing truth for Hawai'i and the world. The State DLNR in its representative former chair Ms. Suzanne Case was informed of transitions by spirit. Great historic events at Kamakahonu. As the new chair has been equally updated. Nothing remains the same. Since we have heard from our ancestors. They indicate what most high God guides us guides for us here. Akau declares Hawai'i the kingdom of Akua, or the kingdom of God upon the earth. Akua will guide all of the sacredness that is Hawai'i now and for the future in each and every sacred site known and those from antiquity yet unknown. In 2021, Akua by our ancestors declared a moratorium on development upon some 40 acres of vital coastal lands of Kona from Kaloko in the north to Honaunau in the south. These lands were known as Pu'uokaluaokalani by our forefathers and they are identified collectively today by Akua as the repository of the especially sacred lands of the ages of Akua. What does Akua guide for this application for changes at Pololū? Here is a spiritual convenience that has come and I read it now. Spiritual convenience of ancestors for Akua, Pololū. No modifications to the land for a trailhead are to be planned. All persons wishing to give in service to the lands of Hawai'i at Pololū Valley are to contact the state DLNR who are to communicate with and gain approval from the restored kingdom of Hawai'i. Only po'e kupa o Pololū, those of family descendants of Pololū may access the Pololū trail and enter the valley. All service projects planned by the state are called to be placed on hold until approval is obtained from the offices of the restored Kingdom of Hawai'i, Ali'i Nui Mō'ī Edmund K Paki Silva Jr. E nānā 'ia ka pulapula i ka la'akea i ka lā'aumi. May the descendants be cared for in times of light and times of misfortune. I read to you now a spiritual convenience that came to us beginning in 2010. Leo kualono I named it, voices [?] the mountain top. [?] March 4, 2010 a whale has beached itself upon the shoreline and Pololū Valley. Akua and the ancestors speak of this coming of this great sperm whale. The water brings the wisdom of the Creator bringing wisdom of the kūpuna. Where the animal passes and places itself is important. The whale is at the Pololū shoreline. It's

as if it's upon the Pololū Trail and into the sea. The wisdom of the Creator brings us the wisdom of the kūpuna. The whale died for the purpose of saving the wildlife of the ocean. He died because of the effect of sonar beams that are used by the military. These practices are affecting all wildlife in the oceans. The whale died because it brings us a message to kanaka maoli, messages, stay on the trail of the ancestors. King Kamehameha is speaking to us do not give plans away. The whale has beached itself on the shore in an area that feeds into the Pololū trail. The whale is presently in two parts. The two parts tell of the two divisions we as a people find ourselves in. Some no longer believe in and know the goodness of our Hawaiian life. Their hearts are no longer open to our people's first teaching. Many of us believe in Christianity over our Hawaiian way. The God of the Christians is the same God of our ancestors. The only difference is many do not know who we are. The trail is one, we 'ōiwi are divided. Kanaka maoli come together as one now, do not let the United States divide us. It is our trail. They are our ancestors, when we step off the trail into a field of 'a'ā lava, we are hurt. But if we walk the trail that has been prepared for us, we are safe and we reach our destination. Ceremony this ceremony should take place from 3pm on it is a good thing that children can be a part this time they can be there to honor the koholā. The children are what the efforts of all of our adult lives are about. Our work is to preserve Earth Mother and to teach the wisdom for all life to come. Should the koholā remain upon the land, the bones all such remains shall be saved, harvested for safekeeping for sacred use by kanaka maoli.

- What was the testimony in Kohala? Can you tell us what most people spoke on?
 - *Notes from the in-person community meeting are available [online](#).*
- Anyone on this call should have access to these spiritual conveyances and I hope you make them available.
- There's no place to submit testimony online.
 - *Additional testimony or comments may be submitted at any time here: <https://forms.gle/jACz8F9EYE6V13Uj6>*
- (Chat comment) Aloha, I am attending on behalf of Councilmember Cindy Evans. I have been taking extensive notes since the beginning of this meeting. However, if you would like to reach out, I am attaching our contact information. Email: cindy.evans@hawaiicounty.gov Phone: (808)889-6512.
- (Chat comment) Can you guys email your timeline to all attendees please?
 - *A general timeline can be found on our project fact sheet here: https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/recreation/files/2023/01/Pololu-Trailhead-Planning_Fact_Sheet_2023-01-16.pdf*

Gabrielle Sham closed the meeting at approximately 6:00 p.m.

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Appendix B

Memos from Previous Planning
Efforts

**February 4th, 2017 – Pololū Valley Lookout: A Summary
of Public Concerns; Power, Water and Roads
Subcommittee of the North Kohala Community
Development Plan.**

POLOLU VALLEY LOOKOUT
A Summary of Public Concerns
Power, Water and Roads Subcommittee of the NKCDP
February 4, 2017

The Power, Water and Roads sub-committee of the North Kohala CDP conducted three meetings with community residents to discuss problems at the Pololu Lookout and consider possible alternatives for long term improvements.

The principal areas of concern expressed are:

KEEPING POLOLU A WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE: Several people spoke about using caution in making the viewing of Pololu easier for more people. Restricting tour busses and prohibiting commercial activity were a common theme. Several residents said the congestion and safety issues have accelerated in the last year.

HEALTH: The lack of porta-potties or other facilities has resulted in people using the local residents' yards, the roadsides and the trail as toilets. Several people complained of the health risks, the smell and ugliness. One owner of valley land suggested composting toilets near the dunes behind the beach.

SAFETY: The increase in the number of visitors increases the risk of drowning in the beach's remote and extremely dangerous riptides. The delay in getting help is a significant problem. There were 3 deaths in one recent year. A lifeguard for Pololu was recommended.

CONGESTION: Vehicles are parking along the highway on private land and using private driveways to turn around. Residents reported an increase in robbery break-ins of parked cars. Police seldom patrol the area.

THE VALLEY TRAIL: Visitors typically like to get out and walk after the drive to Pololu. Many start down the trail unaware how steep or slippery it can be. The signs do not properly warn hikers of dangers and mislead some into thinking there are restrooms ahead. There is no alternative place to stretch their legs. There is no emergency phone and no cell reception. Those in danger must appeal to residents for help. People are camping overnight in the valley. The ban on camping is unenforced.

PENDING SNACK SHACK: Surety Kohala has received a permit from the County to allow for the development of a "snack shack" at the former mule station. The response to such a development was negative. Participants agreed that this would only contribute to the current problems and detract from the wild nature of the lookout area.

The meeting closed with participants reaching consensus on the following topics.

1. Increased police presence to address the everyday traffic problems and the increased number of car vandalism and break-ins.
2. More enforcement of the valley camping and health issues. Better signs warning of dangers.
3. Install an emergency phone and perhaps a webcam. Either could be challenging due to a lack of utilities and a weak cell signal.
4. Employ a lifeguard for the beach.

5. **Create a parking area of limited size away from the current lookout that does not impinge on local residents' property.** Attendees of all meetings opposed a large parking lot, believing that it would invite a tourist horde. Make it sufficient to accommodate a bit more than present needs, they suggested, but leave room for expansion. Most attendees at the last meeting voted for a parking lot mauka of the highway, where it was less conspicuous and detracted less from the viewing area. Toilet facilities should be installed near the parking area and trash cans placed at various marked areas (Figure 1).
6. **Restrict vehicle access beyond the parking lot. Prohibit parking along the highway right-of-way.** Make the present lookout pedestrian-only, but allow vehicles access to drop off passengers (Figure 1).

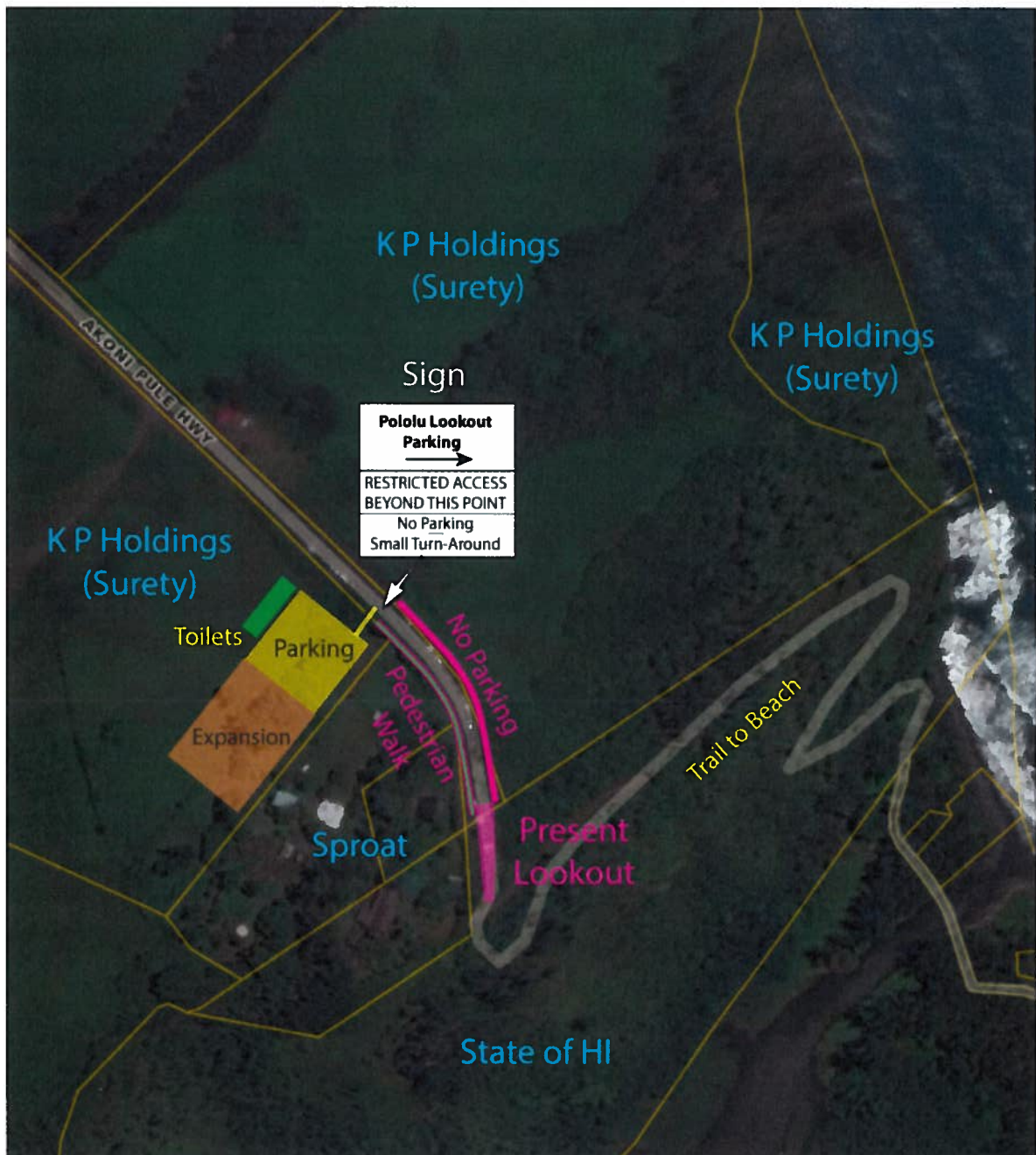


Figure 1. Example of a parking lot and restricting access to the present lookout.

7. **Place stanchions at the present lookout, prohibiting vehicle access beyond a turn-around.**
 This most popular suggestion would create a safe viewing area in which interpretive signs could be placed. Some stanchions could be removable for emergency vehicles to reach the trailhead. A pedestrian walk could be created along the highway between the parking lot and the lookout.

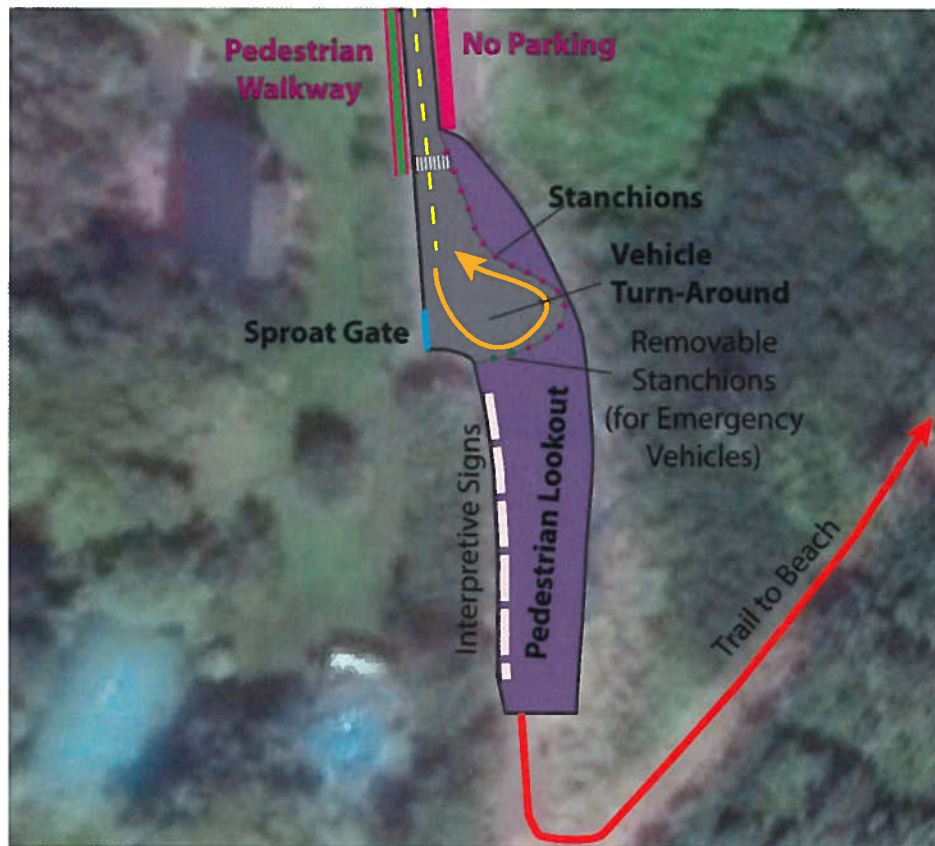


Figure 2. Example of a restricted pedestrian-only lookout with vehicle turn-around.

8. **Separate the activity of scenic viewing of the coastal valleys from the current valley view and trailhead into Pololu.** The view along the Pololu to Waipio cliffs is dramatically better further north along the edge of the Pololu cliff. Moving the viewing area out there (the farther the better) would allow for a view along the entire coast. Surrounding it with natural landscaping and trails would create a much improved scenic experience.

A parking area and a northern viewing area would probably involve purchasing or making legal arrangements with KP Holding (Surety Kohala Corp.) which owns the land both mauka and makai of the highway. Appropriate CDP sub-committees will investigate purchasing, funding, and any considerations involving the State Highways Division and the Dept. of Land & Natural Resources, which currently have responsibility for the area.

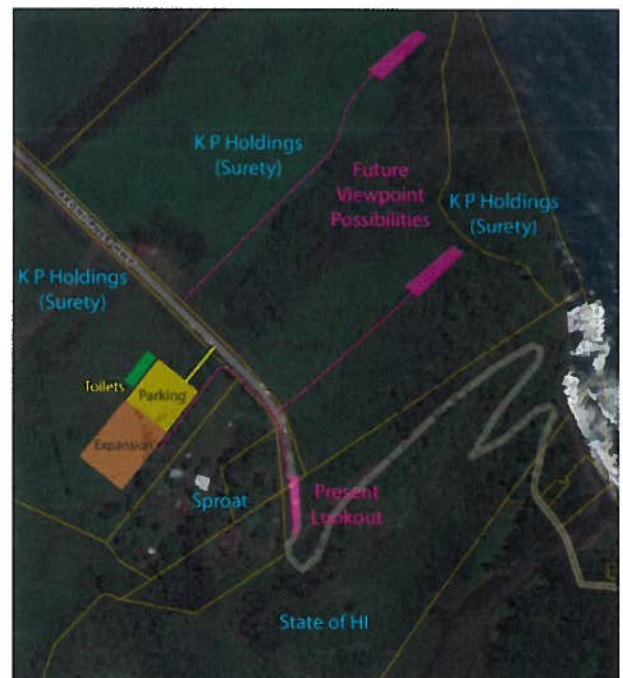


Figure 3. An example of a northern viewing area.

**January 18th, 2017 – Pololū Valley Lookout Public Meeting
Sponsored by the North Kohala Community Development
Plan, Subcommittees on Parks, Water, Roads; Growth
Management; Power, Viewplains, Erosion Control, and
the Community Access Group.**

POLOLU VALLEY LOOKOUT

Public Meeting January 18, 2017

Sponsored by the North Kohala Community Development Plan

Subcommittees on Parks, Water, Roads; Growth Management; Power, Viewplains, Erosion Control, and the Community Access Group

This was a community information-gathering discussion follow-up to a December 2, 2016 meeting with people living closest to the look-out. The goal is to make unified recommendations to different government agencies that control the highway, the lookout and the trail into the valley. Approximately 30 people were in attendance. The PWR sub-committee prepared maps of the land ownership and possible alternatives for long term improvements.

The principal areas of concern that were addressed are:

KEEPING POLOLU A WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE: Several people spoke about using caution in making the viewing of Pololu easier for more people. Restricting tour busses and prohibiting commercial activity were a common theme. Several residents said the congestion and safety issues have accelerated in the last year. "Pololu can't handle more people. The valley is abused as it is," one resident said.

HEALTH: The lack of porta-potties or other facilities has resulted in people using the local residents' yards, the roadsides and the trail as toilets. Several people complained of the health risks, the smell and ugliness. One owner of valley land suggested composting toilets near the dunes behind the beach.

SAFETY: The beach has extremely dangerous riptides. The increase in the number of visitors increases the risk of drowning. It takes 10-15 minutes to hike down the switchback trail. Added to the time for EMTs to drive from Kapa'au to Pololu, the delay in getting help is unacceptable. There were 3 deaths in one year. A defibrillator mounted at the trailhead was stolen a month after installation. A lifeguard for Pololu was recommended.

PARKING: Those in attendance agreed that there are significant problems with the current parking situation. Vehicles are parking along the highway on private land and using private driveways to turn around. Residents reported an increase in robbery break-ins of parked cars. While victims complain, many don't report theft. Police patrolling of the area is irregular.

THE VALLEY TRAIL: Visitors typically like to get out and walk after the drive to Pololu. Many start down the trail not knowing how steep or slippery it can be. The signs do not properly warn hikers of dangers and mislead some into thinking there are restrooms ahead. There is no alternative place to stretch their legs. There is no emergency phone and no cell reception. Those in danger must appeal to residents for help. People are camping overnight in the valley. The ban on camping is unenforced.

PROPOSED SNACK SHACK: Surety Kohala has received a permit from the County to allow for the development of a "snack shack" at the former mule station. The response to such a development was negative. Participants agreed that this would only contribute to the current problems and detract from the wild nature of the lookout area.

The meeting closed with participants reaching consensus on the following topics.

SHORT TERM:

1. Increased police presence to address the everyday traffic problems and the increased number of car vandalism and break-ins.
2. More enforcement of the valley camping and health issues. Better signs warning of dangers.
3. Install an emergency phone.
4. Employ a lifeguard for the beach.
5. Limit access to the lookout to vehicle turn-around, allowing only pedestrians, emergency vehicles and resident ingress and egress.

LONGER TERM:

1. Create a parking area of limited size away from the current lookout that does not impinge on local residents' property. Attendees of all meetings opposed a large parking lot, believing that it would invite a tourist horde. Make it sufficient to accommodate a bit more than present needs, but leave room for expansion. Most attendees at the last meeting voted for a parking lot mauka of the highway, where it was less conspicuous and detracted less from the viewing area.
2. Restrooms should be near the parking area and have trash cans at various marked areas.
3. Restrict vehicle access beyond the parking lot. Prohibit parking along the highway right-of-way. Make the present lookout pedestrian-only, but allow vehicles access to drop off passengers.
 - a. The most popular suggestion was to place stanchions at the present lookout, prohibiting vehicle access beyond a turn-around. This would create a safe viewing area in which interpretive signs could be placed. Some stanchions could be removable for emergency vehicles. A pedestrian path could be created along the highway between the parking lot and the lookout.
 - b. The view along the Pololu to Waipio cliffs is dramatically better further north along the edge of the Pololu cliff. Moving the viewing area out there, or adding one, would allow for a view along the entire coast. Surrounding it with natural landscaping and trails would create a very much improved visitor experience.

Either endeavor would probably involve purchasing or making legal arrangements with KP Holding (Surety Kohala Corp.) which owns the land both mauka and makai of the highway. The CDP sub-committees will investigate purchasing, funding, and any considerations involving the State Highways Division and the Dept. of Land & Natural Resources, which currently have responsibility for the area.

December, 2016 - Kohala Mountain News, "Pololu Lookout Problems Inspire Solutions" article summarizes preliminary meeting of December 2nd 2016 with nearest residents.

Pololu Lookout Problems Inspire Solutions

Kohala Mountain News ---December 2016

Problems of congestion and safety at the lookout at Pololu Valley have sparked the members of four groups to seek community ideas for improving what has become a dangerous situation. A public meeting to explore the problems and solutions has been scheduled for Wednesday, January 18th at 5 pm at the Senior Center.

A preliminary meeting with people living closest to the lookout was held on December 2nd, and the notes from that meeting may act as a basis for further discussions on the future of Pololu Lookout at the January meeting. The goal is to be make unified recommendations to the different government agencies that control the highway, the lookout and the trail into the valley.

Four subcommittees of the North Kohala Community Development Plan Action Committee are sponsoring the inquiry. They are the Community Access Group and the subcommittees on Parks, Water, Roads; Growth Management, and Power, Viewplanes and Erosion Control.

Keeping the rustic, non-commercial nature of the lookout was the central unified opinion of the residents near the lookout, according to a report to the Action Committee on the first of what are expected to be several meetings. Those attending encouraged the adoption of both short term and longer term solutions.

Moving the lookout to a location further toward Akoakoa Point would improve the view, help with the parking congestion and remove the casual visitors from the starting point for the steep trail to the valley floor, the report says. Most felt strongly that the experience of Pololu should not be made significantly easier for visitors – that the wild nature of the valleys, and difficulties getting to it, enhance the visit to the lookout.

For the short term the residents called for more police presence to address the everyday traffic snarls and the rising number of car vandalizing and break-ins. They also asked for more enforcement of the valley camping and health issues.

Using the lookout area for pedestrians and turnarounds only was another suggestion, as was operating portable toilets near the parking along the Akoni Pule Highway. Another idea was for parking on the land by the Mule Station.

In the long run it was suggested to move the viewing area further north along the edge of the Pololu cliff with a better view along the entire coast and surround it with natural landscaping and trails "to reflect the wilderness nature of the experience." Parking for the lookout should be out of view of traffic on the highway and of the lookout, requiring visitors to walk from their cars to the viewing area and to the trailhead. The size of the parking area should limited to the current traffic, but allow for expansion, if and when needed. Restrooms should be near the parking area.

The improvements should "honor the rural nature of the area and not be a substantial renovation with abundant parking, a fancy pavilion, a restaurant or sidewalks and curbs," the report says.

Part of keeping the experience rural included several suggestions on how to limit large tour buses. "There was general agreement that maintaining the curvy road past Halaula with narrow bridges was a good filter for visitors. It was recommended that no bridge widening be undertaken."

The recommendations are in line with problems identified and solutions offered at an August 2011 meeting of Pololu residents.

Moving the lookout would likely involve purchasing or making legal arrangements with KP Holding LLC (Surety Kohala Corp.), which owns the land both mauka and makai of the highway, and from the lookout along the cliff to the Kamehameha Schools land at Akoakoa Point. The group called on the CDP subcommittees to gather information on purchasing and funding any changes and on any future plans by State Highways Division and the Department of Land and Natural Resources, which currently have responsibility for the area.

The subcommittees will also prepare maps of the land ownership and of possible alternatives for long term improvements for the public meeting in January. To receive a copy of the report on the Dec. 2 meeting send a request to imuakohala@gmail.com.

**December 2nd, 2016 and August 5, 2011 – summary notes
from these two preliminary meetings with nearest residents.**

Notes from the Meetings of Residents near Pololu Lookout
8/5/2011 and 12/2/2016

Pololu Valley is the principal tourist attraction in North Kohala. Some have described North Kohala as a net that captures tourist dollars as they pass through on their way to and from Pololu Lookout. Residents and visitors like the rustic nature of Kohala, including the Pololu Lookout area. Four subcommittees of the NK Community Development Plan Action Committee have identified serious problems at the lookout that need addressing.

Before holding a meeting for the public at large, the subcommittees wanted to listen to the concerns of those living toward the end of Akoni Pule Highway and most affected by Pololu traffic. There was a consensus among the attendees of the meeting on Dec. 2 that there are some problems with the present situation at the Pololu Lookout, but that any solution should honor the rural nature of the area and not be a substantial renovation with abundant parking, a fancy pavilion, a restaurant or sidewalks and curbs.

There are some problems that need immediate attention.

- Safety of trail users. Too many people use the trail and swim in the ocean without knowing the dangers.
- The sign about restrooms at Keokea is misleading. There are none at Pololu, which causes health and aesthetic problems.
- Crime and break-ins are increasing. Cars are vandalized.
- Congestion- Parking needs to be controlled. Some cars block driveways or limit the highway to a single lane.
- Toilets, even temporary ones, are needed. Visitors ask residents if they can use their bathroom or simply use the bushes and sides of the trail.
- Install and maintain an emergency phone.

Other issues voiced:

- All agreed that visits to the lookout have increased dramatically in the last 2 years and that safety has become a major issue both at the lookout and in the valley.
- Several people said they would like to see nothing happen to change the present location and size of the lookout, because any change would encourage more people to use the lookout and trail.
- Most felt strongly that the experience of Pololu should not be made significantly easier for visitors – that the wild nature of the valleys, and difficulties getting to it, enhance the visit to the lookout.
- Safety of parking – The present lookout and approach is too small for drivers to turn around without backing into private driveways. The commonly-filled lookout parking space detracts from the pedestrian safety and viewing experience of visitors.
- Buses should somehow be restricted from the lookout. There was general agreement that maintaining the curvy road past Halaula with narrow bridges was a good filter for visitors. It was recommended that no bridge widening be undertaken
- Improvements are needed but must be limited. Leave the area rustic.
- No commercial activities in or near Pololu Valley
- Better policing.
- Move the parking area back: alleviate congestion and improve the turn-around.
- Pololu is an important heritage site and tourist experience. Create interpretive sign boards. Local knowledge and participation in making the signs is needed.
- There are several properties near the Lookout that could be used for expansion.
- The highway may have only a 20-ft. right-of-way.

- Potable water sources for drinking and restrooms is limited. No County water.
- The traffic mess keeps many local residents from visiting the lookout. This is regrettable.
- Bicycle tours are dangerous on the narrow and curvy highway. They should be stopped.
- Many visitors camp down at the beach. The State has no camping permitting or enforcement process in place. Signage does not clearly prohibiting camping.
- Preserve the open vistas and experience by public or conservation purchase of the land between the lookout and Akoakoa Point. The view improves as one approaches the point.

Toward a Solution --- Short Term

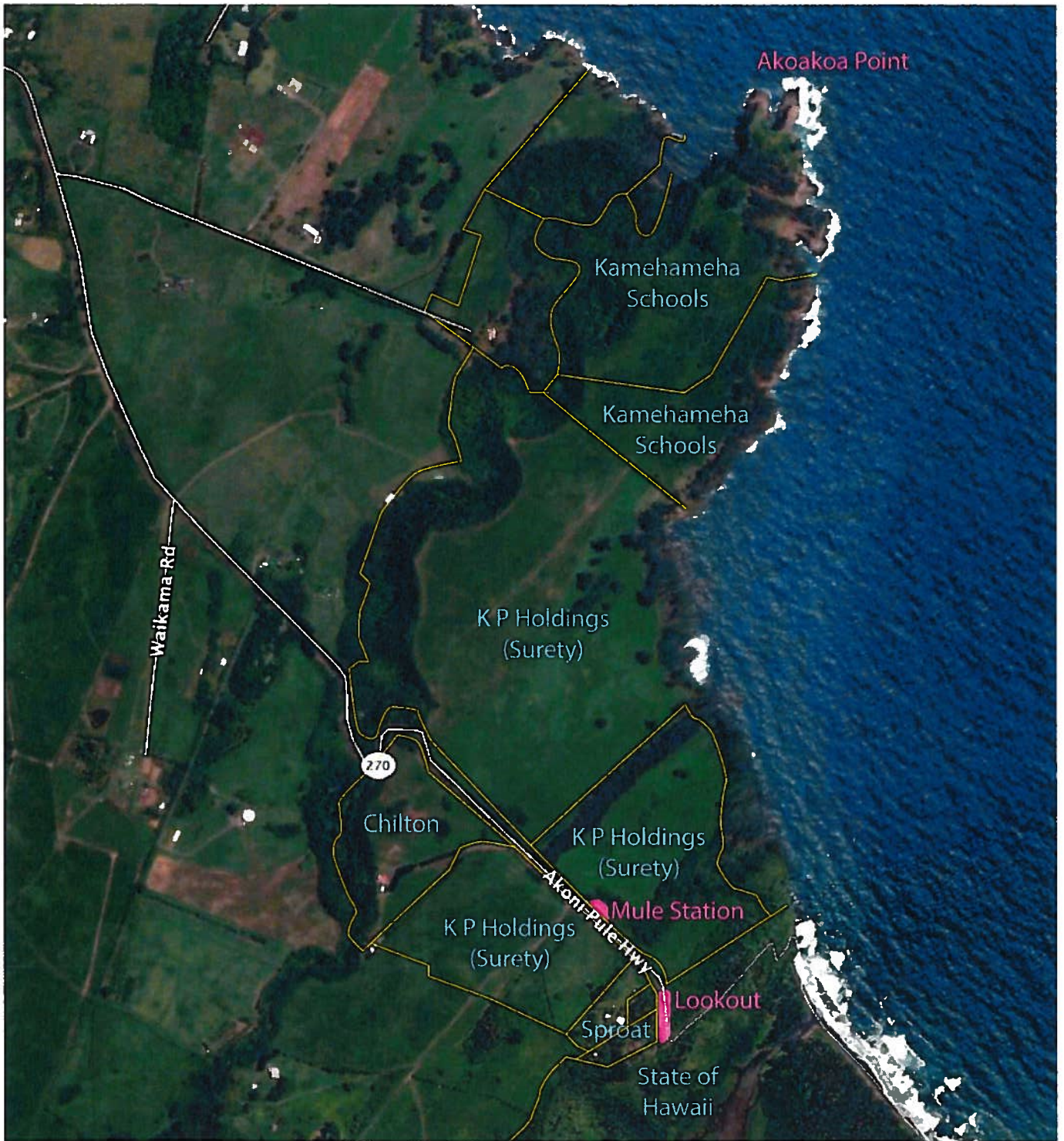
- Increase police presence ASAP to address crime, parking and camping issues.
- Get data on the number of visitors to determine need.
- Use the present lookout as turnaround and pedestrian only.
- Add interpretive boards and better trail signage at the viewpoint.
- Place parking away from the lookout area and make it less conspicuous. Place it back by the mule station if possible (see map).
- Add portable toilets at the parking area.

Toward a Solution --- Longer Term

- Create a parking area with toilets away from the cliff edge and out of sight from the approaching highway, presumably on the Mule Station property.
- The present lookout viewing area should be pedestrian only.
- Build a new viewing area toward Akoakoa Point with a better view along the coast.
- Viewing areas should include trails and natural landscaping to reflect the wilderness nature of the experience. Perhaps only a low stone wall along the cliff edge.
- Do not over-build the parking area. Make it large enough to accommodate traffic, but not so large as to invite significant added visitors and large buses. Hopefully make it expandable to accommodate normal growth in visits.
- Some would like to see the parking area for the lookout and the trailhead be located well behind the viewpoint so cars are less conspicuous.

Possible Problems.

- Any proposal needs a map and description so residents can see the proposed site beforehand.
- Obtaining property for parking and extended lookout (KP Holdings).
- Open Space funds for property acquisition precludes development.
- State-ownership may involve development regulations and standards that destroy the rustic nature of the site. Need to gather the facts on this. An alternative to purchasing the KP Holdings land might be an easement arrangement or restrictive conditions of sale that could work better for keeping the area rustic.



Akoakoa Point

Kamehameha Schools

Kamehameha Schools

K P Holdings (Surety)

Chilton

K P Holdings (Surety)

K P Holdings (Surety)

Sproat

State of Hawaii

Waikama Rd

270

Akonif-Pule Hwy

Mule Station

Lookout

Appendix C

Methodology for Visitor Counts

The section, provided by DLNR DOFAW, outlines the methodology utilized for the visitor counts presented in the management plan.

Pololū Data Analysis Methods

The Pololu Trail Stewards collect data during their shift each day. This data includes counts of how many people hiked the trail and how many people visited the lookout without hiking the trail. The stewards typically were at the lookout taking data from 8 am to 4 pm on Monday through Friday and varying shifts on the weekend.

Hourly Percentage Distribution of Hikers For a Typical Day

While most of the data collected were total numbers for an entire steward shift, there was an adequate sample of hourly counts in the early phases of the steward pilot program to calculate a distribution for the counts per hour. By averaging the number of hikers during each hour from the available raw hourly counts, an approximate distribution of hikers was calculated for a typical time period when hikers and visitors were present (5 am to 8 pm).

Using only the data from the raw hourly counts, the average number of hikers in an hour block (t) was divided by the average total number of hikers per day resulting in the percent of average daily hikers that occurred during the hour block, t , ($raw \%_t$). This calculation was repeated for each hour block (t).

$$raw \%_t = \frac{avg \# hikers_t}{avg \# hikers_{day}}$$

Estimating Total Hikers per Day

Since the stewards only report hiker counts for the duration of their shift, a total daily hiker was estimated. Using the raw percentages for each hour block ($raw \%_t$) and the reported hiker count from a steward's shift ($total hikers_{shift}$), an estimated total daily hiker count ($est \ total \ hikers_{day}$) can be calculated.

The estimated total daily hiker count ($est \ total \ hikers_{day}$) accounts for 100% of the hikers during the day while the reported hiker shift count ($total \ hikers_{shift}$) only accounts for the sum of the raw hourly percent hikers ($raw \%_t$) of each hour block during the steward's shift.

Using the proportion below, the total hiker count was estimated for each day, $est \ total \ hikers_{day}$:

$$\frac{est \ total \ hiker_{day}}{total \ hikers_{shift}} = \frac{100\% \ of \ hikers_{day}}{\sum_{Shift \ start}^{Shift \ end} raw \%_t}$$

$$est \ total \ hiker_{day} = \frac{(100\% \ of \ hikers_{day}) * (total \ hikers_{shift})}{\sum_{Shift \ start}^{Shift \ end} raw \%_t}$$

Estimating Total Hikers per Hour

Using the estimated total hiker count (*est total hikers_{day}*) and the original hour block percentages from the raw hourly counts (*raw %_t*), the estimated number of hikers per hour (*estimated hiker count_t*) for the time period 5 am to 8 pm were calculated.

For each *t* from 5 am to 8 pm:

$$estimated\ hikers_t = est\ total\ hiker_{day} * raw\ \%_t$$

Replicating Calculations for Lookout Visitor Data

All calculations were repeated using the lookout visitor counts provided by the stewards.

Determining Trends

After estimating the number of hikers and lookout visitors per hour during a typical day (5 am to 8 pm), monthly, daily, and hourly trends were calculated to inform decision-making processes.

Appendix D

Review of Visitor Control Measures

Visitor Control Measures

Visitor control measures implemented at other popular visitor destinations were examined as part of the background research for this management plan to identify potential visitor control measures for Pololū Trailhead. Note that the majority of measures examined were implemented in areas under the jurisdiction of State Parks, which has different rules than DOFAW. Therefore, some measures may not be applicable to Pololū.

For example, at the Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve on O‘ahu, visitors are required to make a reservation and watch an orientation video prior to entering the bay. At the time of writing, the bay is closed two days out of the week to allow the reef to rest and recover. At Ka‘ena Point State Park, also on O‘ahu, vehicle access is restricted to O‘ahu residents with a permit. At the Kaiwi State Scenic Shoreline, the Makapu‘u Tidepools have been closed indefinitely. Capacity limits, through a reservation/fee system, have been implemented at three State Parks: (1) Hā‘ena, Kaua‘i, (2) Diamond Head, O‘ahu, and (3) Wai‘ānapanapa, Maui. Consultation with the State Parks Division (Alan Carpenter, Deputy Director) provided more detail on the specifics at each site. Visitor control measures for these parks are further described below.

Planning considerations: Success of these visitor control measures directly correlates with enforcement. Places like Hanauma Bay, which has several staff educating and managing visitors, can limit human impact and help protect the natural resources within the bay. Whereas the Makapu‘u Tidepools, which have been closed indefinitely but with no enforcement, is packed with visitors on any given weekend. The state will need to secure future funding for the Trail Steward program or look for other alternatives to enforce visitor control measures at Pololū.

Hā‘ena State Park

Similar to Pololū, Hā‘ena State Park is located at the end of the road adjacent to a rural community on the north shore of Kaua‘i. It is a popular spot for swimming and fishing at Kē‘ē Beach and is also the starting point for the Kalalau and Hanakāpī‘ai Falls trails. Prior to the 2018 flooding event on Kaua‘i, which forced a closure of the park for over a year, visitor numbers reached an average of 2,000 people per day. In 2019, visitor control measures, including a daily visitor cap, increased law enforcement, and controlled parking and entry/parking fee system, were implemented. These measures were triggered by the significant impacts resulting from the increasing number of visitors on the adjacent residential community of Hā‘ena.

Visitor Capacity

The park is open every day from 7:00 a.m. to 6:45 p.m., however, entry is now limited to 900 visitors per day; this number includes both Hawai‘i residents and non-residents.

Reservation System for Entry & Parking

Out-of-state visitors must reserve and pay prior to entering the park (\$5 per person) in addition to reserving a time slot for parking (\$10 per vehicle). There are three time slots available, a morning one from 6:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., an afternoon one from 12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., and an evening one from 4:30 p.m. to sunset. State Parks indicated that the reservation system allows them to crowd control by spreading out visitors throughout the day. Time slots were created based on the historical average length of stay for visitors. Visitors are encouraged to

purchase multiple parking time slots if they are unsure how long they are staying, as they must vacate the parking lot by the end of the time slot.

Upon entry, IDs and reservations are checked to ensure that they match. For all Hawai'i residents, entry is free, and no reservations are required. Tour buses are not permitted to enter Hā'ena State Park.

The current parking lot can accommodate up to 100 vehicles, which was reduced from the previous 300-stall parking lot. Based on consultation with State Parks, approximately 60 to 70% of the parking stalls are reserved for Hawai'i residents, which are available for free on a "first come, first served" basis. Consultations with the current parking vendor have indicated that there's usually adequate parking for Hawai'i residents. If a vehicle includes both Hawai'i residents and out-of-state visitors, out-of-state visitors are still required to make a reservation and pay for park entry.

Shuttle Service

There is a shuttle system available at Waipā Foundation, just before Hanalei, about 5.8 miles from the park. Round-trip shuttle prices are currently \$35 per person for ages 16+, \$25 per person for ages 4 to 15, and free for ages 3 and under, which includes entry to Hā'ena State Park. The shuttle runs approximately every 20 minutes daily from 6:30 a.m. to 5:40 p.m., which is the last park pick-up. Reservations are available 30 days in advance.

Vendor

A community non-profit organization, Hui Maka'āinana o Makana (Hui), has an agreement with State Parks to manage access via the parking lot and shuttle service. The Hui has partnered with another organization, Hanalei Initiative, to operate the shuttle service. Hanalei Initiative also leases land from Waipā Foundation to facilitate the parking/pick-up for the shuttle service. State Parks has indicated that the Hui currently has a month-to-month revocable permit from the State.

Planning considerations: The agreement with the Hui provides them with an opportunity to generate revenue to reinvest into caring for the resources of the place. In addition, the shuttle service provides revenue to two other local-based organizations, Hanalei Initiative and Waipā Foundation, which provides employment for local residents. Should similar visitor control measures be considered for Pololū, opportunities for a "win-win" solution should be identified.

Other Complimentary Visitor Control Measures

In addition to the shuttle service and parking/entry reservation system, a parking violation surcharge (on State highways) relating to the State Highway Enforcement Program, Act 250, was passed through the 2019 State Legislature. It added a surcharge for illegal parking to existing penalties for violations of the statewide traffic code that involve stopping, standing, or parking on state highways. As a result, parking violations for individuals who continue to park illegally along Kuhio Highway near Hā'ena State Park would be fined at \$235, an increase from \$35. This effort was implemented to further deter illegal parking along the shoulder of the road.

Another supporting measure relating to the traffic code, Act 128, was passed during the 2021 State Legislature. It authorizes county police chiefs to designate other county employees, such as trained county staff or park rangers, to cite for certain traffic violations on state highways. This measure provides additional manpower to support enforcement efforts for illegal parking along state highways such as Kuhio Highway.

Planning considerations: Since the section of 'Akoni Pule Highway near the Trailhead has been transferred to the County, both Act 250 (2019) and Act 128 (2021) would not apply. Future discussions could explore 1) possible surcharges for parking violations for County roads, and 2) possible opportunities for the County to authorize a State contractor to issue citations for parking violations on County roads such as 'Akoni Pule Highway.

Diamond Head State Monument

The Diamond Head State Monument (DHSM) is located on the southern coastline of O'ahu. It serves as the famous backdrop to Waikīkī and is a popular spot for hiking due to its breathtaking views of the south shore. DHSM is open every day from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with the exception of Christmas Day and New Years Day. The State website shows that the last entrance to hike the trail is at 4 p.m. Prior to the pandemic, an average of 3,000 people per day visited DHSM, with a highest daily count of 6,000 visitors recorded during one day in December 2019.

Reservation System for Entry & Parking

In May 2022, State Parks implemented an entry and parking reservation requirement for out-of-state visitors. Reservations are not required for Hawai'i residents, and there is no parking fee or entry fee for Hawai'i residents either. Entry fees are \$5 per person in addition to \$10 per vehicle for parking. Reservations may be made up to 30 days in advance. Prior to 2021, entry prices were \$1 per walk-in visitor and \$5 per vehicle (Star Advertiser, 2022).

Tour buses are allowed, but they have a separate reservation system. Parking for commercial vehicles is \$25 for 1 to 7 passengers, \$50 for 8 to 25 passengers, and \$90 for 26+ passengers. Any taxi or ridesharing drop-offs are \$2. These rules are enforced by the DLNR, Division of State Parks. The parking is operated by a private parking company.

Reservations for entry are available every one hour, while reservations for "entry and parking" are available every two hours. For parking, vehicles must arrive within the first 30 minutes of their reservation period. It is not clear whether visitors must leave within a certain timeframe.

Visitor Capacity

State Parks indicated that capacity at DHSM is set at 3,000 people per day. They also estimated that visitors to DHSM are more evenly distributed throughout the day because of the new reservation system. While there are fewer visitors with the capacity limits, State Park is generating more revenue from Diamond Head due to the increase in entry fees. The visitor capacity limits also provide a better experience for hikers to Diamond Head.

Wai'ānapanapa State Park

Wai'ānapanapa is situated on the eastern coast of Maui. It encompasses the famous black sand beach, Paioia, as well as a historical coastal trail leading to Hana. Wai'ānapanapa is a popular site for beachgoing, picnicking, camping, fishing, hiking, sightseeing, and swimming. Views from the park include a seabird colony, a natural stone arch, a native hala forest, ancient heiau, and blow holes. The State Park is open daily from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

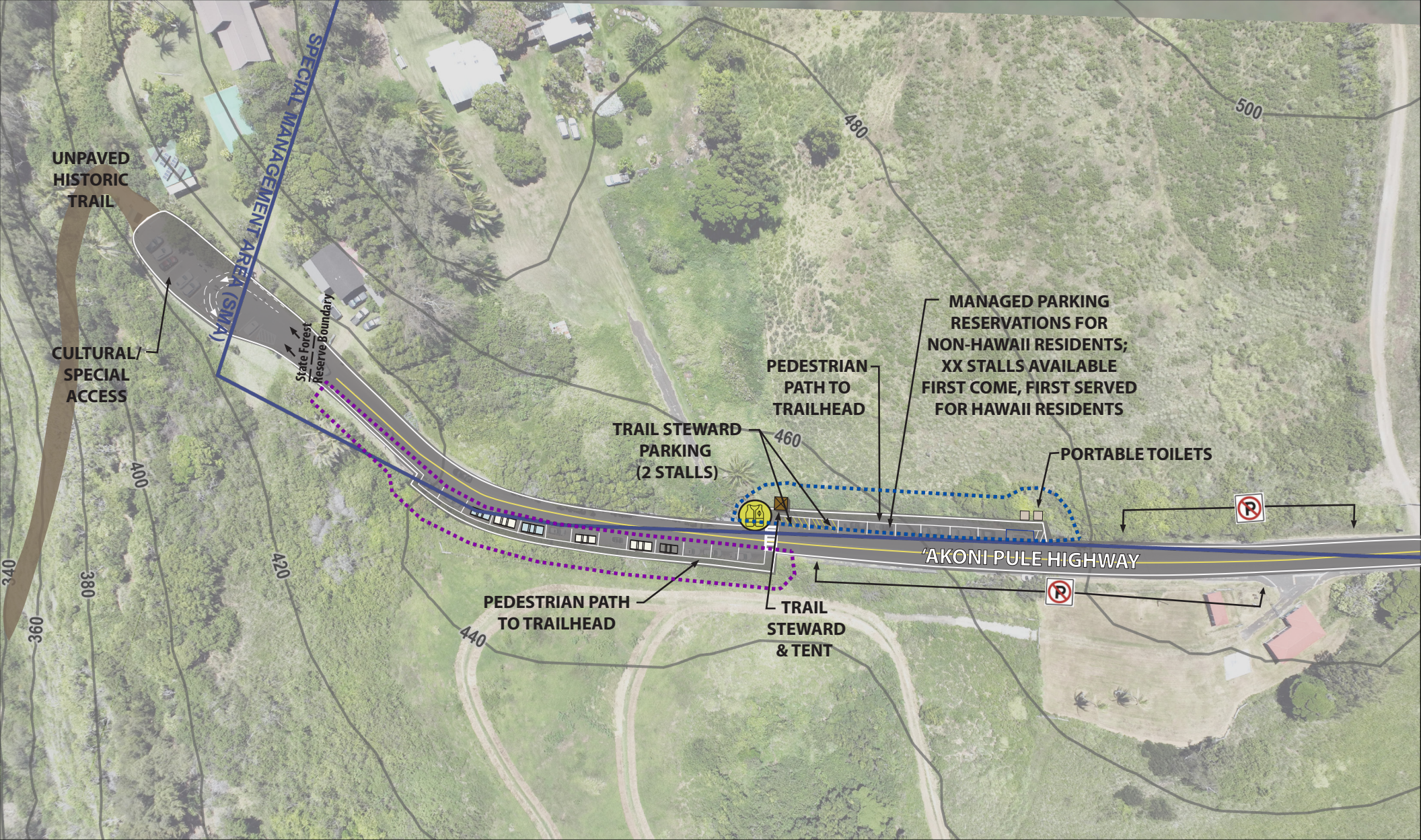
Reservation System for Entry & Parking

Beginning March 2021, reservations and payment are required for out-of-state visitors for both parking and entry; fees are \$10 per vehicle for parking in addition to \$5 per person for entry.

Reservations may be made up to 30 days in advance, and no later than the day before the visit. While Hawai'i residents are exempt from the fee/reservation requirement, visitors accompanying Hawai'i residents are not exempt from the entry fee. There are four entry time slots to choose from and visitors must leave by the end of their slot. Two morning time slots are open from 7:00 to 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and two afternoon time slots are open from 12:30 to 3:00 p.m. and 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. Tour buses are allowed, but they have a separate reservation system. Wai'ānapanapa also allows camping for permit holders; permits can be obtained through the DLNR Online Reservation System. Construction is currently underway for a new entry road that diverts traffic away from the nearby residential community.

Appendix E

Other Scenarios Presented in the Draft Plan



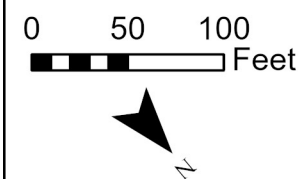
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Note: The illustration shown represents the current physical roadway but does not reflect the actual right-of-way boundaries.

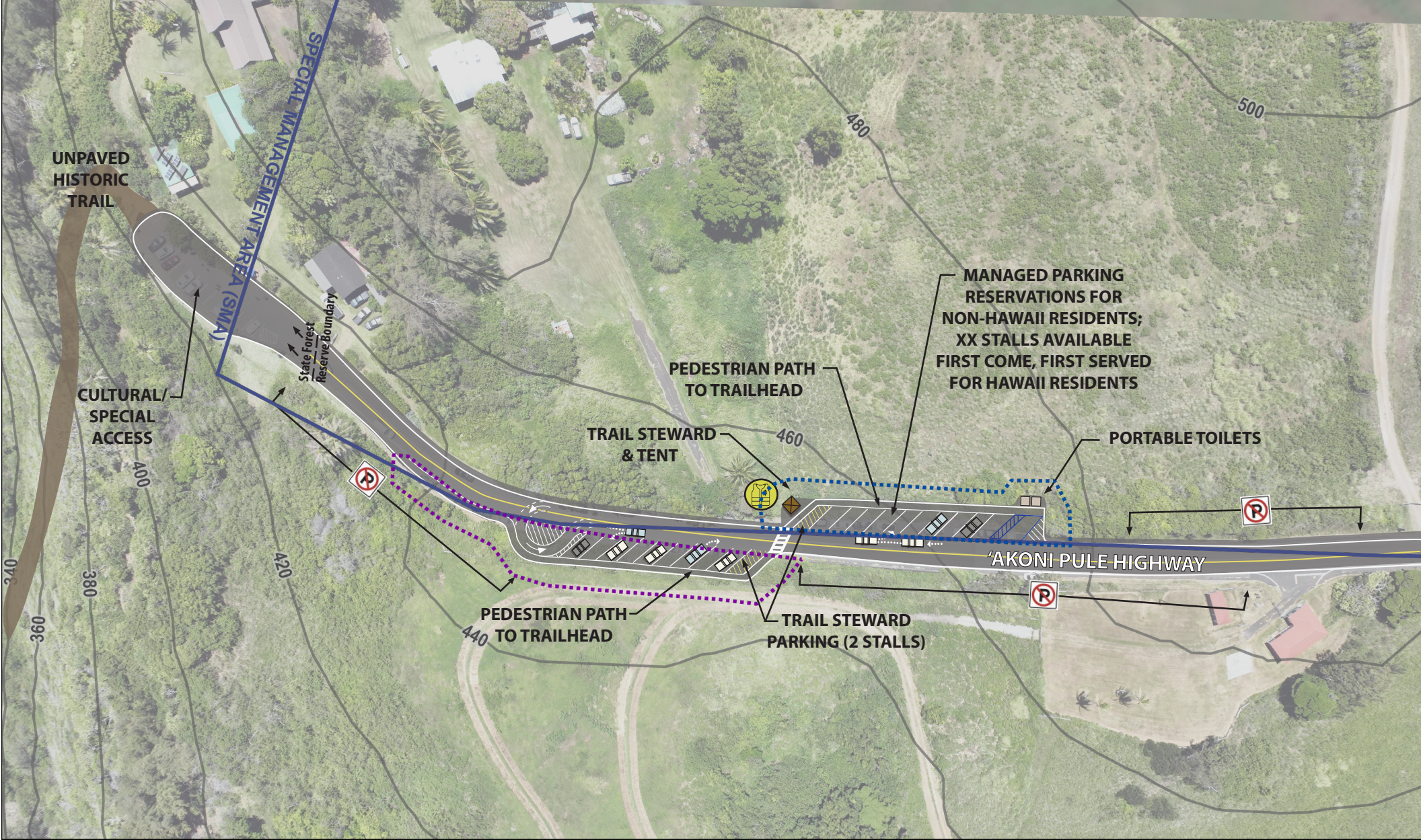
- 20 ft contours
- ▭ SMA
- ▭ 0.21 acres
- ▭ 0.29 acres
(Proposed uses on land owned by Surety)

*Imagery taken 8-28-2023

POLOLŪ TRAILHEAD PLANNING
PARALLEL PARKING
 North Kohala, Hawai'i
 December 2023



Prepared by: TOWNSCAPE, INC.
This graphic has been prepared for general planning purposes only and should not be used for boundary interpretation or other spatial analysis.



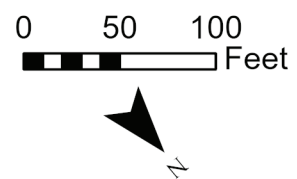
Note: The illustration shown represents the current physical roadway but does not reflect the actual right-of-way boundaries.

DRAFT

- 20 ft contours
- 0.23 acres
- SMA
- 0.28 acres
- (Proposed uses on land owned by Surety)

*Imagery taken 8-28-2023

POLOLŪ TRAILHEAD PLANNING
DIAGONAL PARKING
 North Kohala, Hawai'i
 December 2023



Prepared by: TOWNSCAPE, INC.
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