

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW)
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

March 21, 2014

Endangered Species Recovery Committee
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii

Committee Members:

**SUBJECT: KAUA‘I NĒNĒ ISLAND-WIDE HABITAT CONSERVATION
PLANNING GRANT FOR THE ISLAND OF KAUA‘I**

BACKGROUND:

On July 10, 2013, the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) was awarded a Nontraditional Section 6 Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grant to coordinate, plan and prepare an island-wide Kaua‘i Nēnē Habitat Conservation Plan (KNHCP).

The objectives of the grant include: 1) developing an island-wide nēnē conservation strategy, 2) provide a nēnē habitat suitability map, 3) establish a nēnē public outreach program and 4) produce a draft Kaua‘i Island-wide Nēnē HCP that meets both federal and state requirements.

Nēnē were on the brink of extinction in 1949, numbering perhaps fewer than 30 birds, when a captive propagation and reintroduction program was initiated by the Territorial government of Hawai‘i. In 1957, the nēnē was named as the official bird of the State of Hawai‘i (Hawai‘i Revised Statutes Chapter 5§5-17). From 1960 to 2008 approximately 2,800 birds were released at sites on Hawai‘i Island, Maui, Moloka‘i, and Kaua‘i. Through such captive propagation efforts, nēnē are now estimated at 2500 birds statewide.

Presently, nēnē on Kaua‘i represent approximately half of the existing state-wide nēnē population and are increasingly found foraging and nesting in agricultural farms, residences, and golf course resorts where water sources and attractive food plants are abundant. Utilizing these areas may put nēnē at risk from human impacts, including threats from agricultural operations, construction, vehicles and predation from domestic animals. As the population of nēnē continues to grow, the level of incidental take, habitat loss and degradation, and public safety hazard can be expected to rise.

ANALYSIS

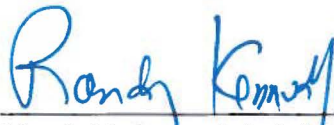
DOFAW wants to ensure that a self-sustaining population of nēnē continues to thrive on the island of Kaua‘i by identifying and safeguarding nēnē habitat and addressing conflicts between nēnē and human activities. The KNHCP project is geared towards working with the residents of Kaua‘i, the Nēnē Recovery Action Group and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The strategy will promote nēnē recovery and growth and will help to avoid and minimize potential human impacts to the species, as well as mitigate for those impacts that cannot be avoided.

A temporary license as part of a habitat conservation plan may be issued to allow take that would otherwise be prohibited if the take is incidental to, and not the purpose of, the carrying out of an otherwise lawful activity. Any take authorization that may be issued would need to come from both State and Federal wildlife agencies in order to be valid. Pursuant to HRS 195D-21(b)(1) an HCP can be developed if it is determined that:

- (A) The plan will further the purposes of HRS Chapter 195D by protecting, maintaining, restoring, or enhancing identified ecosystems, natural communities, or habitat types upon which endangered, threatened, proposed, or candidate species depend within the area covered by the plan;
- (B) The plan will increase the likelihood of recovery of the endangered or threatened species that are the focus of the plan; and
- (C) The plan satisfies all the requirements of HRS Chapter 195D.

DOFAW is committed to responsibly managing and protecting Hawaii’s trust resources. Under a KNHCP focused nēnē recovery efforts will be developed through partnerships and proactive planning. The KNHCP will describe the anticipated effects of the proposed taking, how those impacts will be minimized and mitigated, and how the HCP is to be funded.

Respectfully Submitted,



Pa Lisa J. Hadway, Administrator
Division of Forestry and Wildlife