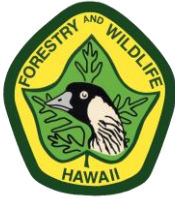
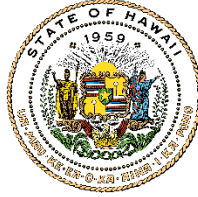


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STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

January 25, 2024

Endangered Species Recovery Committee
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i

SUBJECT: Division of Forestry and Wildlife Evaluation of the Nēnē Maui Nui Safe Harbor Agreements Implementation During Fiscal Year 2023, Plus Quarters 1 and 2 of Fiscal Year 2024

Dear Committee Members,

The Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) is respectfully requesting the Endangered Species Recovery Committee (ESRC) to review and provide a determination and recommendation for compliance regarding the Nēnē Maui Nui Safe Harbor Agreements During Fiscal Year 2023 + Quarters 1 and 2 of Fiscal Year 2024, on the islands of Maui and Moloka'i. The annual reports were prepared by John Medeiros (DOFAW Maui) on behalf of the following Licensees: Pi'iholo Ranch, LLC (ITL; ITL-06), Haleakalā Ranch Company (ITL; ITL-19), and Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch, Limited (Protected Wildlife Permit; Permit no. WLIT-01). DOFAW requests the ESRC review the annual report in accordance with the requirements outlined in Section 195D-25, Hawaii Revised Statutes. This submittal is a summary of the annual report and includes comments from DOFAW.

Safe Harbor Agreement for Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch on the island of Moloka'i.

BACKGROUND

ITL Licensee: Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch, Limited

Project: Reintroduce Nēnē (*Branta sandvicensis*) to Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch, Moloka'i

ITL Duration: The ITL has no specific expiration and is valid unless rescinded; The SHA period was from September 4, 2001, to September 3, 2008 (The current owners wish to remain with a Right of Entry with DOFAW).

Take Authorization: Incidental take of nēnē on lands owned or otherwise controlled by Pu’u o Hōkū Ranch, Limited.

Status of ITL for Pu’u o Hōkū Ranch:

Figure 1: Visual representation of compiled data from the Ranch

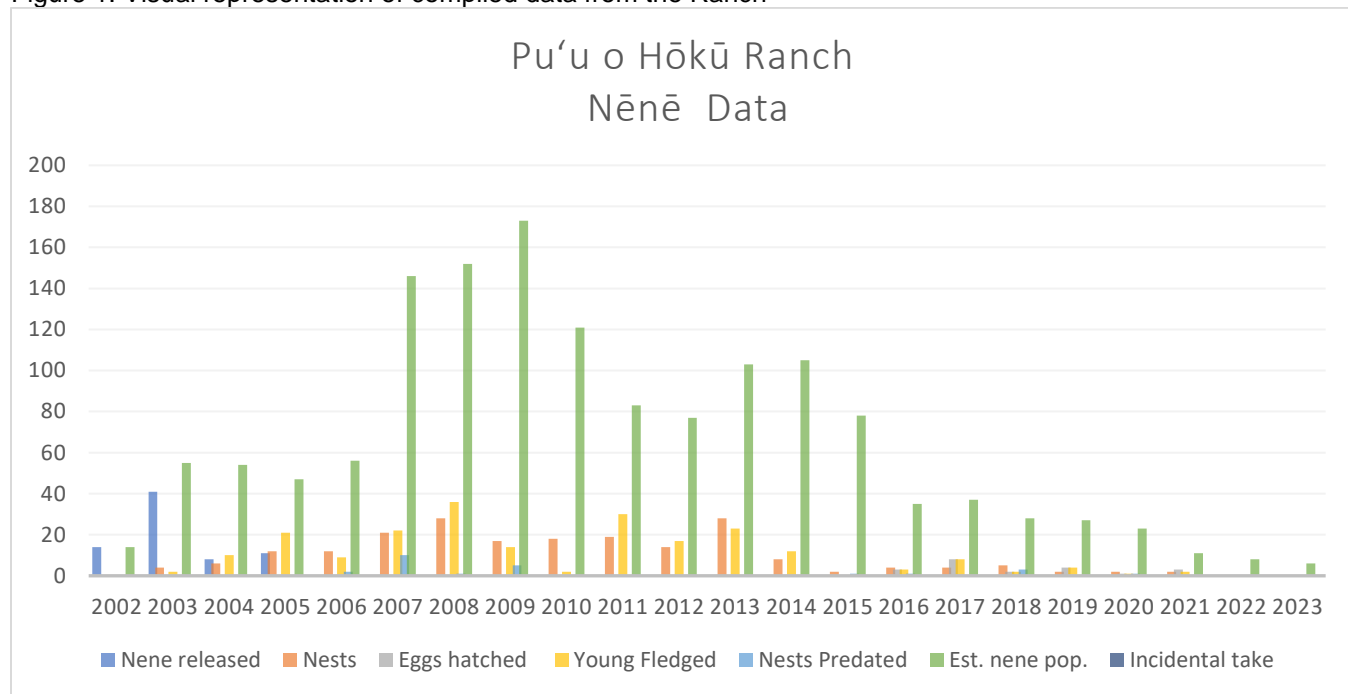
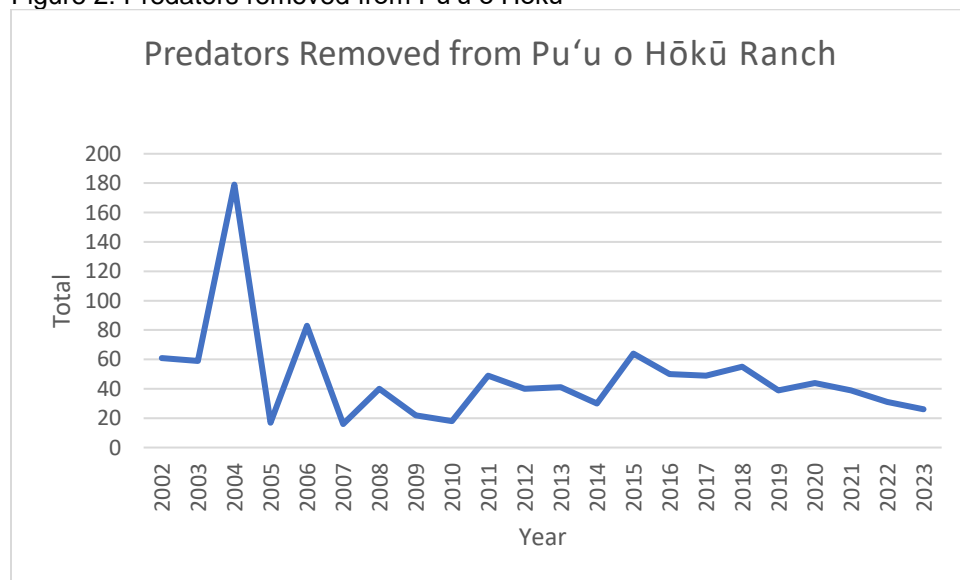


Figure 2: Predators removed from Pu’u o Hōkū



Mitigation Status:

In FY 2023 there was no take of nēnē at Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch. Nēnē monitoring was performed on a weekly basis by DOFAW personnel throughout December 2022. Additional staff from Maui were sent to Moloka'i throughout the remaining reporting period due to DOFAW personnel retiring. Observations from surveys throughout the reporting period resulted in a total of six birds, which was the estimated population size. An island-wide nēnē survey was conducted on Molokai on August 25th, 2022, during which time only four individuals were recorded.

During the August through April nesting season no nests were recorded within the open-top release pen at Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch and no additional nests were located on the ranch or adjacent areas.

Maintenance at the three-acre open-top release pen in FY 2023 included monthly checks and repairs of fences, weekly checks of waterlines and water troughs, and mowing the half-acre around the pen. Ten feet of fence line was repaired, and one water trough was repaired to prevent leaking. A total of 1.0 acres of alien vegetation (Lantana and Haole Koa) was removed from the pen. Twenty acres within the ranch were mowed by DOFAW staff in addition to 850 acres mowed by Ranch personnel.

Sixteen live traps were checked regularly at the pen and a total of 25 mongooses and one cat were removed around the open-top release pen at Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch in FY 2023.

A total of 74 birds were translocated to the Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch from 2002-2005. Figure 1 provides survey data for the original 74 birds translocated to the Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch. The percentage of the original 74 birds that were re-sighted is a factor of survey effort and does not account for any unknown mortality or emigration from the ranch and may not necessarily be a measure of translocation success.

Safe Harbor Agreement for the Introduction of Nēnē to Pi'iholo Ranch on the Island Maui

BACKGROUND

ITL Licensee: Pi'iholo Ranch, LLC

Project: Establish a nēnē population on Pi'iholo Ranch.

ITL Duration: The ITL is valid for 50 years from September 21, 2004, to September 20, 2054; the SHA is currently expired. The original period was from September 21, 2004, to September 20, 2014.

Take Authorization: Incidental take of nēnē on lands owned or otherwise controlled by Pi'iholo Ranch, LLC.

Status of ITL for Pi'iholo Ranch: The Incidental Take Permit on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife side is no longer valid and the ITL is no longer valid on the State's side.

Safe Harbor Agreement for the Reintroduction of Nēnē to Haleakalā Ranch on the island of Maui

BACKGROUND

ITL Licensee: Haleakalā Ranch Company.

Project: Establish a nēnē population on Haleakalā Ranch, Maui.

ITL Duration: The ITL is valid for 50 years from May 22, 2012, to May 21, 2062; the SHA has been finalized as of August 2019.

Take Authorization: Incidental take of nēnē on lands owned or otherwise controlled by Haleakalā Ranch.

Status of ITL for Haleakalā Ranch Company:

Figure 3: Visual representation of compiled data from the Ranch

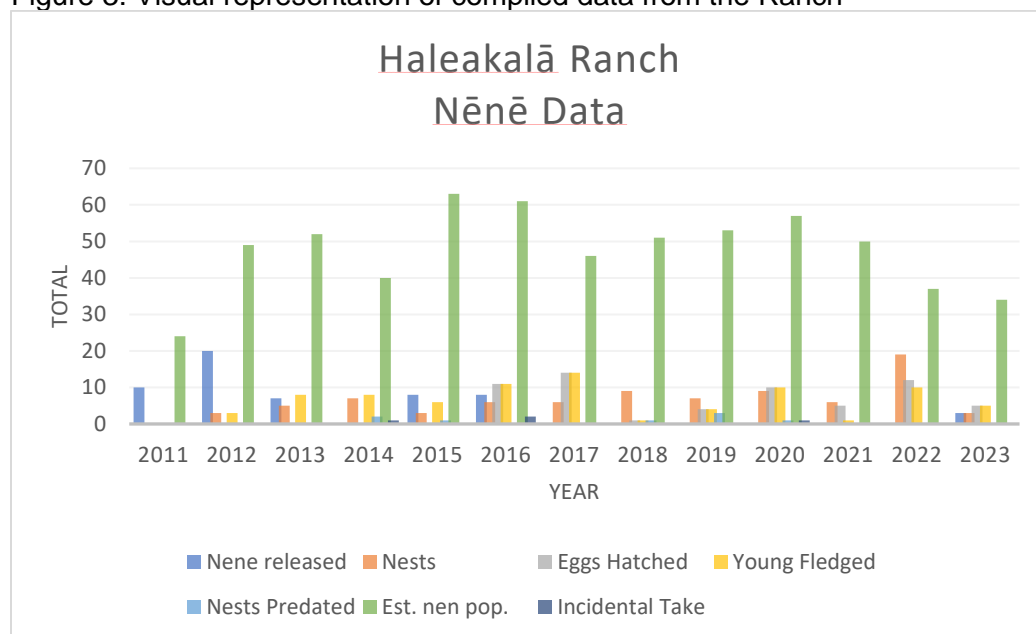
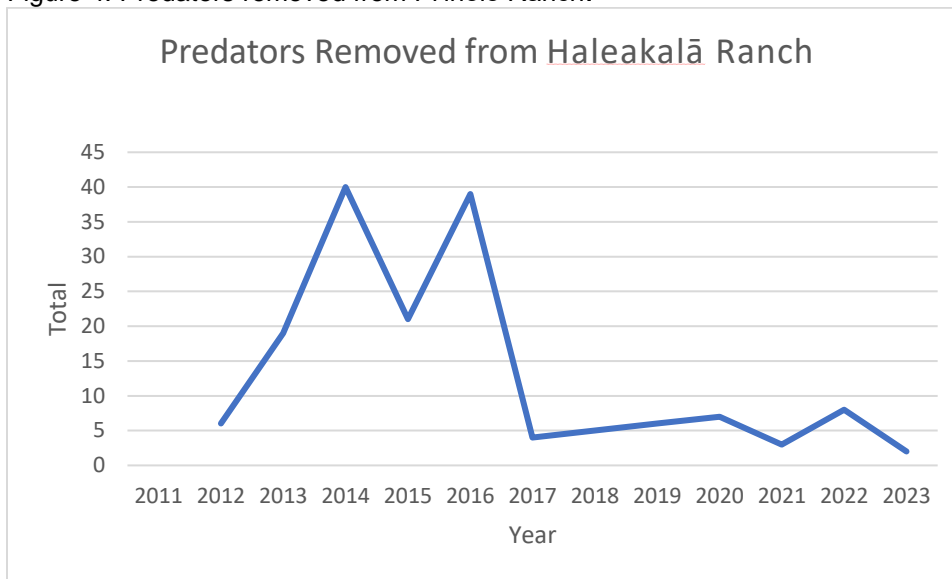


Figure 4: Predators removed from Pi'iholo Ranch.



Mitigation Status:

There was take of three nēnē at Haleakalā Ranch (one adult and two goslings) reported this fiscal year. DOFAW, in cooperation with Haleakalā Ranch, has constructed a two-acre nēnē release pen, conducts predator control activities around nēnē nesting and breeding sites, and maintains access roads leading to the nēnē release pen.

DOFAW conducted regular monitoring during July 2022 to mid-December 2022 at Haleakalā Ranch. Trapping and maintenance duties were taken over by KWP I and KWP II on December 8, 2022. DOFAW staff recorded a total of 24 banded birds at the pen, of which 20 were wild-banded birds and four were Kaua'i translocated birds. A total of 34 birds were observed at the ranch this reporting period, 24 were banded and 10 were un-banded.

A total of three nests were found in FY 2023, all located inside the open-top release pen. Of the three nests, a total of five goslings were produced and successfully fledged.

Maintenance activities included checking fences and automatic waterers monthly. The water unit was checked and maintained monthly. DOFAW staff reported that ten holes were patched in the closed-topped pen. A quarter mile of road was cleared of rock and holes were filled where needed. In total 9.5 acres were mowed in and around the pen to maintain short grass, and 4.5 acres of weed-eating occurred. A total of 0.5 acres of alien vegetation including lantana, guava, fireweed, and bur, was removed. Tetra Tech reports that the pond was drained and cleaned twice a month and refilled with clean water. The water system's shutoff valve was replaced after leaking was observed. New electric fence insulators, solar batteries, and grounding states/wires were installed to get the electric fence perimeter working again. Weekly mowing was conducted to maintain the open-top release pen during breeding season. Mowing then occurred every other

week during the non-breeding season. On December 18th, 2022, there was a large storm event which damaged many of the surrounding trees, the pen entrance door, and the water catchment/mower shed. The downed trees and damaged items were repaired, and unusable materials were removed.

Predator control efforts from 70 traps resulted in a total of 10 mongooses and four rats removed around the open-top release pen. Of the total, DOFAW staff removed one mongoose and one rat.

A total of 53 birds were translocated to Haleakalā Ranch between 2011 – 2016. Three birds were translocated in FY 2023. All three birds were injured and released in the pen. Figure 3 provides survey data for the 56 translocated birds. The percentage of the original 53 birds that were re-sighted is a factor of survey effort and does not account for any unknown mortality or emigration from the Ranch and may not necessarily be a measure of release success.

Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement for the Reintroduction of Nēnē on the island of Molokaʻi

BACKGROUND

ITL Licensee: DOFAW to issue Certificates of Inclusion under authority of §195D-22, HRS, to landowners signing Cooperative Agreements.

Project: Encourage private landowner management activities to benefit nēnē and provide regulatory assurances if nēnē occupy or breed on their property.

ITL Duration: April 7, 2003- April 6, 2053

Take Authorization: Any nēnē or nēnē habitat above Baseline Conditions, as defined in respective landowner Cooperative Agreements.

Status of ITL and SHA: During the reporting period and to date, there are no landowners enrolled under this SHA.

ISSUES & CONCERNS

DOFAW is continuing to reach out to landowners to participate in the Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement for nēnē on Molokaʻi. There are current plans for the relocation of nēnē to Molokaʻi if funding can be secured.

AGENCY RECOMMENDATIONS

After internal review, and consultation with DOFAW Maui, it is the intent of the agency to keep the ITLs in place for the Maui Nui safe harbor agreements. Work and

maintenance remain ongoing at the ranches. DOFAW Maui has an ongoing relationship with the current owners of Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch. Access to the nēnē release pen remains open for maintenance and monitoring. The landowners do not wish to enter into a new safe harbor agreement; however, they are willing to remain with a right-of-entry and are willing to work with DOFAW. There are currently no issues with Haleakalā Ranch SHA. KWP I and KWP II have taken over maintenance/management of the nēnē release pen for mitigation.

In the FY 2022 annual review, the ESRC members were concerned about the release pens becoming sinks to the species and were wanting to recommend rescinding the ITL for Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch; however, it is the belief of DOFAW that good work for the species continues, and supporting the amicable relationships that DOFAW Maui has with the landowners remains a top priority. Therefore, DOFAW HCP asks the ESRC members to hold off on recommending rescinding the ITL to allow DOFAW Maui more time to meet their goals regarding the landowners.

If you have any questions, please contact Kathrine Cullison, Programmatic Habitat Conservation Plan Coordinator, via email at kathrine.cullison@hawaii.gov.

Respectfully submitted,



DAVID G. SMITH
Administrator