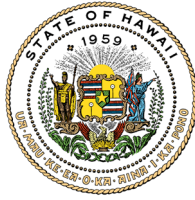


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
1151 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 325
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

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CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
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April 2, 2026

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

SUBJECT: Endangered Species Recovery Committee Evaluation of the
County of Kaua'i Implementation of the Kaua'i Seabird
Habitat Conservation Plan During 2025

Dear Committee Members,

The State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), requests the Endangered Species Recovery Committee (ESRC) review the 2025 Kaua'i Seabird Habitat Conservation Plan (KSHCP) Annual Report prepared by Pacific Rim Conservation regarding the County of Kaua'i ("County"), an individual participant in the KSHCP. This request is in accordance with the requirements outlined in Section 195D-25 of the Hawai'i Revised Statutes. The 2025 KSHCP Annual Report compiles information from eight individual participants as part of the obligations under the KSHCP and State Incidental Take Licenses (ITL). This submittal summarizes the County portion of the 2025 KSHCP Annual Report and includes information provided to DOFAW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (collectively, "the Agencies") by the participant over the past year.

BACKGROUND:

ITL Licensee: ITL-29; County of Kaua'i. The County of Kaua'i Department of Parks and Recreation provides KSHCP oversight and coordination, while supporting departments including the County of Kaua'i Department of Transportation, Department of Housing, Kaua'i Fire Department, Parks and Maintenance Department, Information Technology Department, and the Office of the Mayor.

Project: All County of Kaua'i facilities.

ITL Duration: June 12, 2020–June 12, 2050. At the conclusion of 2025, the participant is approximately 5.5 years (18%) through their permit term.

Status of ITL:

Covered Species Under ITL-29: 'A'o (Newell's shearwater), 'ua'u (Hawaiian petrel), and 'akē'akē (band-rumped storm petrel) fledglings.

In 2025, the County reported no observed lethal or non-lethal take of Covered Species. However, per Save Our Shearwater (SOS) records, six 'a'o fledglings were recovered from unlit County facilities during the seabird fledgling season (September 15–December 15). Because these facilities are unlit, no downed seabird searches or predator monitoring occur there.

Observed take of Covered Species in 2025:

- 'A'o fledglings: 0 lethal / 6 non-lethal
- 'Ua'u fledglings: 0 lethal / 0 non-lethal
- 'Akē'akē fledglings: 0 lethal / 0 non-lethal

Calculated take of Covered Species in 2025:

Using the 50% discovery rate stated in the Participant Inclusion Plan (PIP)

- 'A'o fledglings: 6 lethal / 6 non-lethal
- 'Ua'u fledglings: 0 lethal / 0 non-lethal
- 'Akē'akē fledglings: 0 lethal / 0 non-lethal

Table 1. Authorized take, Cumulative calculated take, Maximum 5-year rolling average, and Actual 5-year rolling average of fledgling take for Covered Species.

Covered Species	Authorized fledgling take (lethal / non-lethal)	Cumulative calculated* fledgling take through 2025 (lethal / non-lethal)	Maximum 5-year rolling average of fledgling take	Actual 5-year rolling average of fledgling take (2021 - 2025)
'A'o (Newell's shearwater)	276 / 217	16 / 16	9.18 / 7.22	3.2 / 3.2
'Ua'u (Hawaiian petrel)	17 / 4	0 / 0	N/A	N/A
'Akē'akē (band-rumped storm petrel)	4 / 0	0 / 0	N/A	N/A

*The PIP discovery rate of 50% was used for take calculations

The table above does not include the unauthorized lethal take of three hatchling honu'ea (hawksbill sea turtle) and the non-lethal take of nine hatchling honu'ea in 2023, and the non-lethal take of one adult honu (green sea turtle) in 2024.

Minimization Measures:

Lighting: In 2025, 19 Category 3 facilities turned off their lights during the fledgling season, while 18 Category 3 facilities remained lit. All Category 4 and 5 facilities kept their lights off during the fledgling season, except for the Kaua'i War Memorial Convention Hall (Category 4), where lights are on for scheduled evening events until 10:00 p.m., and Hanapēpē Stadium (Category 5), where lights were on during four nighttime high school football games. Football games were held on nights deemed low or medium risk to fledgling seabirds, however per the County's PIP:

[T]he County will continue to allow nighttime light use at some facilities; provided the selected nights avoid the peak fledgling migration period and are timed to the moon phase such that fallout is deemed low risk; provided further that such use does not cause it to exceed the take that is authorized if this application is approved (DLNR, 2020).

Downed Seabird Searches: County employees, in conjunction with a wildlife control contractor, conducted downed seabird searches at all 18 Category 3 facilities that remained lit during the fledgling season. Search frequency varied. The five facilities with the greatest search effort completed an average of 71 searches during the fledgling season. Searches began at the start of each shift at around 8:00 a.m. The County continues to use a new online reporting system to collect seabird search data across facilities.

During each nighttime football game, Agency biologists, County employees, and high school student volunteers monitored the sky above Hanapēpē Stadium for transiting seabirds and searched the facility grounds following the game for downed seabirds. In 2025, seabirds were documented circling above the stadium, but no fallout occurred.

Honu Searches: No dedicated honu searches were conducted at County beach parks during honu nesting season (May 15–Dec 15). However, County employees are trained to document sightings and nesting activity observed during routine park operations. No honu, tracks, or nests were reported in 2025.

Predator Control: In 2025, the County continued to use a wildlife control contractor to conduct predator trapping. Trapping efforts increased with trapping occurring year-round at 38 facilities (18 Category 3 facilities where trapping was required and 19 other County facilities). Total trapping effort was 2,246 trap nights, of which 1,581 occurred at Category 3 facilities. A total of 105 predators were removed. The wildlife control contractor also conducts predator monitoring for adaptive trapping.

The County is aware of at least three facilities where feral cat feeding occurs and is working to address the issue. Tampering with traps has also occurred at these facilities.

Employee Training and Public Outreach: The County conducted seabird awareness training for employees, contractors, and partner organizations, focusing on KSHCP compliance, seabird searches and downed seabird response, and lighting minimization. Eight Park Maintenance employees attended an in-person session led by the Kaua'i Endangered Species Recovery Project (KESRP); 171 County employees completed online training and 29 high school students received in-person training to monitor evening football

games for seabirds. A memorandum from the mayor with information about the fledgling season was also sent to 1,300 County employees before the start of the fledgling season.

Public outreach and education efforts included a public outreach meeting hosted by the Mayor's Office; a public presentation by KESRP to Rotary Club Līhu'e; public service announcements about seabird fledgling season during football games; flyers explaining the danger feral cats pose to native seabirds provided to those who reserve camp sites at County parks; installation of "Do Not Feed or Abandon Cats on County Property" signs at Salt Pond Beach; development of an online system to enable public reporting of predators observed at County facilities; and design of a honu information sign for future installation at Lydgate Park.

All County of Kaua'i fire stations also host Save Our Shearwaters aid stations during the fledgling season, allowing community members to drop off downed seabirds for rehabilitation. In 2025, approximately 175 downed seabirds were recovered and placed in SOS aid boxes.

Prior ESRC Recommendations

The County implemented the following ESRC recommendations resulting from the April 10 and October 24, 2025, KSHCP meetings.

1. Coordinate training for seabird searching, handling, and recovery with KESRP and increase searcher training for all covered facilities. *Ongoing.*
2. Increase trap nights and relay predator sightings to the wildlife control contractor to inform trapping at all facilities during fledgling season.
3. Implement systematic predator monitoring and provide data to the Agencies. *Partially met; systematic predator monitoring was completed, but the Agencies have not received the required data.*
4. Enforce the cat feeding ban at County facilities. *Ongoing.*
5. More engagement with the public on wildlife and conservation education. *Ongoing.*
6. Increase public awareness through signs and flyers. *Ongoing.*
7. Work proactively with the Department of Education (DOE) to schedule games. The Agencies will provide the County with a risk assessment calendar in advance, so the County can share it with the DOE.
8. Recommend completing the following as provided by the County in their presentation:
 - a. Category 3 facilities that went dark in 2024 will continue to remain dark during the 2025 fledgling season.
 - b. Use custom software to collect search data (Elements) and make ongoing improvements through trial, troubleshooting, and collaboration with the Information Technology Department.
 - c. Predator control assessments and adjustments with a contractor.
 - d. Provide a predator control contract; contract details requested by the public and local cat advocacy groups.

Outstanding ESRC Recommendations

1. Continually evaluate lighting and landscaping.
2. Ensure that downed seabird searches occur every morning at each of the 18 Category 3 lit facilities. *Improving, but not yet fully met.*
3. Look into seabird fallout at Kekaha Faye Park and other unlit County facilities and consider including these facilities in future downed-seabird searches and predator-control efforts.
4. Amend the PIP to conduct an additional downed seabird search 3-4 hours after sunset.
5. Follow the language in the County PIP. Use Category 5 facilities (facilities with stadium lighting) and schedule evening football games only on low-risk nights.
6. If needed, amend the PIP to a discovery rate that more accurately reflects what the County can implement.
7. Begin daily honu searches at all lit beachfront parks starting in May 2025.
8. The frequency of agency meetings could be adjusted for 2025.
9. Coordinate a lighting site visit with the Agencies and the KESRP before the next seabird fledgling season.
10. Repeat third-party decoy trials at lit Category 3 facilities. *This will occur in 2026.*
11. Identify which future adaptive management measures are planned to meet HCP obligations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:


DOFAW appreciates the measures the County implemented in 2025 to improve compliance and minimize take of Covered Species including increasing downed seabird searches, predator control, and public outreach and education.

DOFAW Recommendations:

1. Implement outstanding ERSC recommendations.
2. Continue to make progress toward meeting the requirements of the County PIP and KSHCP.
3. Due to the unauthorized take of honu'ea in 2023 and honu 2024, amend the PIP to include honu'ea and honu as a covered species.

If you have any questions, please contact Kelli Yamaguchi, Habitat Conservation Planning Program Associate, at kelli.yamaguchi.researcher@hawaii.gov.

Respectfully submitted,



DAVID G. SMITH
Administrator

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Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources. Kaua'i Seabird Habitat Conservation Plan. Honolulu, HI: Division of Forestry and Wildlife, 2020. https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/wildlife/files/2021/03/FINAL_KSHCP.pdf.