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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 Sheraton
Kaua'i Resort's 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 that the Endangered Species Recovery Committee (ESRC) review the 2025 Kaua'i Seabird Habitat Conservation Plan (KSHCP) Annual Report prepared by Pacific Rim Conservation regarding Sheraton Kaua'i Resort ("Sheraton"), an individual participant in the KSHCP. This request complies 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 KSHCP and State Incidental Take Licenses (ITL) obligations. This submittal summarizes the Sheraton 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-26; Kaua'i Blue, Inc. dba Sheraton Kaua'i Resort

Project: Privately owned oceanside resort on 20.1 acres in Po'ipū, within the moku of Kona, Kaua'i.

ITL Duration: June 12, 2020-June 12, 2050. By the end of 2025, the participant was approximately 5.5 years (18%) into their permit term.

Miscellaneous: Sheraton continued to retain ABR, Inc. ("ABR"), environmental consultants, to evaluate lighting, conduct seabird and honu awareness and responder

training, manage data, prepare downed wildlife reports, and prepare the KSHCP Annual Report.

Status of ITL:

Covered Species Under ITL-26: 'A'o (Newell's shearwater), 'ua'u (Hawaiian petrel), and 'akē'akē (band-rumped storm petrel) fledglings.

Observed take of Covered Species in 2025:

- 'A'o fledglings: 0 lethal / 3 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: 3 lethal / 3 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)	81 / 64	25 / 21	2.7 / 2.13	5 / 4.2
'Ua'u (Hawaiian petrel)	1 / 1	0 / 0	N/A	N/A
'Akē'akē (band-rumped storm petrel)	3 / 3	0 / 0	N/A	N/A

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

The participant's 5-year rolling average for lethal and non-lethal take of fledgling 'a'o indicates that if the current rate continues, Sheraton will exceed its authorized take before the end of the 30-year license term. Additional adaptive management measures should be considered to minimize take of 'a'o.

Minimization Measures:

Downed Seabird Searches: Members of Sheraton's security staff trained in seabird search and recovery conducted dedicated downed seabird searches 3–4 hours after sunset and 1–2 hours before sunrise throughout the seabird fledgling season (September 15–December 15). Two searchers conducted a full search of the property twice each evening, resulting in four seabird searches per night. Sheraton staff also search their work areas during work hours. All recovered seabirds were placed in the Sheraton Save Our Shearwaters (SOS) aid station for transfer to SOS, and a downed wildlife report was completed for each incident.

Honu Searches: Trained members of Sheraton's security staff conducted honu searches every morning before sunrise during the honu nesting season (May 15–December 15), except for four days. The searches involved walking the length of the beach lawn and looking for honu, tracks, or signs of nesting along Kiahuna Beach. No honu, tracks, or nests were observed in 2025.

In the 2026 honu nesting season, Sheraton will try to conduct searches after sunrise to improve visibility, as recommended by the Agencies.

Lighting: ABR visited the property in June and September 2025 to evaluate lighting and follow up on new lighting-minimization measures. Changes made prior to the 2025 fledgling season include:

- Removing flood lights from the roof of Lava's restaurant.
- Removing a spotlight from the end of the building.
- Replacing the main pool's underwater lights with lower-luminance lights. Additional pool lighting will be replaced during subsequent pool maintenance.
- Reducing the lumens of parking lot lights where downed seabirds have been found previously.

In December 2025, the agencies visited Sheraton to conduct lighting evaluations in preparation for the 2026 fledgling season. It was recommended that Sheraton shield or turn off a bright light on the second-floor stairwell landing of the Ocean Wing.

In 2025, the County of Kaua'i installed new lighting along Ho'onani Road, which bisects the Sheraton property. Sheraton is concerned that increased lighting will cause additional seabird fallout on its property. The Sheraton Safety and Security Supervisor discussed his concerns with the project manager at the Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative.

Predator Control: Sheraton continued to use a wildlife control contractor to trap predators on the property. In 2025, predator control was expanded from 10 months to year-round. Ten traps were set each night, for a total of 3,630 trap-nights, resulting in the removal of 16 predators.

Predator monitoring was conducted alongside downed-seabird searches. Thirty-seven predator observations were recorded, and wildlife control contractors were notified of these observations for adaptive trapping.

Staff Training and Guest Outreach: Sheraton provided dedicated seabird-searcher

training to all security staff and seabird and honu awareness training to all other staff. In total, 230 of 267 (86.1%) staff members were trained in 2025. Sheraton's goal for 2026 is to train 100% of staff.

During the 2025 fledgling season, Sheraton continued to conduct in-house seabird decoy trials to reinforce searcher training and assess searcher efficacy. Of the 25 decoys deployed on random dates and in random locations, 15 were found by Sheraton staff, yielding a 60% discovery rate.

Sheraton also continues to run an incentive program that rewards eligible associates, contractors, or guests with \$250 for locating a downed seabird or seabird decoy.

As in previous years, brochures on the impacts of lighting on fledgling seabirds and on what to do if a downed seabird is seen were placed in guest rooms and at the front desk. Coloring pages featuring native seabirds were also available for keiki guests and visitors. An educational sandwich board was placed along the beach pathway to inform guests about the seabird fledgling season.

Prior ESRC Recommendations

Sheraton implemented the following ESRC recommendations from the April 10, 2025, KSHCP Annual Review Meeting:

1. Identify and implement additional adaptive management measures to minimize take of 'a'o. This may include:
 - a. Further reducing property lighting
 - b. Increasing searcher efficacy
2. Continue annual lighting audits to determine where birds land versus property lighting. Investigate hot spots.

Outstanding ESRC Recommendations

1. Consider the use of trained canine searchers. *This is not currently being considered.*

Concerns

The current rate of fledgling 'a'o take at Sheraton exceeds the maximum 5-year rolling average, indicating that Sheraton may exceed its authorized take before the 30-year license term.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

DOFAW appreciates Sheraton's ongoing minimization efforts, and the new measures implemented in 2025 including further reducing lighting and increasing predator control.

DOFAW recommends:

1. Conduct honu searches every morning after sunrise during the honu nesting season.

2. Continue to work with the Agencies to identify additional adaptive management measures to minimize take of fledgling 'a'o.

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