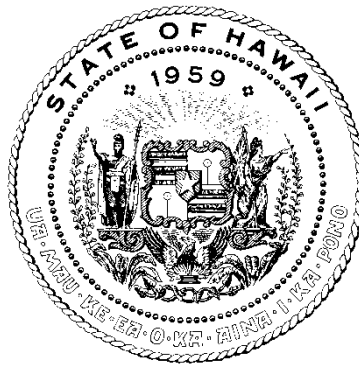


**REPORT TO THE TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE
2018 REGULAR SESSION**

**HAWAII STATEWIDE TRAIL AND ACCESS SYSTEM
“NA ALA HELE”**



Prepared by:

**THE STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
NA ALA HELE TRAIL AND ACCESS PROGRAM**

In response to:
Section 198D-9, Hawaii Revised Statutes

Honolulu, Hawaii
October 2017

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PURPOSE

Chapter 198D, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), established the Hawaii Trail and Access System, under the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). Pursuant to Section 198D-9, HRS, this report has been prepared to highlight DLNR’s accomplishments in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017.

INTRODUCTION

Na Ala Hele (NAH), Hawaii Statewide Trail and Access Program was established in 1988. Section 198D-2, HRS, directs DLNR to plan, develop, and acquire land or rights for public use of land, construct, restore, and engage in coordination activities to implement a trail and access system in Hawaii. The Program is administered by DLNR, Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW). This report is cataloged into four sections:

1. Program Needs
2. Program Summary
3. Funding Sources
4. Ancient and Historic Trails

1. PROGRAM NEEDS

According to the 2015 Hawaii State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), there are two areas regarding public hiking identified for improvement, *(a) demand for more trails or access to mauka lands and (b) the need for trail facilities and maintenance*. DLNR supports these goals and is dedicated to meeting the growing demand for statewide outdoor recreation, management, and expansion. Currently, LNR 804 Forest and Outdoor Recreation supports fourteen full-time civil service positions that directly work for the statewide Na Ala Hele Trail and Access (NAH) Program.

Encouraging responsible public use of Hawaii’s natural resources is part of the DLNR’s mission. However, there is a justifiable concern in being able to address and support the rising number of trail issues, many of which are associated with a significant increase in people wishing to access trails and the rise of social media. Keeping up with this demand is challenging with the resources currently available. However, DLNR is committed to providing safe outdoor recreation opportunities to the public.

DOFAW has a current statewide inventory of 128 trail-and-road features spanning approximately 855 miles. Due to budget and staffing limitations, the level of maintenance on these features varies. Some high use areas, such as Manoa Falls Trail on Oahu, require frequent staff visits to address various issues associated with trail management. Trailhead parking within small communities is a growing problem. On Hawaii Island, the Muliwai Trail provides a difficult hike over eighteen miles of scenic coastal areas through numerous streams and waterfalls, yet the Hawaii Island NAH Program is hard-pressed to keep up with regularly

scheduled maintenance. Locating suitable Off-Highway-Vehicle (OHV) sites statewide that meet the needs of all OHV users—hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, hunters, and dirt bikers—is a challenge. Additionally, vandalism of signs and other infrastructure requires resources. Working to protect and expand legal access to trails and public rights-of-way is another important part of the NAH Program that requires specific legal and land disposition expertise.

DLNR has an obligation to address all of the needs listed above. However, the capacity to manage the program needs to be expanded. More positions and funding for operations would greatly improve the program's ability to keep up with a rapidly growing demand, spurred, at least in part, by access information supplied by social media.

2. PROGRAM SUMMARY

The goal of the NAH Program is to provide public outdoor recreation opportunities for hiking, biking, hunting, camping, equestrian and off-highway vehicle use. In addition, the NAH Program is responsible for inventory and ownership documentation of specific historic trails and road alignments for public use.

Trails and unpaved access roads are critical resource management and recreational features that serve a multitude of access functions:

- Provide access for native flora, fauna, and watershed protection and management work, and allow hunters access to forest reserves as a means to control animal populations;
- Monitor and remove invasive plant and animal species;
- Provide recreational opportunities, including hunting, hiking, biking, equestrian, and OHV activities;
- Provide access to control wildland fires;
- Protect Hawaiian cultural, ancient, and historic trails;
- Provide commercial trail opportunities to strengthen Hawaii's economy; and
- Assist county search and rescue efforts.

NAH Core Activities:

- Implement statewide recreational trail and access road management and maintenance for public use;
- Coordinate ancient and historic trail activities with DLNR divisions or other entities to protect ancient and cultural trail features;
- Conduct and operate commercial trail tour management and monitoring; and
- Assess environmental risks to public safety for trails and access roads by identifying and mitigating hazards through warning signs pursuant to Act 82, Session Laws of Hawaii (SLH) 2003.

NAH Program statewide staff spends the majority of its time maintaining program trails and access roads to ensure public safety and to protect trail and historical values. The management specifications are explained in the Trail Design Guidelines of the 1991 NAH Program Plan. Trail and road management consists of the following activities:

- Grading - trail or access road surface improvements;

- Brushing - cutting back brush along trail and road corridors to specific dimensions;
- Tree removal - removing downed trees that hamper trail use;
- Water diversion - grading trails to avoid water damage;
- Boardwalk installation or repair - boardwalks may be installed in excessively boggy and sensitive environments;
- Re-construction or re-routing of access roads and trails;
- Herbicide application - herbicide application is used to specifically target noxious, non-native plant species that spread rapidly along trail and access road corridors;
- Equipment purchase, repair, or rental - vehicles, helicopter rental, chain saws, brush-cutters, herbicide, fuel, and other equipment used to maintain trail/road features; and
- Informational and warning sign assessments, installation, and monitoring - provide informational signs for public safety and public user information.

Highlights of Statewide NAH Outdoor Recreation Projects

Administration: Staff compiled Act 86 manual, outlining the history and protocol for installing hazardous condition signs. The manuals were made in response to a number of inquiries from DLNR staff on proper protocol for posting Act 86 signs. The manuals were distributed to NAH Specialists, Branch Managers, and State Parks Staff. Administrative staff continues to establish a suitable method to update program strip maps. Staff is exploring different platforms that enable trail lines to be updated, as well as inventory trail features and points of interest. Staff also worked towards launching the online, day-use permit system. This system already hosts the Lulumahu Falls permit application, and should include hiking permits to Kuaokala Trail in the near future. Launching the day-use system will help to give hikers the option to apply for and obtain permits without having to visit a DOFAW office, as well as streamline the process for clerical staff.

Oahu: Program continues to oversee annual maintenance contract for all Oahu trails and roads. Contract services include clearing trails twice a year, and reporting downed trees, wash-outs, and/or vandalized signs. The NAH trail crew now focuses on completing larger trail projects on all non-motorized, program trails. The Oahu program has contracted out the vegetation maintenance of most of its roads (Poamoho Access, Kuaokala, Kamananui Valley Road, Mokuleia Road and Honouliuli Road.) Staff worked with AmeriCorps KUPU staff (40 volunteers) to reestablish trail bed and bench on Poamoho Trail. Staff also worked with the Watershed Partnership Programs to build a wooden boardwalk over Pauoa Flats Trail. The 120 foot section of boardwalk was placed in a heavily eroded section of trail.

Maui: The Kahakapao Recreational Area in the Makawao Forest Reserve continues to be heavily utilized by the public and is the most popular NAH venue on Maui. Monthly inspections of the bicycle features and trail maintenance continue. The second most popular recreational feature for Maui Nui is the Waihee Ridge Trail. The Waihee Ridge Trail underwent a major upgrade in the last year. Work included: installation of 2 (two) observation platforms, drainage upgrades, vegetation management, storm mitigation, and trail tread stabilization. Staff completed routine Standard Trail Maintenance Procedures (STMP), including brushing, grading, water diversion maintenance, tree and brush removal, sign maintenance, and herbicide application to the following trails: Haleakala Ridge, Ala

Loa O Maui, Lahaina Pali, Plum, Polipoli, Tie, Redwood, Mamane, Upper Waiohuli, Boundary, Lower Waiohuli, Waiakoa Loop, Waihee Ridge, Waihou Spring, Waikamoi Ridge, Ohai Loop, Keanae Arboretum, and Hulopoe-Huawai-Fisherman's Trail. Maui staff has continued to provide maintenance support of the Maui Motocross Track, including landscaping maintenance, removing rubbish and debris, hauling materials, and equipment maintenance.

Hawaii: Trail Specialists on Hawaii Island are responsible for maintaining camping sites and hiking trail in remote Waimanu Valley. Staff is coordinating the replacement of two Clivus composting toilets with the assistance of helicopter support. The Waiakea OHV Park requires continuous maintenance, including minor grading, signage, and trash. The Kaulana Manu project, which is a popular native forest bird-watching area located along Saddle Road, is being improved. A capital improvement project will include a parking lot, bathrooms, and interpretive signage. Once permits are approved, solar panels will be installed to provide lighting in the parking area. Working with staff from the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, the Pu'u Huluhulu trail, also located off Saddle Road, is being improved with a ramp to make it compliant with accessibility requirements, and the installation of portable toilets. Routine trail maintenance and improvements include Ainapo Trail, Doctor's Pit Trail, Ala Kahakai, Puu Huluhulu, Puna Trail, Onomea Trail, Kaumana Trail, Waimanu Trail, and Pololu Trail. Brushing, tree removal, sign maintenance, helicopter support, and reconstruction make up the bulk of the work. Maintenance is also done on facilities, which include Ainapo Cabin, halfway shelters, and composting units. Due to Rapid Ohia Death affecting Hawaii Island, boot cleaning stations are being installed and outreach and education efforts have been initiated.

Kauai: The Kauai NAH Advisory Committee met several times in FY 2017, and the priority continues to be resolving access issues along the North shore. Ongoing work to repair the Alakai Boardwalk has been extensive, including roughly 60 hours of helicopter time and approximately 1,700 DOFAW staff hours as well as 320 volunteer hours. The Environmental Assessment of the popular Nualolo Cliff Trail reroute has been completed and repairs of the 0.3 mile section that was damaged by a landslide has begun.

3. FUNDING SOURCES

Table 1: Snapshot of Na Ala Hele Funding & Revenue (Source)	FY 2017
Special Funds – State liquid fuel tax; interest; sale of products; commercial revenue; Act 122/SLH 2014	\$ 283,552
Federal Recreational Trails Program appropriation used entirely for operations	\$1,028,680
LNR 804 General Fund – Appropriation used mostly to cover payroll (shared with wildlife)	\$1,342,500
Total	\$2,654,732

Special Funds

DLNR currently has two different revenue sources, the Liquid Fuel Tax (LFT) and Commercial Trail Tour Activity (CTTA), as part or within the Special Land and

Development Fund established pursuant to Section 171-19, HRS. Special funds have gone down in recent years due to NAH no longer being allocated a share of the Transient Accommodations Tax funds appropriated to DLNR, and a decrease in revenues collected from CTTA fees. This created a shortfall of approximately \$175,000 in FY 2017 payroll and resulted in the diversion of monies from operations to cover full time positions.

Liquid Fuel Tax

0.3% of LFT collected under Chapter 243, HRS, is deposited each fiscal year into the Special Land and Development Fund for management, maintenance, and development of NAH trails and trail accesses established under Chapter 198D, HRS. DLNR is limited to \$250,000 revenue from the LFT.

Commercial Trail Tour Activity

Act 106, SLH 1997, allows DLNR to use funding from fees for commercial use of NAH program trails and trail accesses, which is commonly referred to as the CTTA system. Commercial trail use is regulated by Chapter 13-130, Hawaii Administrative Rules. Revenues from CTTA fees go directly back into trail management and maintenance. In addition to the revenues CTTA contributes to the NAH Program, commercially led tours are intended to provide visitors with a safer and more enjoyable experience than if hiking alone. In addition, the CTTA system provides a venue for the tour industry to grow and therefore, potentially increase economic activities within the State.

The CTTA website reservation system ensures that commercial activities by multiple vendors do not exceed the daily capacities and/or number of groups established for CTTA trails and roads. The reservation system is managed by HIC who then records the trail reservation and date and calculates the fee. The NAH Program established an annual \$75 dollar subscription fee for the CTTA operators to HIC with an additional 10% fee on each reservation. While there is an additional 10% per transaction charge and annual subscription fee for HIC management, the CTTA fees are assessed per unit of use and based upon the potential trail impact by type of recreational uses. DOFAW transfers 20% of this revenue to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs for ceded-land revenue. For a complete list of current CTTA operators, visit: hawaiitrails.org.

Federal Recreational Trails Program Allocation

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is authorized under 23 USC 104(h) & 206. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approves eligibility of RTP funds to DLNR/DOFAW through set criteria, which requires that states 1) develop a trail council consisting of motorized and non-motorized recreational users; 2) have a State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan; and 3) comply with the Assured Access to Funds requirement (a minimum of 30% of the funding must be used for motorized trail use, 30% for non-motorized trail use, and 40% for diversified or multiple trail use). DLNR's RTP obligation for FY 2017 was \$1,028,680.

LNR 804 Na Ala Hele General Funds

General funds of approximately \$1,342,500 were allocated in FY 2017. Due to reductions in general fund revenues over the past years, payroll did not meet the current staff costs. To make up the shortfall, the NAH Program used all of the federal funding and state special

funds available to support basic payroll and operating expenses.

4. ANCIENT AND HISTORIC TRAILS

Section 198D-3, HRS, requires an inventory of trails and access routes be maintained and recorded under the NAH database. The NAH Program has one full time staff position to research and document ancient and historic trails and roads, for inclusion in the inventory under the provisions of Section 264-1, HRS, as stated below:

“(b) All trails, and other non-vehicular rights-of-way in the State declared to be public rights-of-ways by the Highways Act of 1892, or opened, laid out, or built by the government or otherwise created or vested as non-vehicular public rights-of-way at any time thereafter, or in the future, are declared to be public trails. A public trail is under the jurisdiction of the state board of land and natural resources unless it was created by or dedicated to a particular county, in which case it shall be under the jurisdiction of that county.”

NAH provides information for locating and determining whether a historic road or ancient trail falls under the Highways Act of 1892. Abstracts of title help make this determination by historical research, maps, or other related media. Additionally, these types of legal determinations are processed through the Department of the Attorney General in identifying possible interest the State may claim in roads and/or trails situated within the boundaries of lands that are the subject of quiet title actions or Land Court applications. If public ownership is confirmed, access through roads or trails is documented and submitted before the Board of Land and Natural Resources for final approval. In FY 2017, the NAH Program completed 60 abstracts and 15 Quiet Title Action reviews.

The Abstractor is also tasked with providing technical assistance to all DOFAW programs in the search for public access to state managed lands. This has resulted in identifying public access rights through private lands to the Honouliuli Forest Reserve and the Old Government Road in Maunawili on Oahu.

Highlights of Ancient and Historic Trail Projects:

Hawaii

The Abstractor assisted Hawaii Island Staff to respond to concerns about ancient trails for future development along the North Kohala coast. Working with the National Parks Service, County of Hawaii Planning Office, and State Historic Preservation Division, comments were submitted recommending preservation of the ancient trails in the proposed project.

Maui

The Abstractor assisted Maui staff in responding to Advisory Council Member inquiries as well as providing technical assistance regarding issues of land ownership of land adjoining forest reserves.

Kauai

The Abstractor conducted extensive research to determine the State's interest in various alignments believed by the public to belong to the government and attended several NAH Advisory Council meetings to provide outreach and information regarding these alignments.

Oahu

The Abstractor assisted Oahu staff on researching land ownership and other trail issues regarding the State's interest in the ancient route to Pohakea Pass and the Old Government Road at Maunawili.

The work of the abstracting section is of critical importance to the public, and the demand for assistance from the abstract section easily justifies a second position.