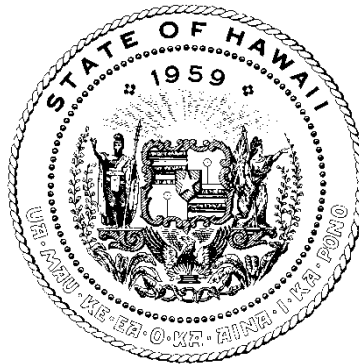


**REPORT TO THE THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE
STATE OF HAWAII
2019 REGULAR SESSION**

**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
December 2018

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PURPOSE

Chapter 198D, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), creates the Hawaii Trail and Access System, under the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). Pursuant to Section 198D-9, HRS, a report is required to highlight DLNR’s accomplishments in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018.

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.

With the dramatic increase in trail use, intensified by higher tourism numbers and exposure from social media, DLNR has an obligation to address all 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 growing demand.

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;
- Monitor and remove invasive plant and animal species;
- Provide recreational opportunities, including hunting, hiking, biking, equestrian, and OHV activities;
- 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;
- Manage commercial trail tour permits activity; and
- Assess and implement environmental risk assessments to improve public safety of program trails and access roads by identifying specific hazards and mitigating dangers through warning signs pursuant to Act 82, Session Laws of Hawaii (SLH) 2003.

NAH Program statewide staff spends most 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, including grading trails to avoid water damage;
- Brushing - cutting back brush along trail and road corridors to specific dimensions;
- Tree removal - removing downed trees that disrupt trail use;
- 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.

A sustainable trail should have as little impact on the surrounding environment as possible; this is done with proper planning, design, construction and maintenance. Although some general principles of trail design guidelines have remained constant over the years, new methods of minimizing a trail's impact on the environment have been developed. Applying these sustainable trail design principles minimizes water damage to trails, and decreases maintenance. Many of Hawaii's trails were developed from informal routes, and not properly laid out and constructed. Applying sustainable trail design principles, existing trails can be upgraded to modern standards. Proper funding and staffing levels to assist with implementing these guidelines would significantly improve the statewide trail network.

Updating the 1991 NAH Program Plan to incorporate these modern trail design guidelines would provide the program with clearer direction on how to develop and maintain long-term sustainable trails. These trail guidelines, if implemented, would save staff time and funding on future maintenance, and would provide for a safer experience for trail users. The plan update could also address new technologies and social media that were nonexistent during the original program plan.

Highlights of Statewide NAH Outdoor Recreation Projects

Administration: Improvements were made to our website (www.hawaiitrails.hawaii.gov) allowing easier navigation to trail information, public announcements, and vendor applications for commercial trail tour activity (CTTA). Authority was delegated to island branch managers to approve CTTA permits, streamlining the process for approval of commercial trail use. An on-line, day-use permit application was also launched for Kuaokala and Mokuleia trails. Researching improvements for public access and more trail opportunities statewide is ongoing.

Oahu: Oahu's trails are well-used by thousands of enthusiasts engaged in outdoor activity, and despite urban interface issues at several trailheads, the program feedback is overwhelmingly positive. Major work includes brushing, grubbing, tree/rock removal, herbicide application, trail head maintenance, sign installation/replacement, and rockwork. Other projects included trail bench reconstruction, armoring water diversions, installing educational signs, and out-planting

native plants. The priority is to keep trails safe. Oahu staff provided continued support of the Kahuku OHV Park, and met with Hawaii Motorsports Association to discuss future improvements.

Oahu's program accomplished several trail projects with the assistance of military and civilian volunteers and AmeriCorps KUPU interns to successfully mitigate trail hazards and keep Oahu's trails open and safe for the public. Service projects conducted throughout the year included clearing vegetation (including invasive weeds and dozens of large fallen trees), and mitigating rock fall and other potentially hazardous conditions. Oahu contracted out much of the routine road and trail vegetation management allowing staff to manage vegetation on trails with high value vegetation resources and focus on larger trail projects. The program submitted an HTA Aloha Aina grant for improvements to the upper portion of Manoa Falls 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. Staff completed routine Standard Trail Maintenance Procedures, including brushing, grading, water diversion maintenance, tree and brush removal, and sign maintenance 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 and expanding the Waieka OHV Park. OHV is also allowed on Mauna Kea (R1, R10). Routine maintenance is ongoing, including minor grading, signage, and trash. The Kipuka 21 project, which is a popular native forest area off Saddle Road where visitors can experience native flora and fauna in a pristine setting is developing into a visitor attraction. A capital improvement project will include a parking lot, bathrooms, and interpretive signage. Negotiating with private landowners is key to allowing public access to trails that include Judd Trail and Hookena Trail, which are not program trails currently, but meet the criteria. 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 2018, and the priority continues to be recruiting new volunteer members. Work to repair the Alakai boardwalk has been extensive. 10 hours of helicopter flight time was used removing old boards, and flying in 150 new boards. Koaie Canyon trail saw extensive improvements including tread widening and drainage improvements. 12 bags of trash from the camping shelters were also hauled out by sling loads.

3. FUNDING SOURCES

Table 1: Snapshot of Na Ala Hele Funding & Revenue (Source)	FY 2018
Special Funds – State fuel tax and CTTA appropriation used mostly to cover payroll	\$285,550
Federal Recreational Trails Program appropriation used entirely for operations	\$859,576
LNR 804 General Fund – Appropriation used mostly to cover payroll (shared with wildlife)	\$1,461,155

Special Funds

DLNR currently has two different revenue sources, the Liquid Fuel Tax (LFT) and Commercial Trail Tour Activity (CTTA), deposited into the Special Land and Development Fund established pursuant to Section 171-19, HRS. Special fund revenues have declined in recent years due to the Na Ala Hele program no longer getting a share of the Transient Accommodations Tax, and a decrease in revenues collected from CTTA fees.

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 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 a contractor (HIC) who records the trail reservations and dates and calculates fees. There is an annual \$75 subscription fee for CTTA operators, 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 submits 20% of this revenue to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. For a complete list of current CTTA operators, visit: <https://hawaiitrails.hawaii.gov/trails/#/vendors>

Federal Recreational Trails Program Allocation

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 to, 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 allotment for FY 2018 was \$859,576.

LNR 804 Na Ala Hele General Funds

General funds of approximately \$1,461,155 were allocated in FY 2018. There is a persistent shortfall in payroll for G084. To make up the shortfall, the NAH Program used federal grant funds and state special funds to cover payroll expenses. There are no State General funds available for operating expenses for the NAH trails and access program.

4. ANCIENT AND HISTORIC TRAILS

Section 198D-3, HRS, requires an inventory of trails and accesses 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 old government roads for inclusion in the statewide trails 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 does research pertaining to the location and documentation of 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 2018, the NAH Program completed 42 abstracts and 14 Quiet Title Action reviews.

Summary 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 Waikoloa 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.

Maui

The Abstractor assisted Maui staff with the opening of the Kahakapao Recreational area as well as providing technical assistance regarding issues regarding access and land ownership.

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 Old Government Road in Maunawili.