

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Division of Forestry and Wildlife
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

October 11, 2019

Chairperson and Members
Board of Land and Natural Resources
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO RESTRICT ACCESS IN PORTIONS OF THE WEST MAUI NATURAL AREA RESERVE, LIHAU SECTION (TMK (2) 4-8:001:002, por), AS SHOWN IN EXHIBIT 1, FOR A PERIOD OF UP TO TWO YEARS.

BACKGROUND:

Rock climbers are installing hardware and footholds into cliffs in the Lihau section of the West Maui Natural Area Reserve. These activities are impacting threatened and endangered plants such as *Achyranthes splendens* and *Schiedea menziesii*. Some individuals of these species are actually growing under the metal holds and steps pounded into the dry cliff walls of concern. The only known *Hibiscus brackenridgei* West Maui population is in danger of trampling or breakage during the hike to the vertical walls for climbing.

The dry cliffs where this climbing is occurring is an ecosystem defined by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Services' Critical Habitat designation:

The dry cliff ecosystem is composed of vegetation communities occupying steep slopes (greater than 65 degrees) in areas that receive less than 75 in (190 cm) of rainfall annually, or are in otherwise dry substrate conditions.¹ This ecosystem is found on all of the main Hawaiian Islands except Niihau, and is best represented along the leeward slopes of Lanai and Maui.²

Modifying geological features (such as chipping away rock for footholds) is a prohibited activity under Section 13-209, Hawaii Administrative Rules. The continued use of these walls for rock climbing is further exposing these rare plants to damage.

¹ The Nature Conservancy, 2006. An Ecoregional Assessment of Biodiversity Conservation for the Hawaiian High Islands. <http://www.hawaiiecoregionplan.info/home.html>

² *Ibid.*

ANALYSIS:

While Natural Area Reserves are generally open to the public, the very close proximity of these climbing routes to rare plant species warrants a closure to prevent further harm to these critically endangered plants. The Division of Forestry and Wildlife recommends closure of cliff areas in the Lihau section of the West Maui Natural Area Reserve, as shown by the attached map which roughly corresponds to areas with slopes greater than 65 degrees, and where this rare ecosystem exists. The Division will also install signage explaining to the rock climbing community why these activities threaten the rare plants whose only habitat are dry cliffs. The Natural Area Reserves System Commission recommended this closure on August 22, 2019.

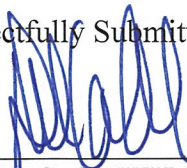
This closure is pursuant to § 13-209-4.5, Hawaii Administrative Rules:

The board or its authorized representative, with the approval of the commission, may close or restrict the public use of all or any portion of a natural area reserve for up to two years, when deemed necessary by the commission for the protection of the natural, geological, or cultural resources of the area or the safety and welfare of persons or property, by the posting of appropriate signs indicating the duration, extent, and scope of closure. Closures may be renewed with the approval of the board or its authorized representative and the commission. All persons shall observe and abide by the officially posted signs designating closed areas.

RECOMMENDATION:

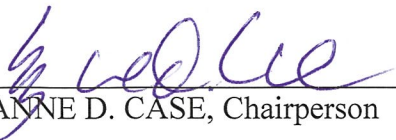
That the Board restricts access in portions of the West Maui Natural Area Reserve, Lihau Section (TMK (2) 4-8:001:002, por), as shown in Exhibit 1, for a period of up to two years.

Respectfully Submitted,



DAVID G. SMITH, Administrator
Division of Forestry and Wildlife

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL:



SUZANNE D. CASE, Chairperson

Attachment

Temporary Access Restriction Lihau Section West Maui NAR

