

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Division of Forestry and Wildlife
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

October 27, 2023

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

Board Members:

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZE THE DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE TO CONDUCT A PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE PROPOSED SET ASIDE OF LANDS AS AN EXTENSION OF THE MANOWAIALE'E FOREST RESERVE, (3) 4-1-006:002, HAMAKUA, HAWAII

SUMMARY

A 162-acre parcel that is on a revocable permit from Land Division for pasture purposes is proposed to be added to the Manowaiale'e Forest Reserve for reforestation, watershed protection, public recreation, cultural use, and native species habitat. The parcel currently provides approximately 90 acres of usable pastureland; the remainder is eucalyptus and fragmented native forest.

BACKGROUND:

The 162-acre Parcel 2 consists of grasslands, eucalyptus forest, and a remnant *koa* forest. This area is directly mauka of the Manowaiale'e Forest Reserve, and adjacent to the Humu'ula section of the Hilo Forest Reserve which has *koa* forests that are important habitat for native wildlife and rare native plants. The existing native species seedbank on the property provides a promising reforestation opportunity. Further, the area's direct proximity to the Keanakolu Ranger and Bunkhouse Cabins and Mana Road will facilitate active management and forest restoration. These two cabins are open to public use and will provide a opportunity for school groups and other members of the public to assist in the restoration of this parcel. Nearby, *koa* forests have successfully been restored on private lands, showing the potential for this reforestation proposal. Examples include the adjacent Umikoa restoration area and other proximate former grasslands (see exhibits). Restoring the native *koa* forest at Manowaiale'e will sequester carbon, improve watershed function to this fragmented forest, and expand habitat for native forest birds that require high-elevation forests above the mosquito line.

The main target for restoration is the approximately 90 acres which is currently in grassland with sparse trees. Below that section, approximately 50 acres is densely

ITEM C-4

forested with non-native eucalyptus. Further below, approximately 20 acres is fragmented native forest with a grassland understory.

The parcel is currently on a revocable permit (No. 7476) to Mr. John Souza for pasture purposes. The Division notified Mr. Souza in 2022 and in 2023 of its intentions to incorporate this area into the Forest Reserve and reforest the area, which will eventually require removing cattle. The Division of Forestry and Wildlife intends to keep the permittee in Parcel 2 on a special use grazing permit until the Division begins to reforest the area. The Division will need to construct a fence on the western edge of the parcel before reforestation efforts begin. If the area becomes a Forest Reserve, the Division would like to issue Mr. Souza a permit to continue grazing for fuel control purposes until the Division is ready to restore the area.

The revocable permit also includes another nearby 66-acre parcel, (3) 4-1-006:004. This "Parcel 4" is not as suitable for reforestation and the Division has no legal access. Instead, the Division has recommended that Parcel 4 be transferred to the Department of Agriculture. However, Parcel 4 is mostly covered in non-native eucalyptus so there may be limited pasture value. Mr. Souza also currently leases the privately-owned parcel that is between these two State parcels.

Pursuant to Sections 183-12 Hawaii Revised Statutes, public hearings must be held on proposed set asides to Forest Reserves. After the hearings are held, the Division will return to the Board to present the public testimony and propose an appropriate disposition based on the information presented.

CHAPTER 343 - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

Pursuant to Section 343 HRS, administrative actions such as conducting a public hearing are *de minimis* and an environmental assessment is not required. Inasmuch as the Chapter 343 environmental requirements apply to the Division's use of the lands, the Division shall be responsible for compliance with Chapter 343, HRS, as amended.

[Continued on page 3]

RECOMMENDATIONS: That the Board:

1. Authorize the Division of Forestry and Wildlife to conduct a public hearing regarding the proposed designation of the subject lands as a Forest Reserve. Further, authorize the Chairperson to:
 - A. Set the dates, locations, and times of the public hearing; and
 - B. Appoint a hearing master for the public hearing.

Respectfully Submitted:



DAVID G. SMITH, Administrator

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL:



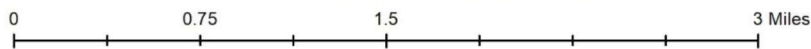
DAWN N. S. CHANG, Chairperson

Attachment

Exhibits – Maps

AUTHORIZE THE DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE TO CONDUCT A PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE PROPOSED SET ASIDE OF LANDS AS AN EXTENSION OF THE MANOWAIALE'E FOREST RESERVE, (3) 4-1-006:002, HAMAKUA, HAWAII

Proposed Manowaiiale'e Forest Reserve Extension (Parcel 2)



 Reserves

DOFAW (808) 587-4170. April 2023. Features approximate and subject to change.

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In adjacent private ranch lands (shown on the map above as the koa restoration area), large tracts of grasslands have been converted to native forest. The photo on the left is from 2013, and the right is the same area in 2022. The forested areas in the center part of the photo are *koa*. The photo represents an area approximately 3.5 miles wide.