

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

May 8, 2026

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

Land Board Members:

SUBJECT: Approval of the Draft Firearms Policy for the Division of Forestry and Wildlife

#### SUMMARY

The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), currently operates under the DLNR Firearms Policy, approved by the Board of Land and Natural Resources (“Board”) in 2006 (Attachment 1).

In 2025, DOFAW convened an internal task force to review and update policies governing the authorized use of firearms by Division employees and qualified partners engaged in natural resource management activities. The task force focused on enhancing safety, accountability, and compliance with applicable legal and administrative requirements to ensure firearms are used appropriately in support of conservation and resource management objectives.

The task force developed a draft firearms policy and circulated it to all DOFAW operational units for review and comment. Feedback received was evaluated and, as appropriate, incorporated into the draft policy.

DOFAW requests that the Board approve the draft DOFAW Firearms Policy (Attachment 2) for statewide implementation and authorize the Chairperson to execute the final policy, subject to review and approval by the Department of the Attorney General.

#### CHAPTER 343 – ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed action is administrative in nature and does not authorize any specific project or activity that would have an environmental impact. Any future projects or activities involving the use of firearms will be subject to environmental review, as applicable, at the time of implementation.

## RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:

1. Approve the draft Firearms Policy for the Division of Forestry and Wildlife.
2. Authorize the Chairperson to execute the final policy, with any necessary edits, subject to review and approval by the Department of the Attorney General.

Respectfully submitted,



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David G. Smith, Administrator  
Division of Forestry and Wildlife

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL



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Ryan K.P. Kanaka'ole, Acting Chairperson  
Board of Land and Natural Resources

Attachments:

- 1) DLNR Firearms Policy (2006)
- 2) Draft DOFAW Firearms Policy (2026)

# **DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE FIREARMS POLICY**

**April 2026**

## **I. PURPOSE**

This policy establishes the rules, procedures, and responsibilities governing the authorized use of firearms by employees of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (“Department”), Division of Forestry and Wildlife (“Division”), in the performance of official duties related to natural resource management and conservation.

This policy also references applicable exemptions from State and Federal firearms laws for authorized government use, including Hawai'i Revised Statutes (“HRS”) § 134-11, 18 United States Code (“U.S.C.”) § 922, and 27 Code of Federal Regulations (“C.F.R.”) Parts 478 and 479, as well as Department-specific conditions and restrictions.

## **II. AUTHORITY**

The Division is mandated to:

- Protect and enhance forested watersheds (HRS Chapter 183)
- Manage and preserve natural area reserves (HRS Chapter 195)
- Protect native species from extinction (HRS Chapter 195D)
- Manage wildlife resources and control harmful species (HRS Chapter 183D)

The use of firearms is an essential tool for carrying out these statutory responsibilities.

## **III. APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to:

1. Division employees who are authorized to carry and use firearms in the course of official duties.
2. Individuals assisting the Division in management activities who are independently authorized to use firearms, unless otherwise exempted by law.

This policy does not apply to the Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement (DOCARE).

## **IV. JUSTIFICATION**

The Division utilizes firearms as a management tool to:

- Control invasive and feral species
- Protect native ecosystems and endangered species

- Reduce wildlife-related hazards
- Support research and conservation activities

When used in accordance with this policy and established safety protocols, firearms are an effective and appropriate tool for fulfilling the Division's mission.

## V. DISTRIBUTION AND TRAINING

Branch Managers shall:

- Distribute this policy to all authorized employees
- Ensure employees understand applicable requirements
- Require and document appropriate training

## VI. DEFINITIONS

- **Authorized** – Approved in writing by the Branch Manager or Division Administrator to use a firearm for official duties.
- **Employee** – Any individual employed by the Division.
- **Firearm** – Any weapon operated by explosive force, including pistols, revolvers, rifles, and shotguns, whether Department-issued or personally owned and approved.
- **Natural Resource Management Purposes** – Activities including, but not limited to, predator control, ungulate control, nuisance wildlife management, research collection, and ecosystem protection.
- **Specialized Firearms and Accessories** – Firearms or accessories restricted to government use under State or Federal law, including suppressors and large-capacity magazines, when properly permitted and approved.

## VII. GENERAL GUIDELINES

### A. Authorized Firearm Users

Only employees who meet all the following criteria shall be authorized:

1. Successful completion of required background checks.
2. Written authorization by the Branch Manager and Administrator.
3. Compliance with HRS Chapter 134.
4. Completion of required training.

Authorization may be suspended or revoked at any time by the Branch Manager or Administrator.

## **B. Authorized Use**

Firearms may be used only for official purposes, including:

- Predator and pest control
- Ungulate management
- Nuisance wildlife response
- Aerial control operations
- Scientific research and collection
- Personal protection from dangerous wildlife
- Training and certification

## **C. Authorized Firearms**

Authorized firearms include:

1. Division-owned firearms.
2. Specialized firearms approved in writing.
3. Personally owned firearms approved in writing and registered in accordance with HRS § 134-4.

The Division shall not be responsible for loss or damage to personally owned firearms.

## **D. Job Hazard Analysis**

All firearm-related activities shall undergo a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA), including pre-activity safety briefings (“tailgate” sessions), in accordance with DLNR policy.

## **E. Restrictions**

1. Firearms shall be used solely for official purposes.
2. Specialized firearms and accessories shall be used only with prior written approval.
3. Division-owned firearms shall not be loaned outside the Division without prior written authorization.
4. Division-owned ammunition shall be used exclusively for official duties.
5. Employees shall not carry or use firearms while under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances.
6. Employees shall not use firearms when impaired by physical condition, emotional state, or medication.
7. Firearms shall not be discharged in a manner that endangers persons or property.
8. Discharge from a moving vehicle is prohibited unless expressly authorized.
9. Firearms shall not be used outside the scope of official duties.
10. Firearms shall not be carried in prohibited areas.

## **F. Registration and Procurement**

All Division firearms shall:

- Be purchased from federally licensed dealers
- Be registered with the Division or Department
- Be inventoried and tracked
- Be acquired only with written authorization from the Administrator and the Chairperson

Additional requirements apply to specialized firearms, which must be securely stored under the custody of a designated custodian.

## **G. Disposal**

Unneeded or nonfunctional firearms shall be:

- Offered internally, or
- Transferred to the appropriate county police department.

Records of disposal shall be maintained.

## **H. Training Requirements**

Employees must:

- Complete hunter education
- Complete firearms safety training
- Maintain first aid certification
- Demonstrate proficiency with each firearm type to be used

Additional requirements apply for aerial operations (refer to the Department Aerial Shooting Policy and Helicopter Operating Policy).

## **I. Storage and Transport**

Firearms shall:

- Be stored unloaded in secured facilities
- Be accessible only to authorized personnel
- Be transported unloaded in enclosed cases

Firearms shall not be stored in vehicles unless no safer alternative exists.

**J. Maintenance**

Firearms shall be maintained in accordance with manufacturer specifications and removed from service if unsafe.

**K. Reporting**

Any firearm-related incident, including injury, unsafe condition, loss, or theft, shall be reported immediately to supervisors, DOCARE, and law enforcement as required.

**L. Authorization and Revocation**

The Chairperson, Administrator, and Branch Managers may approve, suspend, or revoke firearm authorization at any time.

**VIII. POLICY APPROVALS AND EFFECTIVE DATE**

This policy shall take effect upon approval by the Chairperson of the Department of Land and Natural Resources, following review by the Department of the Attorney General.

Approved:

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Deputy Attorney General  
Department of the Attorney General  
State of Hawai'i

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Approved:

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David G. Smith, Administrator  
Division of Forestry and Wildlife

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Approved:

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Ryan K.P. Kanaka'ole, Acting Chairperson  
Department of Land and Natural Resources

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date