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KŪKULU KE EA A KANALOA
KAHO'OLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
KŌMIKINA MĀLAMA KAHO'OLAWE

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DRAFT PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

10:30 am

In person at 1151 Punchbowl St, Room 132
Honolulu, HI

Meeting recording located at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbYa0BsydlU>

COMMISSION MEMBERS

PRESENT:

Faith Kahale Saito, Vice-Chair (attended remotely); Dawn Chang; Saumalu Mataafa (attended remotely); Justin Keoni Souza (attended remotely)

EXCUSED:

Michelle Pescaia, Chair; 'Ānela Evans; Benton Kealii Pang, Ph.D.

KIRC STAFF:

Michael Nāho'opi'i, Executive Director (ED); Daniel Morris, Deputy Attorney General (DAG) (attended remotely); Terri Gavagan, Commission Coordinator (CC); Carmela Noneza, GIS Specialist (GIS) (attended remotely); Ashley Razo, Public Information Specialist (PIS); Dean Tokishi, Ocean Resources Program Manager (ORPM)(attended remotely); Paul Higashino, Restoration Program Manager (RPM) (attended remotely); James Bruch, Natural Resources Specialist III (NRS III) (attended remotely)

IN PERSON

GUESTS:

Peter Akoni (Dawson); Kylee Mar (Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana PKO) (attended remotely)

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Saito at 10:07 am. Roll call was conducted, and quorum was established with four Commissioners.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Minutes of September 24, 2024 Regular Commission Meeting

MOTION: Commissioner Souza moved to approve the minutes of September 24, 2024 as submitted. Commissioner Mataafa seconded the motion.

ACTION: The motion was approved unanimously via roll call: Vice Chair Saito-aye; Commissioner Chang-aye; Commissioner Mataafa-aye; Commissioner Souza-aye.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were made at this time.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

A. Review and Approve Fiscal Year (FY25) Budget Amendment

ED Nāho‘opi‘i explained that the FY25 budget needed to be amended in order to add the Maui County Greens Grant to the Ocean Program and to remove the Department of Health (DOH) 6 grant from the budget.

Commissioner Mataafa requested details regarding the DOH delay. RPM Higashino responded that staff was in monthly contact with the DOH, but that staff was still waiting for the contract to be written.

Commissioner Mataafa asked RPM Higashino what the biggest expected impact of this on the Restoration Program. RPM Higashino responded the biggest impact was on the continuation of the Restoration Program’s ongoing projects. Staff was able to get plant donations from other groups. Staff was keeping fairly busy. This delay was also an opportunity to catch up on other activities such as road work, base camp maintenance and creating fire breaks.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i added that this funding also provided for a Technician II position to assist on island.

Commissioner Mataafa stated that it sounded like there was other work to be done and that he appreciated the staff’s work.

Commissioner Chang noted that RPM Higashino has worked for the KIRC since its creation and thanked him for his dedication.

MOTION: Commissioner Souza moved to approve the KIRC FY25 budget increase of \$17,864. Commissioner Chang seconded the motion.

ACTION: The motion was approved unanimously via roll call: Vice Chair Saito-aye; Commissioner Chang-aye; Commissioner Mataafa-aye; Commissioner Souza-aye.

B. Approve Proposed Calendar Year 2025 Access Dates and Activities for the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana (PKO)

ED Nāho‘opi‘i explained that the PKO submits a list of activities and proposed dates for accesses to Kaho‘olawe to the KIRC for approval based on the terms of the ‘Aelike signed last year. He noted that there were no changes in requested activities.

MOTION: Commissioner Mataafa moved pursuant to HAR §13-261-13 and Section 8 of the Palapala ‘Aelike Kahu‘āina, to approve the proposed access dates and activities for the 2025 calendar year requested by the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana (PKO) as KIRC approved and authorized activities. Commissioner Souza seconded the motion.

ACTION: The motion was approved unanimously via roll call: Vice Chair Saito-aye; Commissioner Chang-aye; Commissioner Mataafa-aye; Commissioner Souza-aye.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

A. Legislative Update, Review Legislation Related to Kaho‘olawe: 1. House Bill (HB) 300 Relating to State Budget, 2. Senate Bill (SB) 473 Relating to State Budget, 3. HB 307 House Draft (HD) 1 Relating to Special Number Plates, SB 143 Relating to Special Number Plates

ED Nāho‘opi‘i reported that staff was tracking four bills. Two of them were the state budget. Neither have been heard yet.

He also reported that there were two bills for a Kaho‘olawe license plate which would generate revenue for the PKO passed to the senate. HB307 HD 1 has passed into the Senate. Its companion bill, SB 143 was not heard so it was likely that the house bill would be used. He noted that there was a good turnout when this bill was heard in the house.

B. Executive Director’s Report

1. Status Update on Budget, Finance and Funding: Review Expenditure Report and Budget Variances

ED Nāho‘opi‘i referred the Commission to the expense report up through January 2025 included in the Commission packet and reported that there was no variance. He also reported that the KIRC was on track for expenditures.

2. Status Update on Plans, Policies and Procedures: Review Long Range Schedule

ED Nāho‘opi‘i referred the Commission to the long-range schedule included in the Commission packet. He noted that a joint project with the PKO to restore the mua in Honokanai‘a was scheduled during the summer.

3. Status Update on Administration, Staffing and Personnel: Report on Status of Current Commissioner's Appointments; Report on New KIRC Staff hires and recruitments

ED Nāho‘opi‘i explained that the Native Hawaiian Organization (NHO) would be submitting a request to Boards and Commissions for Commissioner Pang to serve a second term.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i also reported that PKO was still unsure of what name to submit for Commissioner Evans’ replacement.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i reported that Kale‘a Paiva will be starting on March 3, 2025 to fill the vacant Natural Resource Specialist (NRS III) position. She is a graduate of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Natural Resources & Environmental Management (NREM) Program as well as the King Kekaulike Hawaiian Immersion Program.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i reported that the Cultural Resources Project Coordinator (CRPC) position was still vacant. However, staff was in the process of scheduling interviews with some potential candidates.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i explained that the current Logistic Specialist was currently on active duty with the Coast Guard as she was still in the Coast Guard Reserves. Staff was in the process of creating a Vice Logistic Specialist which would be a short-term temporary hire while the Logistic Specialist was on active duty.

4. Status Update on Capital Improvements, Reserve Operations and Logistics: Briefing on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) Boathouse Expansion Grant Award and Update on Honokanai‘a Base Camp Capital Improvement Project (CIP)

ED Nāho‘opi‘i noted that Peter Akoni from Dawson was in attendance, and he could address any questions regarding the current CIP project at Honokanai‘a.

Mr. Akoni reported the roof repairs on Hut 5 were completed. The other planned tasks included 1) work on the potable water distribution system, 2) installation of air conditioning units, 3) painting of buildings. He also noted that Dawson conducted an electrical study of the camp’s electrical system for a potential systemwide electrical upgrade.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i explained that NOAA awarded the KIRC a \$1 million two year grant for a Kihei Boathouse expansion project. The project would also include a pavilion for outdoor educational presentations and a comfort station. He also shared renderings of the proposed project. The current estimated costs of the project are over \$1 million. Staff was currently looking for new pricing for the planning phase of this project. Staff planned to make a CIP request for part of the project. ED Nāho‘opi‘i stated his biggest concern was that this grant was a reimbursable grant and he was trying to get reassurance that the KIRC would be reimbursed.

Commissioner Chang was excused at 10:34 am.

VI. PROJECT STATUS UPDATES

A. Status Update on Current Commission/Administration Projects

1. KIRC Live-Stream and VR Expedition Project (IMLS4)

ED Nāho‘opi‘i reported that staff was still waiting for these funds to be placed in the KIRC Trust Fund account.

2. Going Mobile: Upgrading the Technological Infrastructure of Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission (IMLS5)

ED Nāho‘opi‘i reported that staff was waiting for receipt of funding.

3. Sharing the Stories of Kahoolawe’s Past, Present and Future (HTA)

PIS Razo reported that all grant deliverables were completed. She pointed out the photos provided in the grant project update displaying the updated photographic displays as well as Quick Response (QR) codes for donations. A television was installed which plays a loop presenting plans for the KIRC Kihei Education and Operations Center.

Vice Chair Saito commented that she and her family had visited the exhibit at the Maui Ocean Center (MOC) and was impressed with it. She asked how long the installation would be up. ED Nāho‘opi‘i responded probably until the KIRC’s Education and Operations Center was constructed in Kihei. She asked if there were QR codes at the Kihei Boat Ramp. Staff responded that the placards along the trail at the front of the KIRC property were created prior to the development of QR codes.

B. Status Update on Current Restoration Projects

1. Coastal and Upland Wetland Restoration on Kaho‘olawe, HI (NAWCA-Wetlands)

RPM Higashino reported this grant was completed in 2024. He added workplaces included Lua ‘O Keāliialalo at the 600 foot elevation and that 4,000 native and Polynesian-introduced plants were installed. At Keanakeiki along the west coast, staff and volunteers planted 2,000 native and Polynesian-introduced plants. Most of those plants were planted prior to the heavy rains at the end of January and into February. The plants which were planted in late December had a higher survival rate. Staff will go out in March for further assessment.

Vice Chair Saito asked the rainfall status during Makahiki. RPM Higashino replied that rainfall was very low and it came very late this year.

Vice Chair Saito asked if there were any impacts from the recent storm. RPM Higashino report some roads got washed out. Staff was able to work with Dawson staff in taking up truckloads of gravel and keep the roads in fairly decent conditions. Vice Chair Saito thanked RPM Higashino and Mr. Akoni for staff’s and Dawson’s work on the roads. RPM Higashino noted that all lot of work was done by the Ocean Program and their volunteers and that ORPM Tokishi took the lead on coordinating with Dawson. Vice Chair Saito thanked ORPM Tokishi.

2. Ka Palupalu o Kanaloa Partnership Project (Kanaloa Plant Working Group)

RPM Higashino reported sixteen plants were in cultivation and it was too soon to determine if cuttings would survive. Pollen was still being collected and stored. He explained that the biggest threats to the Kanaloa plant were molds and fungi. The working group was collaborating with the Plant Extinction Prevention Program (PEPP) Program to work on protocols for planting in the wild. The next meeting was scheduled for May 5 from 3:00-4:30 pm.

C. Status Update on Current Ocean Program Grant Projects:

1. Coastal Wetland Restoration of Kahoolawe, HI, National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (CWC)

ORPM Tokishi reported that all grant deliverables were met, all funding was spent, and that staff was awaiting funding for the complete billing. The number of plants planted exceeded the number required by the grant. The grant also allowed staff and volunteers to work on roadwork and outreach activities.

2. Developing a Digital Application for the Collection of Kilo 'Ike Pili (IMLS 6)

ORMP Tokishi reported that staff was working with the PKO on this grant project to create a database. This grant allows staff to conduct aerial surveys across Kaho'olawe. Staff was securing helicopter dates through July 2025. This grant also allowed the Ocean Program to support the PKO presence in Honokanai'a.

3. County of Maui Greens Grant Program (Greens Grant)

ORMP Tokishi explained that this project runs from January 2025 through December 2025. The project was very similar to the CWC grant project and expands the work to Honukanae, working on the roads as well as planting 8000 plants. The staff was on track with 1000 'aki'aki plants having already been planted with help from the Restoration Program.

ED Nāho'opi'i also reported that the KIRC received \$150,000 of additional funding from the Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands (OCCL) for coastal restoration work. This funding was to be used for the purchase of chipper as well as its transport to Kaho'olawe, more plants, a six-wheel vehicle and remote camera system for island to monitor the coastline to monitor this project.

VIII. NEXT MEETING AND FOLLOW UPS

ED Nāho'opi'i suggested that the next KIRC meeting be held in May or June 2025 after the legislative session to approve the FY26 KIRC budget and invited the Commissioners to attend the upcoming 'Aelike agreement meeting.

Vice Chair Saito thanked the KIRC staff and Dawson for their work.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:52 pm.