

LEGISLATIVE BIENNIUM GENERAL FUND BUDGET REQUEST FOR 2026
KAHO`OLAWA ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
January 2026

1. Request CIP Funding to match the NOAA grant for the KIRC Kīhei Boathouse expansion

Summary: The NOAA Hawaiian Island Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary has allocated \$1,000,000 to the KIRC to expand the current Kihei Boathouse to add additional overhead coverage and office spaces to store the KIRC and NOAA vessels. Additionally, they are also providing funds to build a comfort station and pavilion adjacent to the boathouse. A preliminary estimate for the whole project indicates that \$1,000,000 is insufficient to cover all phases of the project, therefore the KIRC is requesting the State to match the NOAA funds with an additional \$1,000,000 in CIP funding.

Background: NOAA regularly loans the use of their 38-foot rigid hull inflatable boat named R/V Kohola to the KIRC to support KIRC operations when the 'Ōhua (the KIRC's 40-foot landing craft) is inoperable. NOAA's support for KIRC operations was a tremendous help when the 'Ōhua had engine problems and the KIRC was looking at canceling months of on-island accesses. In return for NOAA's generous support of the KIRC, we have authorized NOAA to store their vessel on our Kihei property when they are not in the water at Ma'alaea Harbor. NOAA had infrastructure improvement funding under the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to make facility improvements to include their North Kihei offices. NOAA approached the KIRC with an offer to provide funding to expand the current boathouse to store the NOAA vessel, provide some operations space and fund a comfort station and pavilion at the boathouse. A preliminary estimate of the project done in 2024 showed that approximately \$1.4 to \$1.8 million would be needed to complete all facets of the project.

Request: Request \$1,000,000 in general obligation bond funds (CIP funding) to match NOAA's funding to expand the KIRC's Kīhei Boathouse.

Justification: The expansion of the Kihei Boathouse would include providing two overhead structures on either side of the current boathouse providing covered parking for both the KIRC and NOAA vessels. Additionally, a portable office and storage trailers for both the KIRC's and NOAA's usage would be installed.

The KIRC currently rents a portable toilet for use on site, since there are not restroom facilities at the Kihei property. The project also includes building a traditional beach park comfort station that includes restrooms and shower facilities. An attached, covered pavilion is intended to be used for on-site KIRC educational programs, as a KIRC volunteer waiting preparation area and for PKO staging.

Methodology: Both the KIRC and NOAA will be seeking an additional funding request in the Governor's FY27 budget proposal.

2. Request CIP Funding for Phase II of the Kaho'olawe Restoration and Resilience Center at Kīhei in DLNR's Fiscal Year 2027 Administration's budget request

Summary: The KIRC has the unique opportunity to build the Kaho'olawe Restoration and Resilience Center at its currently base yard property located adjacent to the Kihei Small Boat Harbor. This project will not only consolidate and provide a single KIRC office on Maui but will also tell the story of Kaho'olawe's cultural significance, its ecological devastation and the efforts to restore and demonstrate our communities' resiliency to heal the damages of the past. Additionally, this facility will also create an additional revenue generating venue in the South Kīhei corridor to assist in Maui's economic recovery,

generate additional tax revenues and funding to assist in the continuing restoration efforts on Kahoʻolawe.

Background: Act 119, SLH 2015, Item D-14 as amended by Act 124, SLH 2016 and corrected by Act 49, SLH 2017 authorized \$500,000 in general obligation bonds for the planning and design of an education center, exhibit area/visitor center and administration building for the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) in Kīhei, Maui.

This new facility will be located on an 8.261-acre property controlled by the KIRC, situated on South Kīhei Road. The new office/information center facility will replace currently leased office space to house the KIRC's full-time Maui-based employees. Another portion of the new facility will be devoted to the KIRC's historic and interactive exhibits about Kahoʻolawe, with a community center, archive, kitchen, café, retail spaces, visitor center and workshops/classrooms.

In 2018, the KIRC finalized the conceptual drawings for this new facility and completed all the entitlement work needed to advance this project to the next phase. The work completed included: reaffirming the existing Environmental Assessment, completing new shoreline assessment and traffic studies, and making an application for a Special Management Area permit from the Maui Planning Commission.

The next phase of the project is to develop the detailed drawings and plans necessary to build this project. This includes final construction drawings and specifications, planning and development of exhibits and archive storage, final planning design for the office layout, and final design of the building infrastructure (HVAC, network).

Additionally, this request includes construction efforts to expand the current boathouse to include a larger concrete pad and two additional covered wings for additional boat storage as well as creating a small educational pavilion and restroom facilities adjacent to the current boathouse.

Request: Request \$4,250,000 in general obligation bond funds to complete final designs and planning for Kahoʻolawe Restoration and Resilience Center at Kīhei

Justification: The KIRC is looking beyond the pandemic and the Maui wildfires. The present conditions provide an appropriate opportunity to begin the final design and eventual construction of the Center as it would be ready to welcome the return of visitors to Maui and to expand a new visitor destination in the South Kihei corridor. The influx of funding to start construction would help revitalize jobs on Maui and the raising of the new Center will become a beacon of hope to the community.

The supplemental appropriation of \$4,250,000 is necessary to continue this project that will create a new facility in South Maui and will help create a new revenue generating destination in South Maui while at the same time creating a central base for all the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve Commission's restoration efforts. It will create a unique center to document, research and educate the community on the environmental resiliency of Kahoʻolawe and other areas across the state impacted by the effects of environmental damage, habitat degradation and climate change. The next phase of the project is to complete construction design and planning, develop a community-based thematic vision for the center and to expand the current boathouse facility to house and maintain multiple ocean vessels.

When completed, the KIRC's Kahoʻolawe Restoration and Resilience Center will become the central location for all operations and support for the long-term management and restoration of Kahoʻolawe. The Kīhei Operation/Education Center is necessary to consolidate all the KIRC's operations to a single State-owned facility that will eliminate the need for leased office space in Wailuku, provide the KIRC

with revenue generating opportunities unavailable on Kahoʻolawe and provide a community outreach site to increase the public awareness on the efforts to restore Kahoʻolawe. If the project is deferred, the KIRC operations will continue to be scattered across Maui, the KIRC will have to continue leasing office space in Wailuku and it will not be able to develop revenue generating opportunities that could lead to financial self-sustainability.

CIP Request	Amount	Description of Work
Planning	\$350,000	Update community planning documents and SMA permits
Design	\$3,000,000	Complete design process and construction drawings. Develop museum exhibition designs.
Construction	\$900,000	Expand current boathouse to include additional workspace and boat storage capabilities. Build a small educational pavilion with restroom adjacent to the boathouse.
Total	\$4,250,000	

Methodology: The KIRC will be seeking a request for additional CIP funding in the Governor’s FY27 budget request and if not approved by Budget & Finance and the Governor’s office, we will be seeking legislative support to introduce a new legislation for the funding.

3. Request additional general operating funding and authorization to add one new position for KIRC in DLNR’s Fiscal Year 2026 Administration’s budget request.

Background: In the 2017 legislative request, the KIRC initially submitted a request for general funding for 19 temporary positions. Act 49 SLH 2017 authorized 15 temporary KIRC positions, which were the currently filled positions. Vacant positions were not funded.

In addition to protecting, restoring, and managing the resources of the island of Kahoʻolawe, the KIRC is also responsible for protecting the aquatic resources of the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve which includes the surrounding two miles of ocean. The Ocean Resource Specialists support this effort through the objective measurement, documentation, and restoration of Kahoʻolawe aquatic resources. With current climate changes and effects of more severe weather conditions, a renewed effort is now being undertaken by the Ocean Program on coastal reclamation, rehabilitation, and protection.

Request: Add half-year general funds to support one (1) Ocean Resource Specialist II (\$27,000 FY27).

Justification: The increasing impact of coastal erosion and severe weather along the shorelines of Kahoʻolawe have increased the staff’s focus on coastline stabilization and coastal wetland restoration efforts. These ongoing efforts need additional field support including additional staffing. The KIRC is requesting funding to establish one (1) Ocean Resource Specialist II to support on-island coastal management, restoration, and protection.

Methodology: The KIRC will be seeking a request for additional CIP funding in the Governor's FY27 budget request and if not approved by Budget & Finance and the Governor's office, we will be seeking legislative support to introduce a new legislation for the funding.