

June 26, 2024  
Item IV.C

MEMO TO: KIRC Commissioners  
FROM: Dean Tokishi, Ocean Program Manager  
SUBJECT: Honokanai‘a Honu Nest Excavation

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**RECOMMENDED MOTION:**

1) To authorize KIRC Ocean Program staff to conduct the excavation of known honu nest(s) on Kaho‘olawe with the presence of cultural supervision and direction.

**BACKGROUND & SUMMARY:**

On May 15, 2024, a confirmed honu nesting event was documented and confirmed through photos and video provided by Dawson staff. With known incubation periods, the nest could hatch as early as July 14<sup>th</sup> (55 days) or as late as August 3<sup>rd</sup> (75 days). Ocean program staff will be planning to monitor the nesting area closely during this period of time either in person or via timed camera recording.

After August 3<sup>rd</sup> the Ocean Program staff would like to conduct an excavation of the nest with the presence of a cultural monitor. The excavation would provide confirmation of:

- 1) Whether it was or was not a true nest that contained eggs.
- 2) If it was a true nest, were there any unhatched eggs or what rate of mortality occurred.

In May 2008 a similar nesting event occurred at Pu‘u Tahiti beach where a clear nesting event had been observed with no other documented nesting occurring within the following weeks. An excavation of this 2008 nest was conducted after 75 days of discovery and was proven to be a “false crawl” where the honu dug a nest but no eggs were laid.

**LEGAL AUTHORITY:**

The relevant provisions of Chapter 6K, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes, read as follows:

**[§6K-6] Responsibilities and duties of the commission.** The general administration of the island reserve shall rest with the commission. In carrying out its duties and responsibilities, the commission...

- (1) Shall establish criteria, policies, and controls for permissible uses within the island reserve...

**KIRC Executive Policy Manual, Appendix D: Administrative Access Approval Policy,** Section 2.3: Aquatic life, limited to the following order, *Cetacea* (whales, dolphins, and porpoises), *Pinnipedia* (seals and seal lions), and *Chondrichthyes* (sharks and rays) found in the Reserve shall be recognized as the *Kinolau of Kanaloa*....

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