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Michael K. Nāho'opi'i
Executive Director

KŪKULU KE EA A KANALOA

KAHO'OLawe ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
KŌMIKINA MĀLAMA KAHO'OLawe

811 Kolu Street, Suite 201, Wailuku, HI 96793
Telephone (808) 243-5020 Fax (808) 243-5885
Website: <http://kahoolawe.hawaii.gov>

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 10, 2026

9:00 am

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

Meeting recording located at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Bnbco_IbyE&t=2s

COMMISSION MEMBERS

PRESENT: Michelle Pescaia, Chair (attended remotely); Faith Kahale Saito, Vice-Chair; J. Kalama Chock; Ryan Kanaka'ole; Justin Keoni Souza

EXCUSED: Saumalu Mataafa; Benton Kealii Pang, Ph.D.

KIRC STAFF: Michael Nāho'opi'i, Executive Director (ED); Terri Gavagan, Commission Coordinator (CC); Ashley Razo, Public Information Specialist (PIS); Dean Tokishi, Ocean Resources Program Manager (ORPM) (attended remotely); Paul Higashino (Natural Resources Program (NRPM) (attended remotely); Carmela Noneza (GIS Specialist) (attended remotely)

PUBLIC:

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:07 am by Chair Pescaia. Roll call was conducted, and quorum was established with five Commissioners.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Minutes of December 4, 2025 Regular Commission Meeting

MOTION: Commissioner Souza moved to approve the minutes of December 4, 2025 as submitted. Commissioner Kanaka'ole seconded the motion.

ACTION: The motion was approved unanimously via roll call: Chair Pescaia-aye; Vice Chair Saito-aye; Commissioner Chock-aye; Commissioner Kanaka'ole-aye; Commissioner Souza-aye.

B. Minutes of December 23, 2025 Regular Commission Meeting

MOTION: Commissioner Souza moved to approve the minutes of December 23, 2025 as submitted. Commissioner Kanaka'ole seconded the motion.

Approved 9/3/2026

ACTION: The motion was approved unanimously via roll call: Chair Pescaia-aye; Vice Chair Saito-aye; Commissioner Chock-aye; Commissioner Kanaka'ole-aye; Commissioner Souza-aye.

III. OPEN FORUM

No public comments were made at this time.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

A. Review and Approve Fiscal Year (FY) 26 Budget Amendment

ED Nāho'opi'i requested that the Commission approve a FY26 budget increase of \$257,981. This would reflect:

- additional grants recently awarded
- adjustments to current grants due to awarding delay
- addition of operating funds for the Culture Program with the hire of the Culture Resources Program Coordinator (CRPC)
- addition of trust funds to temporarily fund a KIRC Deputy Director (DD) to allow for the transition to a new KIRC Administrative Office (AO)

ED Nāho'opi'i noted that there was an actual additional change of \$14,000 in general funds as well as an additional \$210,895 in reimbursable trust fund money.

ED Nāho'opi'i explained that Christina Wine was originally hired for the grant funded ORS II position. The grant funding for that position ended. She applied and was hired for the vacant Logistic Specialist (LS) position. He stated that she is well-qualified for the position. Trust Fund money would be used for Ms. Wine's salary until she is transferred to the LS position.

ED Nāho'opi'i explained that there was a reduction of \$6,000 in general funds for the CRPC salary as an adjustment to match the current salary to payrate authorized in the KIRC funding allotment.

Chair Pescaia asked for the current trust fund balance. ED Nāho'opi'i responded the current balance was approximately \$769,000. Chair Pescaia asked if the \$33,000 would be replenished. ED Nāho'opi'i responded staff was expecting proceeds of \$32,000 from an on-line donation program run by the Pacific American Foundation (PAF) on the KIRC's behalf. This was in addition to the end of year direct donation drive. That money will be placed in the trust fund.

Vice Chair Saito asked if \$33,000 which was going to be taken out of the trust fund. ED Nāho'opi'i responded affirmatively and the maximum to be used would be \$33,000 but he anticipated using two-thirds of that amount.

MOTION: Commissioner Souza moved to approve the KIRC FY26 budget increase of \$257,981. Vice Chair Saito seconded the motion.

ACTION: The motion was approved unanimously via roll call: Chair Pescaia-aye; Vice Chair Saito-aye; Commissioner Chock-aye; Commissioner Kanaka'ole-aye; Commissioner Souza-aye.

B. Authorize the Executive Director to fill the Anticipated Vacant Administrative Officer (AO) and Appoint Deputy Director (DD)

ED Nāho'opi'i explained the current AO was going to be relocated at the end of June. He asked the Commission to authorize him to fill the AO position and requested that a Commissioner be assigned to the interview and selection process as required in the KIRC Executive Policy Manual, Appendix A.

ED Nāho'opi'i noted that the recruitment was done and interviews needed to be scheduled. He also explained that the AO position needed to be vacated and the current AO moved to the DD position at least two months prior to the hiring of the new AO.

He noted that it was hard to find someone on Maui with state procurement, accounting, budgeting and personnel training. There were some applicants.

Chair Pescaia asked for volunteers from the Commission to sit on the interview panel. ED Nāho'opi'i noted that he requested the DD position be funded with general funds but was told that was not possible.

Chair Pescaia asked what was the soft date. ED Nāho'opi'i responded no later than June. Chair Pescaia asked what if the on-boarding take longer. ED Nāho'opi'i responded June 30 was the drop dead date.

ED Nāho'opi'i noted he had already spoken to DLNR Personnel and DLNR Fiscal regarding the temporary DD position.

Commissioner Chock asked when the Commissioner would need to be available. ED Nāho'opi'i responded he was hoping within the next few days. Chair Pescaia asked ED Nāho'opi'i to share what the time commitment would be—how many interviews and the expected length of the interviews. ED Nāho'opi'i responded one or two interviews would need to be scheduled this week or next week. The interviews are normally about an hour and that staff would like to pick a candidate by the end of the month.

Chair Pescaia said she would make herself available.

MOTION: Vice Chair Saito moved to:
(1) Authorize the Executive Director to fill the Administrative Officer position and assign Chair Pescaia to the interview and selection process.

- (2) Authorize the Executive Director to appoint Mr. Matt Hatakeyama as the Deputy Director for a period not to exceed four months.

Commissioner Chock seconded the motion.

ACTION: The motion was approved unanimously via roll call: Chair Pescaia-aye; Vice Chair Saito-aye; Commissioner Chock-aye; Commissioner Kanaka'ole-aye; Commissioner Souza-aye.

C. Authorize the Executive Director to extend the Communications Service Contract with Harmer Radio and Electronics, Inc. For FY27

ED Nāho'opi'i requested that the Commission authorize him to award the Communications Contract to Harmer Radio and Electronics, Inc. for \$77,623.01 for May 1, 2026 through April 20, 2027.

ED Nāho'opi'i explained that the current contract was paid from last year's funds.

ED Nāho'opi'i noted that there was an increase in contingency funding to cover the microwave system, wi-fi batteries and upgrade the Base Camp wi-fi.

ED Nāho'opi'i explained the contract using general funds.

MOTION: Commissioner Kanaka'ole authorize the Executive Director to award the Communication Contract to Harmer Radio and Electronics, Inc. in the amount of \$77,623.01 for the period May 1, 2026, through April 30, 2027. Commissioner Souza seconded the motion.

ACTION: The motion was approved by all Commissioners present: Chair Pescaia-aye; Vice Chair Saito-aye; Commissioner Chock-aye; Commissioner Kanaka'ole-aye; Commissioner Souza-aye.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

A. Executive Director's Report

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

ED Nāho'opi'i reported that the KIRC will start spending funds for the Department of Health (DOH) 6 grant project. He also reported that there were no budget variances after the previously approved motion.

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.

ED Nāho'opi'i noted that the March and June accesses would primarily be focused on the mua completion and that there may be a ceremony for the mua in December.

3. Status Update on Administration, Staffing and Personnel: Commissioner Status Update; KIRC Staff Status Update

ED Nāho‘opi‘i reported that the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana (PKO) nominated a person to the governor to replace outgoing Chair Pescaia. Boards & Commissions was awaiting the nomination letter. This person has applied on-line with Boards & Commissions. Once the nomination letter was received by Boards & Commissions it would be forwarded to the governor for appointment. Once appointed a confirmation hearing would be scheduled with the State Senate.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i reported that the new CRPC, Leioko‘olani Brown, started her position on December 29, 2025. Her first task will be working with the Restoration Program to update its archaeological site monitoring plan and procedures in the DOH 6 area.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i also reported that ORS Christina Wine was currently paid by Trust Fund while awaiting her transfer to the Logistics Specialist position. In addition to her experience in ocean resources management, she also was a diesel technician on sailing ships. Once she was in that position she would float between the Ocean Program and the Operations Program.

4. Status Update on Public Information, Outreach and Government Relations: Legislative Update; Meeting with Maui Council Committee on Agriculture, Diversification, Environment and Public Transportation (ADEPT)

ED Nāho‘opi‘i reported that the state budget, House Bill (HB) 300 to the legislature from the governor had a zero increase for the KIRC but staff was monitoring it.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i also reported HB307 which was related to special number vehicle license plates specifically for the PKO did not transition over to the senate but Senate Bill (SB) 103 is still alive but it has only two referrals. He noted that Honolulu County was still having issues with license plate production.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i explained that HB 2538, Representative Amato’s district CIP funding request for Kīhei, and SB 3314, Senator McKelvey’s CIP request both included \$600,000 for the Kīhei Boathouse expansion and \$4.25 million for Phase II of the Kīhei Restoration and Resilience Center.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i reported working with the Maui County ADEPT Committee for potential funding. There was a site visit scheduled for Thursday with county councilmembers. Maui County Councilmen Gabe Johnson introduced a line item in the county budget for the restoration of the Nau‘ulu Rain Bridge between Maui and Kaho‘olawe. An Ulupalakua nonprofit submitted the proposal and asked if the KIRC wanted to participate. Staff was looking at using that county funding to expand the boat house to support operations between Maui and Kaho‘olawe and start a new planting project in the Wailuna area, above the slopes of Hakioawa. Staff would not know about the funding until the Maui County Budget for FY27 was approved.

**5. Status Update on Capital Improvements, Reserve Operations and Logistics:
Update on Base Camp Capital Improvement Project; Update on Kīhei
Boathouse Expansion; New Honokanai‘a Water Catchment Project**

ED Nāho‘opi‘i reported roof repairs were completed but that weather conditions were delaying the painting of the buildings.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i also explained that \$50,000 was left in the contingency fund which will be used for gutter installment and directing water runoff directed into two 2,500-gallon tanks. This water will be used as for the irrigation of plants that are part of the emergency firebreak program.

ED Nāho‘opi‘i reported that DLNR’s Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands (OCCL) has authorized another \$150,000 in special funding for the KIRC’s coastal restoration efforts on Kaho‘olawe. Part of the funding will be used to build a 60’x24’ water catchment storage tank in Honokanai‘a Base Camp to store water which would be used for coastal irrigation projects. It will be built over the fuel storage area to provide a covered area to conduct fuel transfers and keep rain off of the fuel storage tanks to increase the life of those tanks.

Chair Pescaia asked about the Kīhei Boat House expansion. ED Nāho‘opi‘i explained that the staff had selected a contractor. There was a scoping meeting last week. The scope will include construction designs, receiving a special management area (SMA) permit, building permits as well as support while staff contracts a construction company to build the extension. He was hopeful of receiving an invoice soon so that NOAA could lock in the funding.

VI. PROJECT STATUS UPDATES

A. Status Update on Current Restoration Projects

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

RPM Higashino reported the working group’s last meeting was on November 3 and that 15 plants were currently in propagation and the group was trying to propagate more. Current issues with propagation are various plant diseases, spider mites, regular mites and various viruses.

2. Restoration of Kamōhio Watershed Phase I (DOH 6)

RPM Higashino reported that the DOH 6 grant was awarded on December 15, 2025. There was a delay in awarding due to the Lahaina Fire. A new Natural Resources Specialist (NRS) II will be hired for three years to support this grant project. The project area consists of 45 acres. Staff was utilizing best practices, including erosion control, vegetative monitoring and alien plant control. He also reported that there was a delay in planting.

B. Status Update on Current Ocean Program Grant Projects

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

ORPM Tokishi reported that two aerial surveys were conducted from November 7 to December 12 and have updated the database shared with the PKO.

Chair Pescaia asked for clarification regarding the trevally sightings during ORP’s aerial surveys. ORPM Tokishi responded that usually they spot two trevally

(papaio/ulua) every other survey along the northern coast but during the last survey they were more widely distributed and in more abundance. Staff was unsure of the reason. The Commissioners requested a number. ORPM Tokishi responded that approximately eight were spotted. Chair Pescaia explained that she was asking so that the general public understood what was meant by higher-than-normal counts.

ORPM Tokishi noted that the aerial survey does not see subsurface marine life. He was hopeful of finding future funding for improved methodology of collecting data to include subsurface surveys.

Chair Pescaia was interested in marine life in protected spaces as compared to open use spaces. ORPM Tokishi agreed that qualitative and quantitative data together are truly valuable.

Vice Chair Saito thanked ORPM Tokishi for highlighting the unusual activity.

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

ORPM Tokishi reported that this grant provided funding for ORS II Christina Wine and all field deliverables have been fulfilled. A total of 13,070 plants were installed by the end of December. The only items left were the purchasing of the three Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTVs) and provide funding for the water catchment tank at Honokanai‘a.

3. Shoreline Revegetation to Protect Kaho‘olawe Coastal Habitat (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grant)

ORPM Tokishi explained that this funding was for coastal planting in Kealaikahiki ‘Ili. Staff was still working on the funding process established.

Chair Pescaia asked if there had been any honu (turtle) activity on Kaho‘olawe. ORPM Tokishi responded he had communicated with Lopaka Aiwohi of PKO but there were no clear indications of honu activity onshore. Staff and the PKO do keep an eye out during coastal hikes. Staff did not see any activity during the last two aerial surveys.

VIII. NEXT MEETING AND FOLLOW UPS

ED Nāho‘opi‘i stated he would update the Commission about the legislative session and present the FY27 KIRC budget for approval at the next meeting which would probably be after the legislative session. ED Nāho‘opi‘i commented that the staff was awaiting a governor’s message (GM) regarding the new Commissioner. He will notify the Commissioners when it has been received and when the confirmation hearing is scheduled so that those who wish to testify at the hearing may do so. Chair Pescaia invited everyone to join the PKO at the various events commemorating the 50th anniversary of aloha ‘āina.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 am.