



STATE OF HAWAII  
Department of Land and Natural Resources  
Division of State Parks  
Honolulu, Hawaii

October 29, 2009

To the Honorable: Colleen Hanabusa, President of the Senate  
Calvin Say, Speaker of the House  
Laura Thielen, Director of the Department of Land and Natural Resources

**Subject: Report and Recommendations of the Kōkeʻe State Park Advisory Council**

Act 223 of the Regular Session of 2008 established the Kōkeʻe State Park Advisory Council (KSPAC) within the Department of Land and Natural Resources with the mandate to: 1) review and assist the State in revising and updating the Kōkeʻe and Waimea Canyon State Parks Master Plan; 2) advise and assist in the management of the Kōkeʻe recreation residence leases; 3) enhance community education and cultural awareness of Kōkeʻe and Waimea Canyon State Parks; 4) participate in the preservation and protection of the area's natural and cultural resources; and 5) advise and assist in the implementation of the Master Plan recommendations.

Comprised of nine (9) voting members, appointed by the Governor and the Legislature, and four (4) nonvoting agency officials, the Council is charged with working with the State to promote preservation of the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources, contribute to educational programs designed to increase the public's knowledge about the value of the parks' features and awareness of the fragility of the wildland environment and the need to protect and sustain them for future generations. Further, the Council is to assist in developing and implementing management systems that balance public usage with resource protection.

The Division of State Parks convened the first meeting of the KSPAC on January 16, 2009. Since then the Council has met **eight times**, formed three separate Permitted Interaction Groups, received public testimony via email as well as in person, reviewed hundreds of written testimonies provided to the KSPAC by the DLNR, conducted a video conference with the consultant that prepared the Master Plan, and met with DLNR staff.

The Council takes its work very seriously and has focused its time and attention this past year on its legislative mandate to **“review and assist the State in revising and updating the Kōkeʻe and Waimea Canyon State Parks Master Plan”**. The Council has come to the following conclusions and recommendations regarding the Kōkeʻe and Waimea Canyon State Parks Master Plan (hereafter called the “Master Plan”).

The KSPAC finds that the current planning process being conducted by the State is critical for establishing a long-term vision for this unique area. Once approved by the Board of Land and Natural Resources, the Master Plan will serve as the road map to the future that will determine how the abundant natural and cultural resources of the area are cared for, what kinds of public recreational opportunities and facilities will be developed there, and what level of commercial activity will be allowed to exist there.

### **Following State Policy and Law**

First and foremost, the master plan should reflect, in fact, fully embody, the principles expressed by the State Legislature and embodied in the laws of the State of Hawai'i. To this end, the primary principles governing the Department of Land and Natural Resources with respect to all State Parks in Hawai'i are set forth in Hawai'i Revised Statutes Section 184-6, which mandate that:

*DLNR preserve the parks in the state park system in their natural condition so far as may be consistent with their use and safety, and improve them in such a manner as to retain to a maximum extent their natural scenic, historic and wildlife values for the use and enjoyment of the public.*

This statement is unequivocal in stating that the primary goal of the Master Plan should be to preserve Kōke'e in a "natural condition" and "retain to a maximum extent Kōke'e's natural scenic, historic and wildlife values for the use and enjoyment of the public". As hundreds of emails, letters, and verbal statements document, the public has for years and years pleaded for the DLNR to adhere to this stated policy in preparing the Master Plan but their voice seems to have been ignored. We hope that the Council will indeed be given a chance to rectify this and bring the Master Plan back in line with legal mandate of HRS 184-6 and the desires of the community.

### **Major Community Concerns with the Master Plan**

The principles of good planning dictate an approach that requires establishment of a vision and then the development of infrastructure and programs to implement that vision. In the case of the existing Master Plan there is inconsistency in the vision, the terminology used to describe the plan, and the programs and infrastructure called for in the Master Plan with HRS 184-6 what the community consistently testified about year after year.

In the case of Kōke'e the most overriding concerns voiced by the community in public testimony were:

1. That the Master Plan did not reflect an overall "vision" that was consistent with the community's desire to see Kōke'e be preserved as an "unmodified natural environment" – instead it represented the desire of government to create a plan that was clearly designed to generate revenue.

2. Over commercialization of the Parks. Again and again the community voiced opposition to an entry station to charge admission to non-residents, concessions located at lookouts that will generate revenue, and development of new structures including a lodge at “the Meadow”. These revenue generating facilities and programs will forever change the character and integrity of the Park and are inconsistent with the mandate to “*retain to a maximum extent Kōke‘e’s natural scenic, historic and wildlife values for the use and enjoyment of the public*”.
3. Over use of “hardened infrastructure” that will create hardscapes that are inappropriate to maintaining the feeling of Kōke‘e as an “unmodified natural environment”.
4. Lack of overnight accommodations that are “appropriate” for local families who want to enjoy recreational pastimes like hunting and camping with their extended families.
5. There was no plan to provide for a live in park ranger(s) who would deter illegal activities and provide a safety net for lost visitors and emergency situations.
6. Segmentation of the Master Plan via incremental implementation. Environmental laws that affect planning for our State Parks include the Hawaii Environmental Policy Act, HRS Chapter 343 (“HEPA”). These laws are intended to ensure that environmental concerns are given appropriate consideration in decision-making, “along with economic and technical considerations.” The master plan includes a multitude of interrelated options, including proposals that are currently either being implemented or scheduled for implementation, prior to completion of the Master Plan and the issuance of a final companion EIS. This is a significant concern for the Council and we feel strongly that segmentation and partial implementation of the Master Plan without proper review and approval will only hurt the integrity of this unique area and undermine public support for the State Park system.

### **Proposed Solutions**

The KSPAC feels that much of the Master Plan contained useful and appropriate programs and planning solutions, however for it to be acceptable to the community and for it to conform to HRS 184-6 it needs to be significantly modified before it can be finalized and adopted.

The KSPAC has developed recommendations and would like to work with the DLNR, the consultant, and the community to make these changes to the Master Plan. We feel that the proposed changes will address the concerns that have been voiced by the community for years and meet the needs of the DLNR to generate revenue to support KSP. Several key changes we are recommending are as follows:

#### **Change # 1**

Develop a clear vision for the Master Plan that is consistent with State policy and community vision and that uses consistent terminology for all aspects of the Master Plan. All programs and infrastructure proposed in the Master Plan **must** support this vision.

**Change # 2**

Use existing historic Park Headquarters as currently situated for issuance of park permits and related DSP needs. There should be no new development of a visitor center or park headquarters at the Meadow.

**Change # 3**

Develop overnight accommodations for onsite rangers who will provide a 24/7 presence in KSP.

**Change # 4**

Prohibit concessions at lookouts and limit built amenities in the Meadow area, at the lookouts, and along the roadway corridor consistent with the overall goal of an “unmodified natural environment”.

**Change # 5**

Develop a staffing plan that will provide the needed maintenance for natural and cultural resources within the KSP as well as the maintenance of the existing and new infrastructure associated with the public’s recreational use of the Park.

**Change #6**

Limit roadway width to 18’ and continue DOT jurisdiction over Waimea Canyon Road to 14 miles.

**Change # 7**

Develop a policy that will be adopted along with the Master Plan that identifies what percentage of revenue generated in KSP will stay at the Park and be used to support the programs and infrastructure that are part of the Master Plan including regular maintenance.

**Change #8**

Consider additional state-owned rental cabins and new tented-camp areas with associated infrastructure (potable water, restrooms, recreational space, barbeque pits, etc) to accommodate the increased demand for “local style” use of the KSP. These facilities can be located on some of the recreational lots that are currently vacant and do not have cabins on them. Our research has shown that there are \_\_\_\_\_ lots that could be used in this way by local families. Properly developed these facilities will replace the need for a new lodge facility to be located by The Meadow. Alternatively, additional short-term rental cabins could be sited within the area currently used by the existing state rental cabins. Consider allowing the community to obtain leases for vacant recreational lots and develop them for community use.

**Change # 9**

Suggest the State look at new dedicated revenue sources that will support State Parks around the State – such as tour bus fees and rental car fees among other ideas.

**Change # 10**

Explore the concept of locating new over-night facilities closer to Waimea Canyon Lookout and out of view, similar to the Kilauea Military Camp facility that is located inside Hawai‘i

Volcanoes National Park on Hawaii island. This facility could provide appropriate concessions in an out-of-sight location. Locating of this facility needs to consider the impact to hunters who currently use this area for bow hunting.

**Change # 11**

Include in the Master Plan the concept of a multi-stage small-scale hydro that uses ditch water to generate electricity for the Park as a new source of revenue generation.

**Change # 12**

Suggest the formation of an island-wide State Park advocacy group that will increase community participation and awareness of both local and political issues that impact all of the State Parks on Kaua'i.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Council has been given a legislative mandate to “**review and assist the State in revising and updating the Kōke‘e and Waimea Canyon State Parks Master Plan**”. To accomplish this additional funding will be required as the DLNR has exhausted its funding and completed its contract with the consultant who developed the existing draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Kōke‘e and Waimea Canyon State Parks.

The Council respectfully requests the support of the 2010 Legislature and the Department of Land and Natural Resources in securing adequate funding to re-engage the consultant and enter into a contract to revise and update the **Kōke‘e and Waimea Canyon State Parks Master Plan as set forth above**. We pledge to secure community support for the legislative action that will be required to secure this funding and pledge our support and commitment in working with the Department to accomplish this important work. Kōke‘e is unique in the world – biologically and culturally it stands alone as a wahi pana – storied place – that is near and dear to both kama‘āina and malihini alike. It deserves the utmost care and protection as well as long-term management. It is in this context we ask that you help to secure its future.

‘O mākou iho no me ka ha‘aha‘a,

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