



NĀ ALA HELE
Hawai'i Trail & Access System

Nā Ala Hele Hawai'i Island Advisory Council Minutes

Approved: December 3, 2025

Revised:

MEETING DATE: August 20, 2025

- PLACE:**
- Remote ZOOM Conference Call/Video
 - Division of Forestry and Wildlife at
19E Kawili St. Hilo, HI 96720

- Voting Members Present:**
- Terrence Noda, Chairperson
 - Nani Pogline, Vice Chairperson
 - Charles "Chuck" Flaherty, Secretary
 - David Rietow
 - Roger "Maha" Kaneali'i Jr.
 - Jeffrey Yaumachi
 - Christopher Seymour
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- Voting Members Absent Excused:**
- Kawehi Ryder
 - Moana Rowland (resigned effective 8/18/25)

- Voting Members Absent Unexcused:**
- none

- Ex-Officio:**
- Jackson Bauer, Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program
 - Rick Gmirkin, Ala Kahakai National Historic Trails

- Ex-Officio Absent:**
- none

- Invited Guest:**
- none

- Public:**
- Max Lounsbury
 - Tawn Keeney
 - Peter Sur, Governor's East Hawai'i representation
 - Travis Wise

I. Call to Order: 6:01PM

II. AC CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS

Terrence requested for new agenda items can be made at end of meeting. Terrence said he would be expediting the agenda and asked that speakers to have considered what they would be saying in order to be most efficient with time. He requested that any members of the public would be providing testimony to place that in the chat to assist in expediting the meeting as well.

III. Review DRAFT MINUTES of June 18, 2025 meeting

a. David motioned to accept the June 18th minutes. Nani seconded. No discussion. Jeff motioned to approve the minutes. David seconded. Roll call vote was unanimous.

IV. PUBLIC TESTIMONY - none

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Program Plan update and discussion (PBR/Nā Ala Hele staff) - no update. Work on plan continues.

B. Nā Ala Hele Program update (Nā Ala Hele staff)

a. Program Trails updates – Jackson said all program trails are doing great.

- i. Pololū Trail [54] – Portable toilet has been delivered with right of access from landowner. Land donation process is well underway and will occur once subdivision application has been approved.
- ii. Muliwai Trail/Waimanu Campground [36] – Maintenance trip will be in September.
- iii. Upper Waiākea ATV & Dirt Bike Riding Area (Terrence) [27] – Terrence took out a few trees that had fallen. There will be a chainsaw training to remove fallen trees. Keiki trail needs major clearing. David asked about a tree removal project from a couple of years ago. Terrence said the volunteers did a great job at that time.
- iv. Kūlanihāko'i Mountain Bike Park (Chris) [78] – Not too much change. Planning to have public trail clearing in September. Chris asked Jackson to assist by sending out e-mail blast about the event once it is scheduled. Another batch of garbage was dumped and needs to be removed. Signage at the quarry has been taken down. The state forestry sign at the entrance needs to be replaced. There is rubbish tree growth that needs to be removed at the entrance. Larger fallen tree was removed that had fallen. Eagle scout has completed training to put up signage on the trail and looking at designing a boot brush for bike tires as ROD prevention. Chris asked about the MOU. Jackson said he would send draft to the Mountain Bike Park Board so that process could move forward.
- v. Puna Trail [12] – The two new trail stewards, Raina and Sakari, are now in place. NAH started to implement the Puna Trail plan in September 2024. Work on the kīpaepae, traditional stone causeway, was paused during the Summer that will allow people to avoid the muddy section on the way to Hā'ena bay where the fish pond overflows forcing people

going way around and trespassing on adjacent properties. NAH is working on a preservation plan to submit to SHPD. Can proceed once SHPD has approved the plan. Work will start again now that school is back in session. Kawehi will be helping with that effort and already has Ulu Pono at Keaau High School participating. More information about this post-graduate skills development program can be found at [Ulupono project-based learning](#). Jackson will let the Council know when other volunteer projects come up so they can participate.

- vi. Other program trail updates – things are moving pretty smoothly on other program trails.
- b. Historic Trails updates
 - i. Judd Trail – no update since last meeting. Surveys are done and are waiting on completed survey reports. Trail and encroachments have been identified and documented. Working with the land division to have the encroachments removed. The volunteer crew has cleared most of the trail.
 - ii. Hōnaunau to Ho’okena Trail. Same thing, paper work for surveys are being wrapped up and volunteers have cleared most of the trail.
 - iii. Onouli to Kealakekua. Archaeologists have begun work. Waiting on results.
 - c. Access updates
 - i. Kaupakuea Access to Hilo Forest Reserve (Nani) [49] – Nani said she had been focused on the Ka’ū Forest Reserve access and now understands that it is easier to acquire public access before it is blocked than after. Jackson said he’d had an e-mail exchange with the county Planning Department, so the issue is still alive and will remain on the agenda.
 - d. Administrative Tasks update – Jackson said there will be a National State Association of Foresters convention at the Mauna Lani resort in September. The Division of Forestry and Wildlife will be the host. There will be field trips on one of the days. Jackson will be leader of one to Pololū. Terrence wanted to know if anyone could sign up. Jackson said that members of the AC could sign up if interested, but it is a conference.
 - e. Other NAH program updates – program trails are running smoothly. Two new staff people have been hired. Focus has been on Puna trail as well as others.
 - i. Nā Manu ‘Elele Trail Steward Program – no significant changes. NAH has 20 stewards state-wide through this program. NAH is hoping that green fees will replace federal funding that ceases at the end of 2026. s
 - ii. Nāpu’u Recreation Plan (Forest Solutions/Nā Ala Hele Staff)- Plan development is moving forward nicely. Jackson will be meeting with the ‘ohana of the area next week. Has gotten excellent input and data from different constituencies, including descendants of the area. Have developed some great working relationships.
 - iii. Ala Kahakai Interpretive Plan – a draft plan was sent to NAH for review. Hoping to have a final plan by the end of this year or beginning of next.

- iv. Statewide Nā Ala Hele Program Manager – the position still remains posted and open. Interviews will begin soon. It's listed as a Forester VI, even though it is not for a forester position. Jackson continues to serve a temporary administrator.

C. Budget/Legislative Update (Nā Ala Hele staff)

No update, other than “green fee” legislation was passed that could possibly benefit the NAH Program. With federal funding for the current trails stewardship grant programs expiring at the end of 2026, green fee program revenue could be replace the federal funding. However, because money will go into the General Fund, the state Legislature will have to appropriate the green fees to replace the federal funding.

D. Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail Update (Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail staff)

Rick shared that work on the lower part of Ka’awaloa trail to repair the earthquake damage has been completed. It went really, really well, NAH staff and lots of ‘ohana and community volunteers from the surrounding area participated. The AKNHT crew started the next stage of the Great America Outdoors project clearing vegetation along a six-mile coastal stretch of the Old Cart Road and alanui aupuni (Old Government Road) from Keauhou to Ka’awaloa. The crew has also been working up in Kohala doing vegetation clearing on the unencumbered state lands clearing buffers around roads as well in the center of roads to reduce fire risk. Rick encourages anyone who is interested in kokua to join.

E. Subcommittee Updates:

- a. OHV Subcommittee (Terrence, John Howerton) – Terrence asked if Jackson had learned of any potential locations. Jackson said there was a possibility of some synergy between the subcommittee’s vision and the proposed Mauna Loa Challenge Course. Terrence will present map at next meeting.

- b. Waipi’o Valley Access Road Subcommittee (Terrence, Nani, Debbie Chang) [64]

Nani said the Mayor’s office has still not responded to the request for a meeting to discuss this public access. Jackson remains as the Nā Ala Hele representative on county council member Heather Kimball’s Waipi’o Valley Access Road long-term planning committee.

Thanks to Debbie Change, Nani was notified of and able to attend a Hāmākua Community Development Plan Action Committee meeting at which council member Heather Kimball gave a report on the status of the Waipio Valley Access Road planning. Most importantly, Heather acknowledged that it is indeed a public access. Jackson shared that the road was quitclaimed to the county in the past, so the county has jurisdiction. A public education program for users to learn about the cultural and environmental resources and restrictions to be put into place to protect them. A permit system for access is being discussed and considered. It is a complex issue. One idea is that permit applicants would be encouraged to do volunteer work in support of cultural and environmental resources. Regardless, historic and cultural sites and traditional and customary practices will be identified and a preservation plan put into place to implement protections, restrictions, protocols, etc. The emergency

proclamation will be in effect for another two years. After that public access will begin again. The proclamation cannot be renewed. Another idea is to have time restrictions for pedestrian access to limit the impact on local vehicular use. Another idea is to track the number of users and implement controls if a certain capacity is exceeded. Debbie Chang strongly supports the idea of having pavement decals or some other indicator to direct pedestrian traffic. Terrence said pedestrian traffic is problematic because light trucks coming up the steep, of wet, road have to steer from side to side of the road to have sufficient tractor. This creates a dangerous situation. Debbie supports restricting pedestrian use to certain hours, but it must be reasonable. Terrence noted that requirement could result in people being trapped in the valley. Commercial use is a big issue to resolve as well. The subcommittee will be doing additional research in order to draft a letter to express the AC's recommendations on the access road. Nani said she would find out to whom the letter should be addressed because it is not clear at this time.

The AC then had a discussion about

https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol05_Ch0261-0319/HRS0264/HRS_0264-0001.htm

https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol05_Ch0261-0319/HRS0264/HRS_0264-0001.htm "Public highways and trails" in order to clarify the county's jurisdiction over the Waipi'o Valley Access Road.

David asked why Kamehameha Schools had not been a part of the discussion since they own so much of the Waipi'o Valley. Jackson said he believed they were a part of Heather Kimball's long-range planning committee, but he has not yet seen who is representing them there. Jackson pointed out that the beach area is owned by Bishop Museum. Jackson pointed out that, regardless of special interests efforts to influence any decisions, the law is the law and must be followed.

- c. Wailuku River Convergence Lookout Access Subcommittee (Terrence, Nani, Jeff, Chris, James Eller) [74]

Chris has sent a draft letter to Jackson on the history of the area. It will be agendaized at the AC's next meeting.

- d. Nā'ālehu Hills Subdivision Subcommittee (Charles, Nani, Terrence, Keola Childs)

As approved by the AC at its last meeting, the subcommittee conducted and completed its research, created a map that identified the public access easement, drafted, approved, and submitted a letter containing the map to the county Planning Director recommending the establishment of the public access easement.

- F. HAR 13-130 Rule Revision Update (Nā Ala Hele staff) – no update
- G. Hawai'i County General Plan (Chuck)

Chuck reported that the AC's recommendations had been submitted to the county council's Policy Committee on Planning, Land Use, and Economic Development. The PCPLUED began its review of the draft General Plan 2045 as Bill 66, Draft 1. The first

two meetings, held on July 9th and July 29th were on the second section, entitled “Collaborative Biocultural Stewardship”. The next meeting was held today at 5PM on the third section, “Addressing Climate Change for Island-wide Health. The AC’s recommendations were not incorporated into Bill 66, Draft 2 because, while the recommendations were approved by the Leeward Planning Commission, they were not considered by the Windward Planning Commission. As a result, the Planning Director did not incorporate the AC’s recommendations into Draft 2. Instead, the Director presented the AC’s recommendations to the county council and asked them to decide which, if any, of the AC’s recommendations to include in Bill 66. Chuck noted that the county Game Management Advisory Commission had also submitted recommendations that closely reflected those of the AC and the county council duly noted this fact during the July 9th meeting.

H. Council member trail experience sharing

Nani went on a Polaris ride on the R-1 Mauna Kea Access Road [6]. It was a cloudless day, so the views of Hāmākua were spectacular. David went on Makāula-’O’oma Forest Reserve Trails [60]. Was beautiful rainforest environment.

Jeff did hiking on ‘Oahu. He said Hawai’i island residents are so lucky to not have the dense population because there were so many hikers and no parking.

Terrence hiked up the tree-planting access road at mile 16 on Saddleback Road. Beautiful views of Hilo. Can also access the forest area there.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Council Attendance Policy (Terrence) Terrence led a discussion about whether or not the AC should adopt an attendance policy. He noted AC members served 1-year terms and that membership is renewed upon the agreement between the member, the AC chair, and the DLNR chair. Terrence proposed that the AC set a number of meetings in which an AC member could have unexcused or excused absences within a year before not being recommended for term renewal. He then gave each AC member an opportunity to share their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions. The AC reached a consensus agreement that Terrence would draft a proposed council attendance policy to be presented at the next meeting for discussion and decision-making by the AC.
- B. Set next meeting agenda – draft letter containing history of Wailuku Convergence area discussion and decision-making, Waipi’o Valley access road draft letter discussion and decision-making, council attendance policy, “trail availability gap analysis”.
- C. Set next meeting date – Wednesday, December 3, 2025 at 6PM.

VII. ADJOURNMENT motion made by Chuck, seconded by David. Adjourned at 8:00PM