



NĀ ALA HELE
Hawai'i Trail & Access System

Nā Ala Hele Statewide Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

DATE: July 3, 2024
TIME: 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Via Zoom video conference, AND
In person, DLNR-Div. of Forestry and Wildlife, 19 E. Kawili St., Hilo, HI

ATTENDEES: Statewide Council Members
Skye Razon-Olds, O'ahu, Statewide Council Chair¹
Klayton Kubo, Kaua'i, Statewide Council Vice-Chair
Terrence Noda, Hawai'i island
Russell Reinertson, Maui

Ex Officio

Bill Stormont, Nā Ala Hele (NAH) Program Manager
David Smith, DOFAW Administrator
Kawika Smith, NAH Trail and Access Specialist, Kaua'i
Jackson Bauer, NAH Trail and Access Specialist, Hawai'i

Call to Order, Introductions, and Announcements

The meeting was called to order at approx. 5:05 p.m. by Chair Skye Razon-Olds.

After Introductions, Program Manager Bill Stormont offered the announcement that he has accepted a new position within DLNR effective July 8, 2024, and would be leaving his current position with the Nā Ala Hele Program and the Division of Forestry and Wildlife. In his new position, he will be the Project Director for the newly formed Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority.

Mr. Stormont also reported that, at the moment, there is no one in place to temporarily assign into the position behind him. Inquiries can be forwarded to Administrator David Smith or the Trail and Access Specialists on each of the Branches if there is an island-specific need.

Approval of July 27, 2022 and September 27, 2023 Statewide Advisory Council Minutes

Chair Razon-Olds opened discussion on approval of the 2022 and 2023 Statewide Advisory Council (AC) meetings.

¹ New O'ahu Advisory Council Chair, replacing David Nash

In reviewing the 2022 minutes, Mr. Stormont offered that the reason the minutes were not approved at the 2023 meeting was incomplete written documentation of concerns expressed by Terrence Noda at the meeting. Mr. Stormont clarified that he subsequently completed the statements regarding those concerns, shared and discussed the completed written minutes with Mr. Noda, and Mr. Noda confirmed the revised minutes as written were satisfactory to him. Russell Reinertson moved to approve the revised minutes as written, and Klayton Kubo seconded. The motion to approve the 2022 minutes was approved unanimously.

Chair Razon-Olds reviewed the 2023 Statewide AC minutes and there was no discussion. Mr. Reinertson moved to approve the minutes as presented, Mr. Noda seconded. The motion to approve the 2023 minutes was approved unanimously.

Election of Officers

After a brief discussion of the customary process for rotating the Chairpersonship sequentially around to the 4 extant Island Advisory Councils, Mr. Stormont offered for consideration the suggestion that Ms. Razon-Olds, as the new Chair of the O'ahu AC, retain the Statewide Council chair seat. Several supporting factors were pointed out, including Ms. Razon-Olds' experience with other similar councils and Boards, and with Sunshine Law requirements. Ms. Razon-Olds indicated a willingness to carry forward as the Chair into the coming year, and council members were comfortable with that. Mr. Reinertson moved that the Statewide Advisory Council retain the current elected Board members, and Mr. Noda seconded. The motion to retain the current board member officers through Fiscal Year 2024-2025 was unanimously approved.

RTP Project Table Review and Approval

Among the requirements for receiving federal Recreational Trails Program funding is an annual review and approval of the list of "features" – trails, roads, OHV parks and mountain bike parks, that Hawai'i uses the funding for maintenance activities on. Mr. Stormont shared that the current list has not changed in the past few years, and is identical to the list approved by the Statewide AC in 2023.

Mr. Noda asked if the DOT was in support of all of the features on the Project Table, which was confirmed, though also noted that they simply require Statewide AC approval. Mr. Noda asked if the Table included any closed trails. Mr. Stormont pointed out that there are often temporary closures, but that does not mean they are removed from the list. Hawai'i Branch Trail and Access Specialist Mr. Bauer also noted that trails in the planning stage have been included on the list to allow RTP funding to be spent on planning and development.

Chair Razon-Olds asked if recreational areas on O'ahu currently in planning stages, specifically Helemano and Honouliuli, were on the Table. Mr. Stormont responded no.

For Kaua'i, Trail and Access Specialist Kawika Smith confirmed the Table was accurate.

On Maui, Mr. Reinertson shared that, being on the Maui council for many years now, he was familiar with the list, and was comfortable with it. He did express frustration that it was not distributed along with the meeting materials the week prior. Mr. Stormont offered an apology, noting he just today realized the Project Table had not gone out with the other materials, and distributed them asap today.

Chair Razon-Olds asked the members if they would like to have more time to review the Project Table because of the short time allowed for review. Mr. Noda noted that if issues arise about individual features on the Table, they will be discussed at the respective island Councils. Mr. Noda then offered a motion to approve the 2024 Project Table as submitted. Mr. Reinertson seconded. The motion to approve the 2024 Project Table was approved unanimously.

Administration Report

Legislative Site Visits. Mr. Stormont reported that the Division of Forestry and Wildlife hosted two site visits over the course of Fiscal Year '23 for members of the State House of Representatives, and specifically the House Committee on Water and Land. Committee Chair Rep. Linda Ichiyama approached Mr. Stormont asking to collaborate on planning a site visit to Hawai'i Island to review ongoing and planned activities Branch-wide, and not limited to the Nā Ala Hele program. With Administrator Dave Smith's approval, Mr. Stormont initiated discussion with Hawai'i Branch Manager Steve Bergfeld about planning for a two-day site visit. The Hawai'i Branch site visit was held August 22-23, 2023, and there were nine members of the House of Representatives that attended one or both days. With the August 8 Maui and Hawai'i wildfires fresh on everyone's minds, the subject of the Division's response capability and responsibilities was a common theme throughout the 2 days. Site visit stops and subjects involved all Division programs, including the Pu'u Maka'ala Natural Area Reserve, Upper Waiākea Off-Highway Vehicle Park, Kūlanihāko'i Mountain Bike Park, Kaulana Manu Nature Trail, Mauna Kea Forest Reserve, Waimea State Tree Nursery, and the Pu'u Wa'awa'a Forest Reserve. Hawai'i Island NAH Advisory Council members Terrence Noda and Chris Seymour attended in support of their active volunteer role in managing the Upper Waiākea OHV Park and the Kūlanihāko'i Mountain Bike Park sites respectively. A copy of the August 2023 site visit itinerary is attached here.

At the conclusion of the 2023 site visit, Rep. Ichiyama indicated a desire for a similar Maui site visit following the 2024 legislative session. Mr. Stormont, with Administrator Smith's approval, began working with the Maui Branch staff to organize a visit. On Maui, the August 8 wildfires remain at the forefront of community and agency thoughts, as well as 2024 legislative actions. Specific sites visited featured actions and plans taken and in place to address those issues. Sites visited included the 'Āhihi-Kīna'u Natural Area Reserve, Makawao Forest Reserve, Maui Bird Conservation Center, Waihou Springs Trail, Kahakapau Recreation Area, and a visit with Haleakalā Ranch leadership to discuss state-funded deer control efforts on the ranch and on Maui in general. A copy of the June 2024 site visit itinerary is also attached.

NAH New Positions/Staffing Update

Mr. Stormont provided an update on where the program was with the newly-created positions and hiring:

- > New Admin. Program Specialist: Position description nearly completed. No model to go on, so it's taken some time and consideration in development;
- > New Trail and Access Specialist, Maui Branch: In external recruitment, internal applicant turned down appointment;
- > New Trail and Access Specialist, O'ahu Branch: In external recruitment, no internal applicants;
- > Reinstated Forestry and Wildlife Technician: In external recruitment, no internal applicants;
- > New Trail and Access Specialist, Kaua'i Branch: Interviews conducted, offer pending;
- > New Forestry and Wildlife Technician, Kaua'i Branch: Interviews conducted, offer pending.

Mr. Stormont stressed the expected positive impact of these new positions on the program statewide. They represent a nearly 50% increase in total professional and technical staff on the Branches statewide. And the new administration Program Specialist position will effectively double the admin level management staffing, from one to two.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Economic Development Administration (EDA) Funds

Mr. Stormont reviewed the program highlights:

- > Hawai'i received \$14.2 million ARPA EDA funding for Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation;
- > Then-Governor Ige instructed the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) to work with the Department of Land and Natural Resources to develop project plans for spending that funding;
- > Funding available for use through December 2026;
- > Working collaboratively with the HTA, DLNR secured \$7.2 million of the \$14.2 million available;
- > Nā Ala Hele-specific projects include:
 - o Na Manu Elele Land Stewards Program, \$3.85 million, now employing 20 FTE KUPU positions in trail and resource stewardship roles across the state, modeled after the trail stewards program piloted at Pololū Valley, N. Kohala;
 - o Trail Capacity Study, \$1.1 million, contract with UH Manoa Natural Resources and Environmental Management Program. Working closely with the Program Plan Update contractor PBR Hawai'i so as not be duplicate. Both projects reaching out to many of the same community members for input;
 - o Ala Kahakai Interpretive Plan, \$300,000;
 - o Napu'u Recreation Plan, \$400,000;
- > Mr. Stormont also shared that some of the DLNR funding was going to other Divisions, including:
 - o Aquatic Resources, for Community-Based Subsistence Fishing Area stewards (4);
 - o Conservation and Resources Enforcement for new hire equipment support.

Chair Razon-Olds asked if we knew what the HTA was doing with their portion of the funding. Staff was unsure of what projects they eventually decided to fund, but there was early discussion of an underwater snorkel trail off Waikiki Beach and an urban trail through the downtown Honolulu financial district and nearby areas. Mr. Bauer also mentioned they may be using some of it for the ongoing update of the Destination Management Action Plans for all of the islands.

Trail Stewards Update

This update was discussed heavily in the ARPA EDA funding discussion. Mr. Bauer offered the update that across the state the Na Manu 'Elele Land Stewards Program now has 20 staff. On Hawai'i island they remain at Pololū Valley, and are also stationed daily at the Puna Trail and are rotating at several trails along the Saddle Road. At the Puna Trail site, the presence of the steward not only help make users aware of the significance of the trail, but also sharing safety information about the ocean conditions at Ha'ena Beach.

Mr. Bauer reported that on O'ahu the program is seeing great success in helping ensure appropriate (or curb inappropriate) behavior at several highly-traffics trails such as Mānoa Falls and Kā'iwa Ridge.

He further noted it is hoped that the Land Stewards program and the coming results of the Trail Capacity Study will work in conjunction to address many of the trail issues we see across the state. The combination of behavioral changes with stewards in place, along with capacity issues – sheer numbers in

many cases, and the structured management of that, could go a long way toward protecting the resources and the experience for users.

Mr. Stormont shared that there have been challenges getting applicants for positions on Kaua'i and Maui. Mr. Bauer updated that the Maui positions have been filled and staff there will begin on July 15.

Chair Razon-Olds had a follow-up question about the Trail Capacity Study and whether they were looking at specific trails in the study. Mr. Stormont responded that the goal and desired outcome of the study will be a programmatic structure for assessing trails and other features to have a quantitative way of potentially setting limits on the number of users. This is driven in part by the Attorney General's recommendation that there be a structured basis for making decisions on setting limits in the program's administrative rules.

Mr. Kubo also had follow-up questions on the Trail Capacity Study: 1) What is the timeframe for completion of the study?; and 2) Are they going to come around and talk story with and ask questions of the island advisory councils. Mr. Stormont responded the study is currently scheduled to be completed in 2026, and that yes, the study leadership will be seeking time for interviews and discussion with folks on the neighbor islands. Chair Razon-Olds asked if they could be asked to set meetings with the Advisory Councils, and Mr. Stormont responded that's already been done.

Program Plan Update

Mr. Stormont provided a brief update on the progress PBR Hawai'i is making. They have gathered a significant amount of data having met with a lot of stakeholders and others, including island advisory council members, and the process of assimilating all that data takes time. He also stressed that the quality of the product and its impact will be far-reaching for the Program, and it will take time to complete it well.

Administrative Rules Revision Update

Mr. Stormont reported that the contract Legal Fellow who was leading the work on the revision resigned in April and there has not been a replacement hired. That has left the effort on a pause. Current issues include the AG's determination a Ka Pa'akai Analysis be completed. That has been done and is currently under review by the AG's office. The draft rules are ready for review. Once the AG review is complete, the Division will secure permission from the Board of Land and Natural Resources to hold public hearings on the revised administrative rules and the process can move forward.

Island Reports

Maui

Mr. Reinertson shared the management plan process for the newly acquired Kahehamenui Forest Reserve, which has the potential for new Nā Ala Hele trails, is moving. It was purchased and has been state lands for about 5 years, and they are still waiting for the draft management to be released for public comment. Some management actions are already underway, including fencing, game animal control, and protection of endangered species, which was the primary reason for the purchase. But they are disappointed it's taking so long for the draft management plan to be presented for public comment.

Among the big current issues with the Maui AC is vacancies, and subsequent problems with making meeting quorum. Mr. Reinertson indicated they are hopeful the program plan update and the administrative rule revision can provide more clarity on what best practices will dictate to remedy these situations. Mr. Reinertson further shared specific situations where they have been “hamstrung” and unable to carry on Advisory Council business, and that his review of current best practices would quorum to be met by not counting the vacant seats when determining quorum.

Hawai‘i Island

Mr. Bauer presented for Hawai‘i Island. Much of the update had already been covered in earlier discussion, but he did share they’ve just submitted a large grant application for a project involving the “Kohala Corridor” in North Kohala.

Beyond that, maintenance work on Hawai‘i Island trails continues. Crews are available to the program roughly once a month, and those crews are now at almost full staffing, and able to get a lot done.

He also shared there was professional sustainable trail design, layout, construction, and maintenance training offered to staff on all the Branches. This involved 7 days of classroom and on-the-ground field training for Forestry and Wildlife staff, as well as a limited number of seats available for volunteers and contractors.

The program currently has several KUPU staff, and is still working to fill its long-vacant Specialist position.

Lastly, Mr. Bauer reported that Mr. Noda has been and continues to be the leading volunteer in managing the Upper Waiākea Off-Highway Vehicle Park in East Hawai‘i, and efforts are underway to identify a suitable location for an OHV park in West Hawai‘i, with several sights being considered.

O‘ahu

Chair Razon-Olds offered the O‘ahu update. The program continues to move along. KUPU staff/stewards are deployed at sites across the island. The Haiku Stair removal process and legal challenges continue, which is having an impact on other trails in the area. Chair Razon-Olds wanted to be on record saying she supports removal of the Haiku Stairs.) Consequently, the O‘ahu AC is trying to push the opening of other recreation resources like Helemano and Honouliuli to create more outdoor recreational opportunities and help take pressure off temporarily unavailable sites. She reported that a working group is being formed to look at the Helemano recreation site for various forms of recreation, including hiking, dirt biking, horseback riding, and even frisbee golf. Because these lands were formerly an agricultural plantation, there’s very low risk that there will be the chance of disturbing any potentially remaining cultural features. Local legislators have reached out seeking updates and site visits, and they will be referred to the Forestry and Wildlife staff.

Mr. Kubo offered some thoughts regarding the Haiku Stairs. While he does not live on O‘ahu, he sees the removal of the stairs as a loss. He feels there should be more discussion between the County and other agencies, including seeing the potential for revenue generation. State Parks is earning significant revenue from places like Diamond Head and Hā‘ena, so he is told.

Kaua‘i

Mr. Smith asked Chair Kubo if he wanted to share anything about the council's activity on Kaua'i. Mr. Kubo reported it had been some time since they'd had a meeting. He said Mr. Stormont was at the last two they held, but those were a while ago. He is personally interested in adding two trails to the Program: Honopu Ridge, which he says was "de-listed" after Hurricane Iwa, many years ago; and "Kalepa Mauka." These are both in the Kōke'e region. He expressed concerns over State Parks taking control of those trails.

Mr. Kubo encouraged council members to become more active at the legislature, supporting relevant legislation, and to participate as a group in volunteer trail maintenance projects.

Mr. Reinertson offered his support for Mr. Kubo's thoughts about the Haiku Stairs. Mr. Kubo further offered he's "been pushing, all the way to the DLNR Chair." He also offered that the motivation is more financial support and resources for Nā Ala Hele.

Chair Razon-Olds, speaking further to the Haiku Stairs issue, stated there is no parking for users, no room for parking, the community is opposed to it, it is military history, and there is an endangered plant species being impacted adjacent to the trail. This is why they are pushing hard for other recreation spaces to be made available.

Statewide Advisory Council Meeting Frequency

Chair Razon-Olds offered that she felt Mr. Kubo brought up a good point about being more involved during the legislative session, and suggested meeting around the beginning of the legislative session. Mr. Kubo added that he'd like to see meetings of the Statewide Council at least three times a year, including one in the October-November time frame to plan.

Mr. Stormont added that during the 2022 and 2023 sessions, he distributed hearing notices and other information to the island advisory councils, suggesting they provide support as they saw fit. Those turned out to be very successful sessions for the program. The 2024 legislative session was a very different one because of the August 8 wildfires, with major shifts in funding priorities. As such, there was no Nā Ala Hele program-specific legislation that made any progress this past session.

Mr. Noda asked Chair Razon-Olds what was hoped to be achieved with more frequent statewide council meetings that wouldn't be achieved by the island councils, saying the Hawai'i Island council is very active in that way.

Chair Razon-Olds shared that, as was suggested by Mr. Noda, more frequent review of the Project Table would be advisable, and that their O'ahu council is also very active during the legislative session, that meeting more frequently could offer more timely discussion and interaction, and allow for more time to discuss than the short annual meeting time allows. She also felt that any voted-on, agreed-upon messaging or testimony coming from a statewide body, rather than an island-based body, would carry more weight.

After more discussion about meeting timing, it was decided that Chair Razon-Olds will send out a meeting hold for October 9, 2024 for the next Statewide Advisory Council meeting. Mr. Bauer agreed, but did offer a cautionary note that due to Mr. Stormont's impending departure, status and availability of staff to host the meeting may present a challenge.

Administrator Dave Smith Comments

Administrator Smith joined the meeting shortly after it began and was asked if he had any thoughts or information to share with the Council. He did offer that there may be someone interested in a temporarily assignment to the Program Manager position, so there may be staff available soon to take over the position responsibilities.

He went on to offer thanks to Mr. Stormont for his time and service to the Program, his long experience with Forestry and Wildlife, his work to secure the new funding and positions for the Program (and acknowledging Mr. Kubo's efforts), and establishing and nurturing relationships with legislators. Mr. Smith offered all to reach out to him in the interim if need be.

Chair Razon-Olds adjourned the meeting at 6:23 p.m.