NĀ ALA HELE
Hawai'i Trail & Access System

Nā Ala Hele
Hawai'i Island Advisory Council
Minutes

Approved: 7/23/2026

Revised: 7/23/2026

MEETING DATE: **April 2, 2026**

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

Voting Members Absent Excused:
- Chris Seymour

Voting Members Absent Unexcused:
- none

Ex-Officio:
- Jackson Bauer, Hawai'i Island Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program
- Jenna Masters, Acting Statewide Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program Manager

Ex-Officio Absent:
- Rick Gmirkin, Ala Kahakai National Historic Trails

Invited Guest:
- Theresa Dean, PBR Hawai'i
- Mareé Medeiros, PBR Hawai'i

Public:
- Deborah Chang
- Patricia Tummons
- Topher Fast
- Ike Yoshina

I. Call to Order and Roll Call (6:20 pm)

II. AC CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS – Terrence has commitment later in the evening, so he will be expediting the meeting.

III. Review DRAFT MINUTES of February 4, 2026 meeting

a. Terrence announced he has to leave early, so he would late to expedite the meeting. He would like to remove a couple of items on the agenda. Terrence asked for a motion to accept the minutes. David made the motion to accept the minutes. Jeff seconded the motion. Roll call vote was unanimous. Terrence asked for a motion to accept the February 5, 2026 meeting minutes. David made the motion to approve. Nani seconded the motion. Terrence asked for discussion and/or corrections. There were none. Terrence took roll call vote. Terrence, Nani, Chuck, David, Jeff, and Roger voted to approve. Motion passed.

IV. PUBLIC TESTIMONY (Three minutes maximum) – none

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Program Plan update presentation and discussion (PBR/Nā Ala Hele staff) Jackson announced that PBR has completed the draft Program Plan. He noted the plan was last updated in 1991. Jackson introduced PBR consultant Teresa ,who then introduced PBR consultant Mareé, who's been working with the graphic version and hiking around the island gathering photos for the plan. The April 2026 draft Program Plan can be accessed at https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/recreation/nah/na-ala-hele-program-plan/. Theresa shared her screen and began the PowerPoint presentation.

Theresa explained that this plan is a high-level strategic document staff use to guide their decision-making and strategic investments in staffing, training, management, and other activities. She asked that the Council keep in mind that the document is to address institutional broad brush needs, instead of specific trail management issues. Overall, this is a functional roadmap for, not only not NAH staff, but for the Council as well.

She began with an orientation of, the plan as it has been drafted and published.

It's separated into 7 chapters and has a very similar structure to the 1991 plan. The presentation will walk the Council through chapters 1 through 7 in order to give the Council an overview of what each chapter contains at a high level, and then to provide examples.

Theresa emphasized that, over these past three and a half years, PBR has spoken with DLNR staff, forestry and wildlife staff, NAH Council members across, islands, trail user groups, volunteers, private landowners, and has worked really closely with all of NAH staff, to really understand the underlying issues and needs for the program.

First, staff across the program and division have identified the need to centralize essential functions at a program level so that the Island Branch staff aren't burdened by the recreating the wheel.

Theresa said this update provides recommendations and functional guidance on what should be standardized across the program, while still allowing for flexibility for local needs and context.

Stakeholders, the trail users, visitors, and other folks that PBR talked to at the public meetings have all expressed a desire to steward trails and accesses. They want to be involved as volunteers in other capacities, so this update identifies existing cooperative agreements, potential funding sources, staff positions, as well as protocols and processes that can be implemented so that staff can use, volunteers and strategic partnerships much more efficiently.

PBR has heard, and this is pretty much island-wide consensus, that people want to see investment in improving and maintaining existing trails and accesses, as well as expanding uses on certain trails.

Everyone, who's been engaged in this process, is well aware that not all trails are for all uses, and that people highly value conserving sensitive ecosystems and allowing for restricted access in sensitive places.

Theresa said this update uses national standards and existing best practices across all of the different island branches that have been instituted to set up functional categories for trail uses, level of access, future infrastructure improvements, and all of this is based on, you know, the sensitive ecological considerations and other factors.

And finally, PBR heard from the public and stakeholders that there's a need to create a more robust structure for trail planning, construction, management across the program, so this update pulls on the industry standards, national standards, and we create a framework that allows staff and council members to critically evaluate, plan, construct, and maintain program features. Theresa said that is what she hoped the Council would see during her presentation.

Beginning with Chapter 1, the plan outlines overall vision, goals, and we've established new objectives for the program.

Back in 2023 that, most of the Council participated in a visioning exercise where we asked staff and the Council to reflect on how the program has been achieving the goals from the 1991 plan, brainstorming about how the program can be better supported and what the goals of the program should be in the future. The results of the visioning exercise reaffirmed the original intent of the program and emphasized historic preservation, better communication, preservation of cultural context of trails and accesses, natural resource conservation and continued public access, but also smart public access.

With regard to the amended program goals 1 through 5. Each goal in the plan has its own icon, so that readers can visually identify and connect the goal to each chapter and the recommendations that are provided. Program goals were slightly revised mainly to accommodate the addition of objective statements.

What's new in this plan, not included in 1991 plan, is the addition of objectives, which help to further define success for the program, and clearly outline where investments and program improvements should be made. For example, under Goal 2, Planning, Objective B, collaborate with other public and private landowners, and organizations to preserve and protect public trails and accesses from adverse impacts of climate change, natural disasters, and development pressures.

The intent of all of these objectives, but this one in particular, is to help the program define success through building partnerships with others and addressing environmental and development pressures surrounding public trails and accesses. This highlights the need to work with private parties and other agencies to achieve this goal.

These are broad brush objective statements that really try to encompass the intent behind both the goal and the vision statements. The draft plan breaks out each one of these objectives by the goals, but because of time constraints today, Theresa said she hadn't read all of this to us, but she encourages the Council to take a look at the plan and read through the vision goals and objectives, because this plan will guide all of the decision, all of the recommendations presented throughout the plan.

Terrence thanked Theresa and Mareé and asked if there were any questions. Ike asked how this program review was initiated. Theresa explained that the Division of Forestry and Wildlife initiated the NAH program review because it was so out-of-date and contracted with PBR Hawai'i for the project. Ike complimented Theresa and Mareé for their work. Jeff asked if the draft plan considered the change in technology since 1991 and gave the ubiquitous use of social media and the internet today as examples. Theresa referred Jeff to Chapter 5, Trail and Access Maintenance, and Chapter 4 Chapter 4, Planning for Trails and Accesses and noted that social media is a double-edged sword. It drives traffic, but also can be used as a tool to manage traffic. The draft plan tries to avoid being very prescriptive types of recommendations, the types of things that should be deployed for our trails. The goal is to create a framework. If NAH starts experiencing high volumes on trails and it is becomes clear that a lot of this volume is being pushed by social media, then the plan is the framework that should be used to evaluate the social media sources and determine the parameters needed to evaluate and address the situation, such as permitting or other kinds of restrictions to be considered. The plan doesn't address specific things like whether or not NAH should have an Instagram account, because that's something that the program will evaluate internally. It's really about the questions that come up for NAH, so that NAH can respond in an adaptive and flexible way. A member of the public, Topher Fast asked about the protocols on the volunteer programs. Are there any that relate to documenting volunteer hours? Theresa said there are recommendations on what should be tracked in a database. PBR has recommendations for when somebody shows up or goes online and fills out a form to volunteer. Contact information is gathered, along with known skills, and physical abilities. Then, throughout this process, as the volunteer works with the branch staff to do volunteer hours, NAH would be tracking the hours in the database, tracking the type of work that you would be doing, as well as the hours and the type of work that the volunteer would be performing so that the volunteer can be informed about the level and existent of work that can be done. The volunteer would, for instance, weed, because you've been trained to know what is

invasive. Maui and Hawai'i Island have volunteer coordinators, so they were consulted to find out what their "pinch points" where they were encountering challenges and where uniform collaboration and guidance would be helpful, etc. Then a framework was built from there for the plan. Jeff asked, in terms of a volunteer, what model is being used? Jeff explained that he comes from an archaeological background and while he was working at the East Mojave Preserve, they were developing a site stewards program. So what model is going to be used for each trail? Is it just to generally go to the trail and do general stuff, or is there more of a stewardship approach involving local community? Or monitoring the trail and making sure it is not being harmed. Theresa answered that the answers to Jeff's questions are detailed in the draft plan. For groups or lineal/cultural descendants of the area with deep knowledge and connection to a place and to a particular resource, they have their own kind of mechanism for cooperative agreements or more formal agreements to help steward a particular resource. The plan also has a section that outlines something like NAH where it's a contracted formal agreement between a nonprofit organization and the state. But then there's also smaller groups who will just approach NAH and say," we want to volunteer". And that could be a volunteer for one day, could be volunteering and stewarding a particular trail. There're multiple different avenues and the plan provides a framework for addressing all of those different types.

Theresa thanked the Council for their time and noted that she could spend a lot of more time going through the plan, but she thinks it's best to give it a read and urged the Council to send comments via e-mail. There were no more questions. Terrence thanked Theresa and Mareé again for their time and the excellent presentation.

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

   a. Program Trails updates – the condition of island trails held up pretty good, despite the two strong big Kona low storms. There were a lot of tree falls, but volunteers have cleared up most of the areas that needed to be addressed, such as the Kūlanihāko'i Mountain Bike Park

      i. Pololū Trail [54] – no update.
      ii. Muliwai Trail/Waimanu Campground [36] – no update, maintenance work planned for summer.
      iii. Upper Waiākea ATV & Dirt Bike Riding Area (Terrence) [27] – Ian Cole is will be doing some spraying. Terrence working on repairs to machine.
      iv. Kūlanihāko'i Mountain Bike Park (Chris) [78] – The Board of Land and Natural Resources approved the Memorandum of Understanding with the Big Island Mountain Biking Association to be the stewards of the park. Jackson extended his congratulations to Chris and the
      v. Puna Trail [12] – no update, minor tree fall to be cleared.
      vi. Other program trail updates – Mauna Loa Observatory Road is now open after lava flow was been graded.

   b. Historic Trails updates

      i. Judd Trail – Jackson asked former NAH AC member Debbie Chang to share the findings of her trip with Jackson to the Judd Trail. Debbie said the hike revealed the trail easement had been violated even further as a

result of the county approving permits without regard to the trail easement, despite the fact the trail easements are recorded on the property deeds. The area that is impacted and violated to the point the trail is not usable by the public covers almost the entire trail section between Ali'i Drive to Kuakini Highway. This is a trail that was declared state-owned in 1990, 36 years ago, yet we now do not have the ability to walk that trail. What we found in January is the newest construction compromising the trail itself. The trail is now unrecognizable and difficult to locate, despite the Special Management Area permit that required a 10-foot-wide no-build easement. That SMA permit condition has been completely disregarded. Debbie asked the Council if the state, as land owner of this historic trail, is going to do anything or is going to allow this violation to persist.

Jackson said NAH had approached the county after the site visit, but the county basically said "what's done is done". Despite the fact that the county erred in issuing the building permit without verifying the SMA permit/trail easement was being violated, the county will not take action to correct the error. Jackson said there's not a lot the NAH can do relating to the county as NAH is not litigious, it's a community group. If there is a trail usesr or community group that would have legal standing to file a lawsuit, NAH would want to be consulted. While one facet is the county easement created by the SMA permit, another facet is the archeological preservation plans and the archeological easements protecting the trail that the State Historic Preservation owns. Those have been violated as well.

Debbie asked if the county and state are going to allow the private landscaping to continue to grow into and further encroach on the trail.

Jackson said he brought it up to the attention of state Land Division, but got no response. Jackson also contacted SHPD and the staff person there asked that NAH "move it up the chain", so Jackson said he will do that. Debbie said she was gratified to see the emphasis that seems to be put in the draft program plan regarding historic trails and she would keeping in mind classic historic trails, such as the Judd Trail, that are owned by the state as she further reviews the draft program plan, specifically with regard to how NAH approaches these. Jackson said NAH shares Debbie's sentiments 100%, but noted that NAH has no enforcement authority and must rely on other state agencies and county agencies that do have the enforcement authority. Jackson also noted that NAH needs more action from the community as well. With regard to damage to state property, there are two state agencies, Land Division, for the damaged state property, and then SHPD for violations of state historic preservation laws, rules, and regulations.

Debbie noted that it might be appropriate to notify DOCARE when SHPD archeological easements are violated to create an official record.

Jackson said the state needs to pursue this violation of the trail

On a final note, Jackson wanted let the Council know that the errors impacting the Judd Trail today were the result of errors in the subdivision approval and issuance of building permits in the past. Jackson now has a good working relationship with the county administration and he believes this will mitigate the errors such as those involving the Judd Trail moving into the future.

ii. Other historic trail updates – no updates

c. Access updates

i. Kaupakuea Access to Hilo Forest Reserve (Nani) [49] - Nani is hoping that the grant that the county has obtained to identify trails will include documenting this trail.
ii. Other access updates – no updates.

d. Administrative Tasks update – no updates.

e. Other NAH program updates

i. Nā Manu ʻElele Trail Steward Program - the steward program has obtained funding until April of next year, so there is one more year of solid funding for the Charles Stewart program. Currently, the state's budget bill includes it as an approved allocation of green fee revenues. Jackson is hopeful there will be an additional year or two with the green fees. Ideally, it would become a permanent budget item. Jackson thanked everyone who testified. The program is running smoothly.
ii. Nāpuʻu Recreation Plan (Forest Solutions/Nā Ala Hele Staff) – meetings and work continuing. Hopefully, a draft will be available this Summer.
iii. Ala Kahakai Interpretive Plan – the plan is completed and has been issued. Community meetings to introduce the plan have been held.
iv. New Koaiʻa Trail – located just north of Waimea. Working on draft Environmental Assessment to include a Cultural Impact Assessment. Draft EA will be released after which there will be a comment period. The pasture area is where the proposed trail would be located.
v. Statewide Nā Ala Hele Program Manager – Jackson acknowledged Jenna's attendance in the Council meeting and expressed his appreciation of her excellent work as interim Program Manager.

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

D. Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail Update (Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail staff) – no update.

E. Subcommittee Updates:

a. OHV Subcommittee (Terrence, John Howerton) - no update.

b. Waipiʻo Valley Access Road Subcommittee (Terrence, Nani, Debbie Chang) [64]. Council member Heather Kimball suggested that the Council submit a letter that memorializes the Council's positions to the mayor, Director of Public Works,

county Corporation Counsel, and the Access Road Steering Committee. Nani asked what is the Council's position on the Access Road becoming part of a park. The Council's position is that public access should not be impeded. Terrence said that Nani should draft the letter

c. Wailuku River Confluence Lookout Access Subcommittee (Terrence, Nani, Jeff, Chris, James Eller) [74] – no updates.

d. Nā'ālehu Hills Subdivision Subcommittee (Charles, Nani, Terrence) – no update. Chuck asked if Jackson had spoken to the Planning Department to determine status of the subdivision approval. Jackson had no information and reiterated that letters had been sent from the Council, the Dept. of Forestry and Wildlife and the county Game Management Advisory Commission to the Planning Department. Chuck shared that he had reached out to Keola Childs to see if he wanted to remain on the Committee, but had not gotten a response. Jackson said he would remove him since he has not responded to the Council's outreach efforts.

No update from Planning Department as to status of reconsolidation and subdivision application approval.

F. HAR 13-130 Rule Revision Update (Nā Ala Hele staff) – NAH will work to have draft available this Summer for a public meeting prior to submission to the Board of Land and Natural Resources.

G. Hawai'i County General Plan (Charles) – Chuck said a meeting of the county council's Policy Committee on Planning, Land Use, and Economic Development was held on March 10th. Council member and Committee chair Ashley Kierkiewicz introduced a completely new draft general plan, which she's calling draft General Plan 2026. This newest draft General Plan does not incorporate the recommendations of this Council per its letter and submitted written testimony submitted last year. There is a lot of community opposition to GP2026. Most people support continuing work with draft General Plan 2045. Chuck will keep the Council posted as to whether or not any of those recommendations that the Council submitted as testimony are incorporated. At this point, they have not.

H. Council member trail experience sharing – no members had trail experiences to share.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposed New Punahoa State Park (Chris) – Jackson recommended deferral to next meeting. Jackson said Representation Matthias Kusch

B. Set next meeting agenda – Possible vote on application to Council; possible presentation by Matthias Kusch,

C. Set next meeting date was set for July 23rd, 6pm.

VII. ADJOURNMENT at 8:15pm.