



Planning Department

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OFC. OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
August 14, 1991

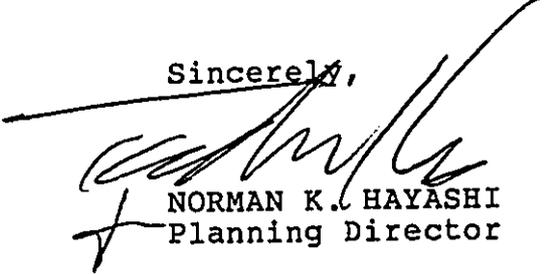
Office of Environmental Quality Control
220 South King Street, 4th Floor
Honolulu, HI 96813

Gentlemen:

Notice of Determination and Environmental Assessment
Applicant: Kenai Air Hawaii, Inc.
TMK: (3) 5-9-2:Portion of 4

Enclosed please find four copies of an Environmental Assessment-Negative Declaration for a proposed helistop at Kahualiilii, North Kohala, Hawaii for publication in the OEQC Bulletin.

Sincerely,


NORMAN K. HAYASHI
Planning Director

ASL:mra
2664D(1)

cc: Kenai Air Hawaii, Inc.
Sidney Fuke

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1991-08-23-HI-FEA - Kahua Ranch Helistop North Kohala

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT - NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Applicant: Kenai Air Hawaii, Inc.
P. O. Box 3270
Lihue, HI 96766

Approving Agency: Hawaii County Planning Commission
through the Planning Department
25 Aupuni Street
Hilo, HI 96720

Consulting Agencies:

County: Department of Public Works
Department of Water Supply
Civil Defense Agency
Department of Parks and Recreation
Police Department
Fire Department
Real Property Tax Office

State: Department of Land and Natural Resources
Department of Transportation-Highways Division
Department of Health
Department of Education

Federal: Mauna Kea Soil Conservation District

Other: Hawaii Electric Light Company
North Kohala Community Association

Class of action: Establishment of a new helicopter facility.

PROPOSED ACTION

The applicant, Kenai Air Hawaii, Inc. intends to establish a helistop and related tour operation improvements on 10,000 square feet of land. The affected area is a portion of Kahua Ranch, located approximately 6,500 feet mauka of Kohala Mountain Road, Kahualiilii, North Kohala, TMK: 5-9-02:Portion of 4.

The helistop would be a rest stop for helicopter tours originating at the Waikoloa heliport. The helistop site will not involve the construction of any permanent structures, as the helicopter is expected to land on the natural terrain. A small portable tent would be constructed to provide some cover during inclement weather. The tent would not exceed 5,000 square feet. There would be between 6 to 8 flights a day. Normally, there would be 4 passengers. The helistop is intended to give the passengers the opportunity to take pictures of the area. The stops would be from 15 to 30 minutes and no meals will be served. Helicopter operations will occur between 7:30 am and 5:00 pm.

The helistop will be used in association with either a 30- or 50-minute helicopter tour of North Kohala. The primary flight path for both the 30- and 50-minute tours proceeds in a northerly direction from the Waikoloa heliport to the proposed helistop at Kahua Ranch. Following a 30-minute stop at the helistop, the shorter flight will continue in a northeasterly direction to the Kohala coastline via Honokane Gulch and return along the same path. The 50-minute tour will continue from Honokane Gulch in a

southeasterly direction to Waimanu and Waipio Valleys. From the southern end of Waipio Valley, the tour will return to the Waikoloa heliport. An alternate return route will be used in order to maintain safe operations during variable weather conditions (see attached flight path map). All refueling and maintenance operations will take place at the Waikoloa heliport.

Operating altitudes under 1,000 feet above ground level (AGL) will occur in the vicinity of the Waikoloa heliport and the proposed helistop in conjunction with take-offs and landings. Operating altitudes along the North Kohala coastline will range between 500 and 1,000 feet AGL. A minimum altitude of 1,500 feet AGL will be maintained over Kawaihae Village. Along the alternate weather route, operating altitudes will be over 1,500 feet AGL. Flight paths will occur over the State Land Use Conservation District and the Special Management Area.

A Noise Impact Assessment for proposed helicopter flight operations and the proposed Kohala helistop at Kahua Ranch was carried out by Darby and Associates. The results of the assessment were reported in a memorandum dated September 6, 1989. Excerpts from the report are included below:

"A. SUMMARY -- According to the noise standards and guidelines specified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Hawaii Helicopter Operators Association's (HHOA) Sound Abatement Program, the potentially affected noise sensitive areas are not expected to be significantly impacted due to the proposed helicopter

flight operations. These standards and guidelines use an allowable Day-Night Average Sound Level (Ldn) of 55 dB. For the worst case condition (a maximum of eight flights per day), it is estimated that the 55 dB Ldn contour line generated by helicopter activities lies within 800' from the helipad along the landing and takeoff track and within a sideline distance of 150' from the helipad. The majority of the noise sensitive areas would be exposed to an Ldn of less than 45 dB.

The helicopter generated Ldn levels were also compared to the noise criterion of 'ambient less 5 dB', specified in the preliminary Hawaii State Helicopter System Plan. At noise sensitive areas located near the major highways, the Ldn generated by the helicopter activities comply with the State Plan's noise criterion. However, at locations away from the highways where the ambient Ldn levels are generally significantly lower, the State Plan's criterion may not be met, especially at times of low ambient level (i.e. when there is little or no wind.)

A more typical helicopter operation scenario of two flights per day has also been considered. The Ldn generated by helicopter activities in this scenario is at most 50 dB, even within the vicinity of the helipads. None of the noise sensitive areas are expected to be impacted, according to the 55 dB Ldn criterion. The 'ambient less 5 dB' criterion is also satisfied at locations near the major highways. At quieter locations (i.e. away from the

highways) and during calm weather conditions, the Ldn generated by the helicopter operations may not comply with the 'ambient less 5 dB' criterion.

The results of an analysis indicate that it would require over 100 helicopter flights per day in order to generate an Ldn of 55 dB, at a slant distance of 500'.

Assessments of possible noise impact using the maximum A-weighted sound level noise descriptor, Lmax, indicate that the majority of noise sensitive locations would not be significantly affected. An Lmax of about 73 to 78 dBa may be experienced at homes which helicopters overfly at an altitude of 500' above the ground level. Of these homes, those located away from the major highways more probably will experience some intrusiveness at times of low ambient level (i.e. when there is little or no wind)."

STATE AND COUNTY LAND USE POLICIES

The property is situated within the State Land Use Agricultural District. The applicant is requesting a Special Permit to allow the proposed helistop.

The General Plan Land Use Pattern Allocation Guide (LUPAG) map designation for the area is Intensive Agriculture. The site is situated within the County Agricultural-20 acre (A-20a) zoned district.

The site is not within the Special Management Area of the County of Hawaii. The site is over 6 miles away from the

shorelines to the east and west.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The proposed helistop site is a 10,000-square foot portion of a 2,207 \pm -acre parcel of land belonging to Kahua Ranch. The site has occasional pasture use.

The site is located at approximately 3,500-foot elevation and is fairly level.

The area is not known to be inhabited by any threatened species of plant or animal. Vegetation of the site consists principally of kikuyu grass.

The area is not known to contain any significant archaeological features. The site is approximately 11 miles southeast of the Mo'okini Heiau and approximately 8 miles northeast of the Pu'ukohola Heiau, both of which are registered as National Historic Landmarks.

The Soil Survey Report, published by the U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service, classifies the land as Manahaa silt loam (MMD). The Manahaa series consists of well-drained silt loams that formed in volcanic ash. Permeability is moderately rapid, runoff is slow, and the erosion hazard is slight. The area receives approximately 75-80 inches of rain annually.

The Land Study Bureau's Overall Master Productivity Rating System classifies the soils as "C" or Fair. The land is classified as "Other Important Agricultural Land" according to the State Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Lands of Importance to the State of Hawaii (ALISH) map.

According to the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the project site is determined to be in Zone "X" (outside the 500-year flood plain).

Surrounding lands are zoned A-20a. Cattle and sheep are pastured on the subject property. A wind farm on Kahua Ranch's adjoining property produces electrical energy. Commercial horseback riding tours are conducted on the property. The nearest residence is at Kahua Ranch headquarters, which is located approximately 5,000 feet to the southwest of the proposed helistop. Special Permit No. 705 was granted to Kahua Ranch to allow a bed and breakfast operation at the ranch headquarters.

The proposed helistop is approximately 2 miles west of the Honokane Gulch Forest Reserve, which is within the State Land Use Conservation District.

The proposed helistop is approximately 1 mile east (mauka) of Kohala Mountain Road. No vehicular access is proposed. The area is accessible by 4-wheel drive and foot only. In the event of an accident, the applicant's other helicopter(s) would coordinate with the appropriate agencies to provide emergency relief.

Potable water and beverages will be transported on the helicopter. No other water is available on-site.

No sewage facilities are proposed. All solid waste materials would be brought out daily by the helicopters and disposed of at the heliport base.

AGENCY COMMENTS

The Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Land Management has expressed concern as to whether a commercial operation such as this is a suitable land use for the area. They believe that this type of use should be situated within lands zoned for such activity such as the Kamuela or Upolu Airports. According to the Historic Sites Section of the Department of Land and Natural Resources, it is likely that the proposed use will have "no affect" on historic sites.

The Department of Agriculture has stated that, should emergency fueling take place at the site, petrochemical pollutants could reduce the agricultural potential of the area.

The Mauna Kea Soil and Water Conservation District has expressed concern for the lack of toilet facilities and recommended that portable facilities be provided. Furthermore, The District noted that AGL levels are not always observed and policeing is a problem.

The Police Department commented that emergency vehicle response time is 90 minutes due to limited accessibility.

The Civil Defense Agency recommended that "a hold be placed on all helicopter applications that involve an expansion of flights in proximity to residences and wildlife unless a comprehensive plan is developed by the appropriate levels of government." They also recommended that the County investigate noise complaints made by North Kohala residents.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND MITIGATING MEASURES

The proposed helistop is not expected to have significant environmental impact on the resources of the area.

The site is not an identified habitat for any rare or endangered species of plant or animal.

The project site is not known to contain historic sites. No construction is proposed other than a portable tent. Thus, the proposed use has been determined by the Historic Sites Section of the Department of Land and Natural Resources to have "no effect" on historic sites.

The proposed use will not affect beneficial uses of the environment. The site is approximately 6 miles from any shoreline, over 1 mile from the nearest road, and 2 miles from the nearest State Land Use Conservation District. Existing pasture use on the subject property will not be affected.

According to the consultant, Darby and Associates, potentially affected noise sensitive areas are not expected to be significantly impacted by the proposed helicopter operations. It is estimated that the majority of the noise sensitive areas would be exposed to an Average Sound Level (Ldn) of less than 45 dB compared to the standard Day-Night Ldn of 55 dB as specified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Hawaii Helicopter Operators (HHO) Association Sound Abatement Program.

According to the applicant, no refueling will take place at the site. Therefore, the potential for petrochemical pollution is insignificant.

Degradation of environmental quality and public health due to lack of toilet facilities is unlikely, since the overall tour time ranges from 30 to 50 minutes with a 15-30 minute stop at the proposed helistop.

Due to the distance of the site from Kohala Mountain Road, viewplanes will not be impacted.

The site is not within an environmentally sensitive area such as a flood plain, tsunami zone, geologically hazardous land, or fresh or coastal waters.

IMPACTS WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED

Ambient noise levels will be negatively affected by the proposed use within approximately 800 feet of the helipad along the landing and takeoff track and within a sideline distance of 150 feet from the helipad. However, outside of the landing area, noise levels will be within the range specified by EPA and HCPO guidelines. Although elevated noise levels could negatively impact pasture use in the immediate vicinity of the site, such impact is determined to be not significant. The elevated noise levels at the site will not impact any lands within the State Land Use Conservation District, the shoreline area, or any historic sites. It should be noted that concern expressed by consulted agencies for noise levels along flight paths outside of the subject area is not addressed in this assessment for the reason that those impacts are not specifically associated with the proposed helipad use. Flight paths are now in use and will not be significantly affected by this request other than within

the landing and takeoff area. The elevated noise level within the proposed helipad area is not determined to constitute a significant environmental impact.

DETERMINATION

Based on the above, it is determined that the proposed helistop will not have significant impacts upon the environment. Therefore, a notice of negative declaration is now being filed with the environmental assessment.

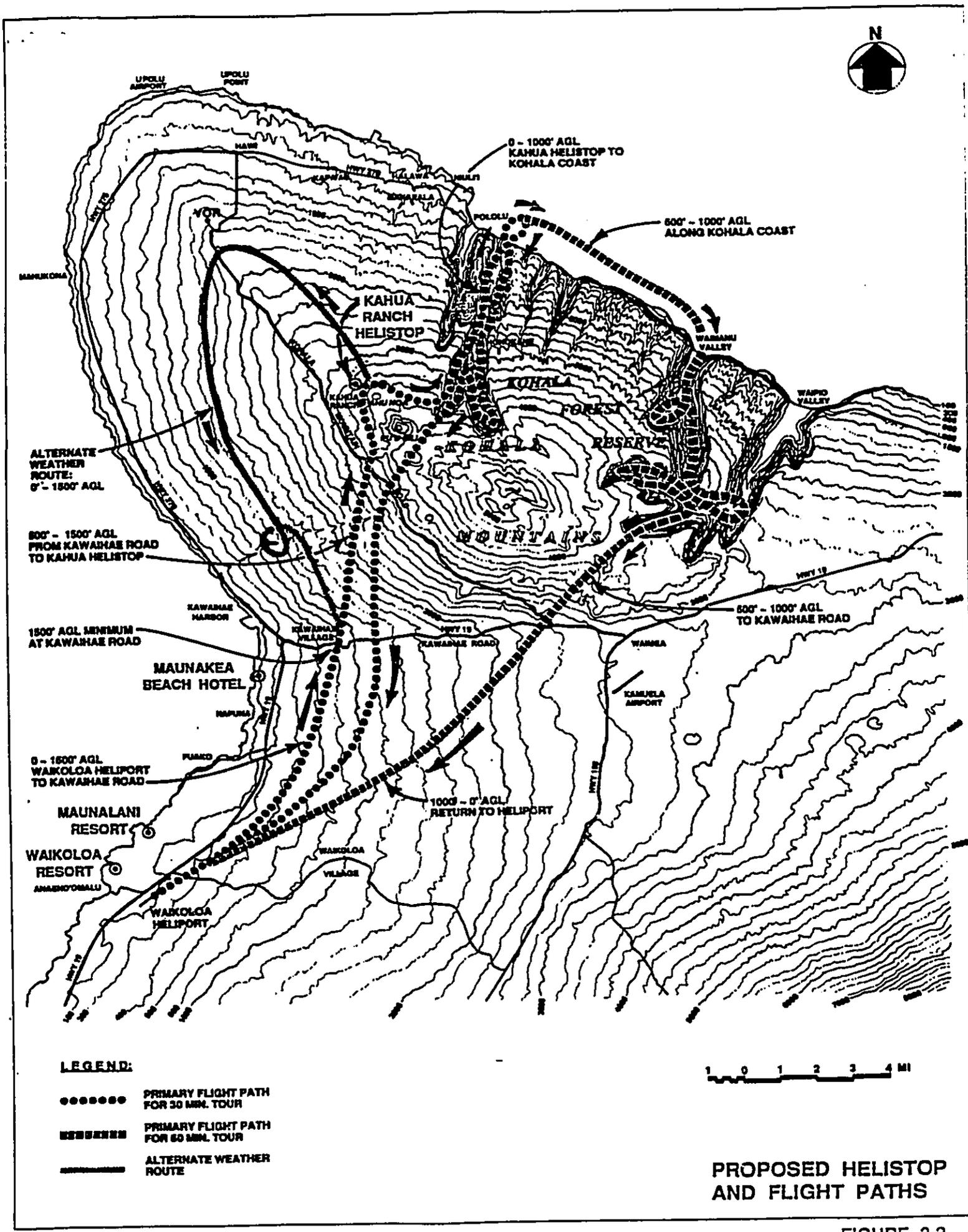


FIGURE 2-2