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JUL 23 2016

**Draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact
for the
Laupāhoehoe Forest Management Plan
June 2016**

**USDA Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Research Station – Hilo**

**Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry
Hawai'i Experimental Tropical Forest
Hawai'i County, Hawai'i**

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An environmental assessment (EA) was jointly prepared by the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Forest Service (USFS) on the Laupāhoehoe Forest Management Plan. Laupāhoehoe Forest consists of two state-managed parcels of land on the eastern windward flanks of Mauna Kea in the North Hilo District on the island of Hawai'i. Both parcels are managed by the DLNR Division of Forestry and Wildlife: 4,449 acres as Forest Reserve and 7,894 acres as Natural Area Reserve. In addition, the Laupāhoehoe Forest is designated as part of the Hawai'i Experimental Tropical Forest (HETF).

The Laupāhoehoe Forest Management Plan proposes management actions to be implemented over the next 15 years to support long-term protection of the native forest and watershed. In addition to continuing existing management (e.g., invasive species control, rare plant restoration, research, etc.), the Management Plan also proposes the creation of new fenced conservation units (approximately 2,659 total acres (22% of the forest area), the maintenance and development of identified primitive trails within the Forest and the establishment of primitive camping at Shack Camp; increased opportunities for education and outreach visits, and the installation of management shelters and helicopter landing zones to support natural resources management, wildfire suppression, and emergency response. Best management practices and mitigation measures would be incorporated to minimize negative impacts to water, botanical, faunal, or archaeological resources.

Potential impacts associated with Alternative 1, the no action alternative, and Alternative 2, the implementation of the Management Plan, were fully disclosed and analyzed in the EA. As described in detail in the EA, implementation of the proposed action will not result in significant impacts to any affected resources.

The DLNR and USFS incorporated a variety of public involvement techniques in developing the Management Plan and reviewing the EA. The Laupāhoehoe Advisory Council (LAC) was formed in December 2010 to provide guidance and consultation to DLNR and USFS on issues of management, research, and education in Laupāhoehoe Forest. DLNR and USFS compiled resource information available for Laupāhoehoe Forest, reviewed current conditions and activities within the Forest, and developed draft management concepts. DLNR, USFS, and the LAC then jointly developed a draft Management Plan through a collaborative planning process.

Eleven public meetings were held with the LAC between 2012 and 2014, developing and discussing different aspects of the draft management plan. The comments and suggestions made

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through this process helped further develop and refine the proposed management actions. The Draft Management Plan was released to the public in April 2015, announced on the Hawai'i Experimental Tropical Forest web page and on DLNR's Laupāhoehoe web page, and hard copies distributed to local public libraries. DLNR staff gave a public presentation on the Plan at the Natural Area Reserves Commission meeting of April 27, 2015, and an informational poster session on the Draft Management Plan was held for the public on June 17, 2015.

In October 2015, DLNR mailed an initial scoping letter to a wide variety of Federal, State and County agencies, Native Hawaiian organizations, non-governmental organizations, adjacent landowners, and interested individuals inviting comments and feedback on the Plan to be used in developing the Draft EA and mailed a second letter announcing availability of the Draft EA in March 2016. The Draft EA was available for a 30-day comment period beginning on March 8, 2016, with publication in the Hawai'i Environmental Notice, the Hawai'i Tribune Herald, and the Sacramento Bee. Public notices about the project and Draft EA were published in the Hāmākua Times, and the LAC held a public meeting to discuss and receive comment on the Draft EA at the end of March 2016.

Thirteen public comment letters were received. The comments expressed support for the preferred alternative, encouraged the protection of more native forest through additional fencing, expressed appreciation for incorporation of pre-consultation comments into the Draft EA, requested additional information on reforestation techniques, provided additional information regarding historic features (flume remnants), provided form comments regarding the relation between the project and the State's water quality standards, advised that implementation of certain activities would require site plan approval from the Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands, and offered technical edits or requested clarifications. Individual responses to the public comments were prepared and included in the Final EA (June 2016). Clarifying text was added as necessary to address the comments; no substantive changes were made to the Management Plan or the EA.

The USFS has prepared this draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI) in satisfaction of requirements of NEPA. This draft DN/FONSI documents the decision of the Forest Service to implement the Laupāhoehoe Management Plan. Based on review and evaluation of the information contained in the EA, I have determined that implementing Alternative 2 would not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement for the proposed action is not required.

This draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact and supporting references are available for public review at the USFS, Pacific Southwest Research Station, Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry, Hilo, Hawaii, 96720. These documents can also be found on the Internet at <http://hetf.us/page/home>. Interested and affected parties are being notified of our decision.

How to file an Objection and Timeframe

Objections will only be accepted from those who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding the proposed project during scoping or other designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with §218.5(a). Issue raised in objections must be based on timely, specific, and previously submitted written comments regarding the proposed project,

unless the issue raised is based on new information that arose after the designated comment opportunities.

Objections, including attachments, must be filed via mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays) to: *Reviewing Officer - Alexander Friend, Station Director, Pacific Southwest Research Station, 800 Buchanan St., Albany, CA 94710*, FAX: (510) 883-8858, afriend@fs.fed.us.

Objections must be submitted within 45 calendar days following the publication of this notice on June 23, 2016 in the Hawai'i Tribune Herald and the Sacramento Bee. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the time to file an objection.

The objection must contain the minimum content requirements specified in §218.8(d) and incorporation of documents by reference is permitted only as provided in §218.8(b). It is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely filing of a written objection with the reviewing officer pursuant to §218.9. All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process.

At a minimum an objection must include the following (36 CFR 218.8(d)): 1) The objector's name and address, with a telephone number, if available; 2) a signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for Email may be filed with the objection); 3) when multiple names are listed on an objection, identification of the lead objector (verification of the identity of the lead objector shall be provided upon request); 4) the name of the proposed project, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the name or location of the site on which the proposed project will be implemented; and 5) a description of those aspects of the proposed project addressed by the objection, including specific issues related to the proposed project if applicable, how the objector believes the environmental analysis or draft decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy; suggested remedies that would resolve the objection; supporting reasons for the reviewing officer to consider; and 6) a statement that demonstrates connection between prior specific written comments on the particular proposed project or activity and the content of the objection.



Ric Lopez, PhD
Director
Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Research Station
Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry

6/22/16
Date