



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

News Release

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

LAURA H. THIELEN
CHAIRPERSON
Phone: (808) 587-0401
Fax: (808) 587-0390

For Immediate Release: January 29, 2008

**DLNR HOLDS PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING ON PROPOSED
PROTECTION PLAN FOR 'AHIHI-KINA'U NATURAL AREA RESERVE**

KAHULUI – The Department of Land and Natural Resources invites the public to information meetings **on Wednesday, Jan. 30 and Thursday, Feb. 7** to learn about, and comment on, its proposed action plan to address impacts to natural resources and safety concerns taking place in the 'Ahihi-Kina'u Natural Area Reserve on Maui.

DLNR proposes to restrict access to portions of the 'Ahihi-Kina'u Natural Area Reserve for a period of two years in order to formally establish and mark trails, install educational signage, and establish baseline measurements to quantify damages that may occur after reopening the areas.

The meetings will be held at Lokelani Intermediate School cafeteria, 1401 Liloa Dr. in Kihei, on **Wednesday, Jan. 30 at 6:30 p.m. and Thursday, Feb. 7 at 6:30 p.m.**

“Like all other natural area reserves that DLNR manages, 'Ahihi-Kina'u's purpose is not to provide recreation like a park,” said Laura H. Thielen, DLNR chairperson.

“The reserve is set aside for preservation, so that its unique and sensitive resources can exist without the threat of impacts. The reserve is also used for important research so that future generations may learn from Hawai'i in its natural, and unaltered state,” said Thielen.

“Taking these steps to protect areas of the reserve is necessary and timely,” she said.

Anyone wishing to participate in the public meeting that requires special assistance or auxiliary aids or services (i.e. sign language interpreter, wheelchair accessibility, or parking designated for the disabled, please contact Matt Ramsey, 36 hours prior to the meeting so that arrangements can be made, at (808) 264-2029.)

(more)

Background

'Ahihi-Kina'u Natural Area Reserve, located on the southern coast of Maui adjacent to La Perouse Bay in Makena, is a protected area set aside specifically for the preservation of its unique resources.

At its establishment, laws were set in place to protect its resources. Consumptive actions such as fishing of any kind, opihi picking, and coral harvest are strictly prohibited. In addition several other actions including camping, fires, and littering are also prohibited.

'Ahihi-Kina'u was established in 1973 as the state's first natural area reserve. Other areas were later added as part of the state's Natural Area Reserves System, to protect biologically rich and geologically unique areas from the threat of development.

The 'Ahihi-Kina'u natural area reserve's highest point starts at the source vent for the most recent lava flow on Maui -- Kalua O Lapa -- and extends approximately half a mile offshore to protect 800 acres of ocean and 1,200 acres of land.

It is the only natural area reserve to contain a marine area. Past studies have shown that the reserve's marine diversity was at one time comparable to the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. Other studies have stated that its brackish ponds or anchialine ponds were the most pristine in the nation.

In recent years, 'Ahihi-Kina'u Natural Area Reserve has become a popular visitor destination.

Both visitors and residents alike frequent the area to swim in its rich, protected waters and gaze upon the most recent lava flow on Maui.

###

For more information news media may contact:

Deborah Ward

DLNR Public information specialist

Phone: (808) 587-0320