



HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

ITEM NO. G-3 INFORMATIONAL BRIEFING
Draft Environmental Assessment
for the DHHL Honomū Subsistence Agricultural
Homestead Community and
Anticipated Finding of No Significant Impact
(AFONSI)

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

- 1. Inform HHC on status of the Honomū Subsistence Agricultural Homestead Community**
- 2. Present Summary Highlights from the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA)**
- 3. Provide the HHC an opportunity to comment on the DEA being prepared to satisfy Chapter 343, HRS, prior to publication in OEQC's Environmental Notice Bulletin**

Why Agriculture?

- Provision of the HHCA
- Sustainability-resilience requires ag.
- Our DNA connects to the land and ag
- The Agricultural Waitlists are longer than the Residential Waitlists
- 20 years since the last Agricultural Award
- Dedicated CTAHR staff – direct assistance, training workshops
- Opportunity to develop programmatic supports for ag
- Opportunity to integrate agricultural support facilities into community plan

HOMESTEAD LEASES STATEWIDE

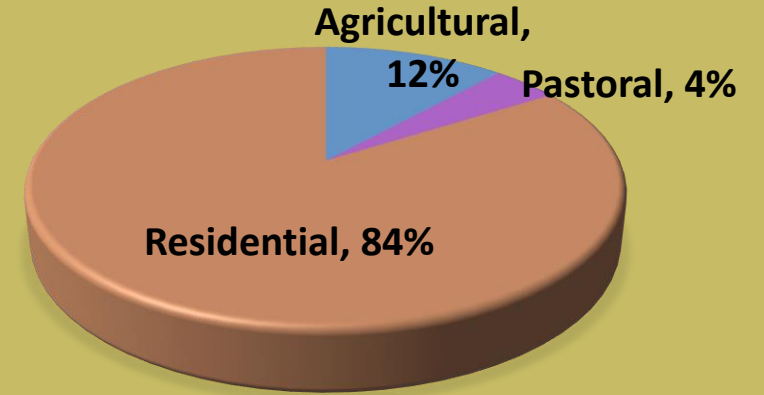
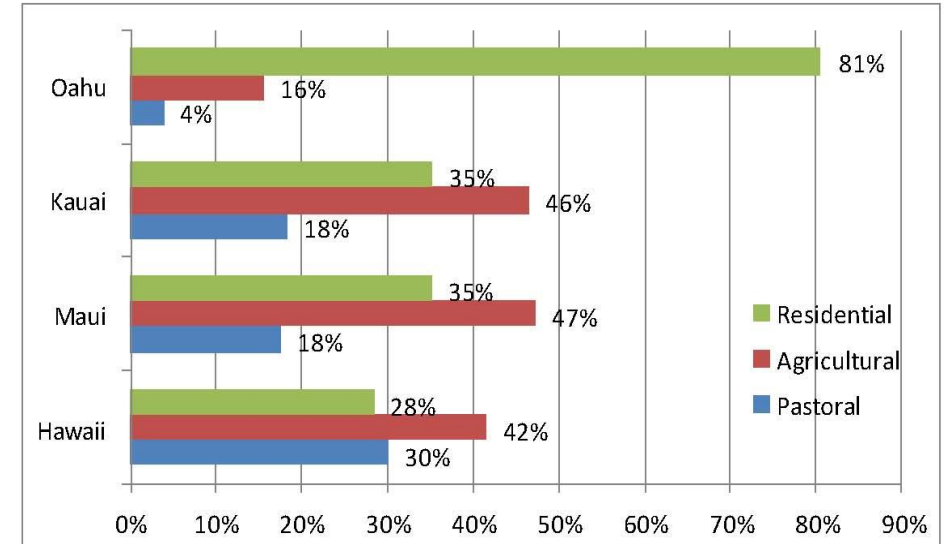


Figure 2. Application Type and Island, 2014



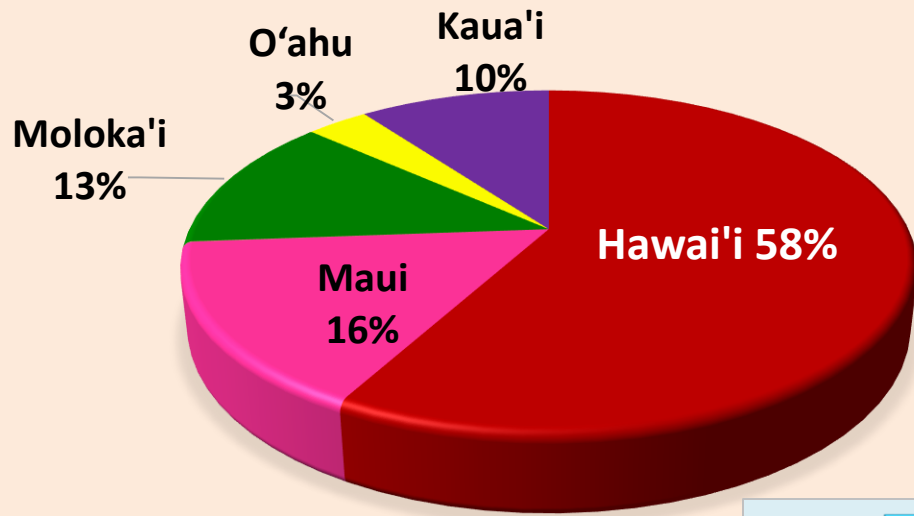
Administrative Rule Change

In March 2017, DHHL's Administrative Rules were amended to allow subsistence agriculture on ag lots that are no larger than 3 acres. Within 3 years, lessees would be required to:

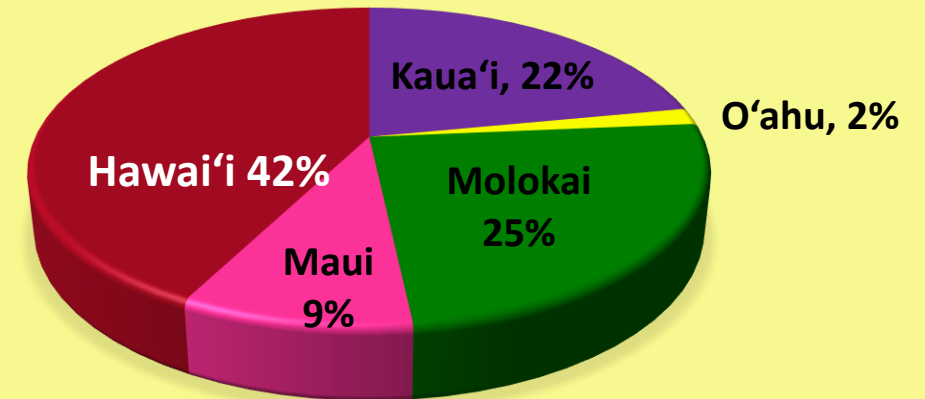
- 1. Cultivate food crops and/or small livestock for subsistence agricultural purposes; OR**
- 2. Reside and cultivate subsistence agriculture**

Why are we Focusing on Hawai'i Island?

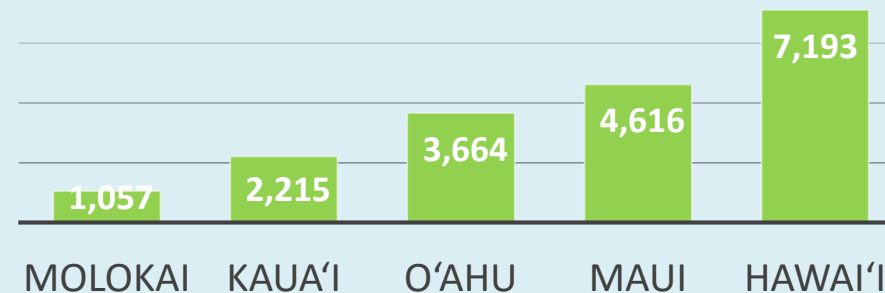
Land Inventory



Lands Designated for Agricultural Use



Agricultural Waitlists



High demand for Ag Homestead Leases on the Big Island

The last Ag lease on the Big Island was awarded 20 years ago

Department of Hawaiian Home Lands

Hawai'i Island Plan

May 2002



Final Report

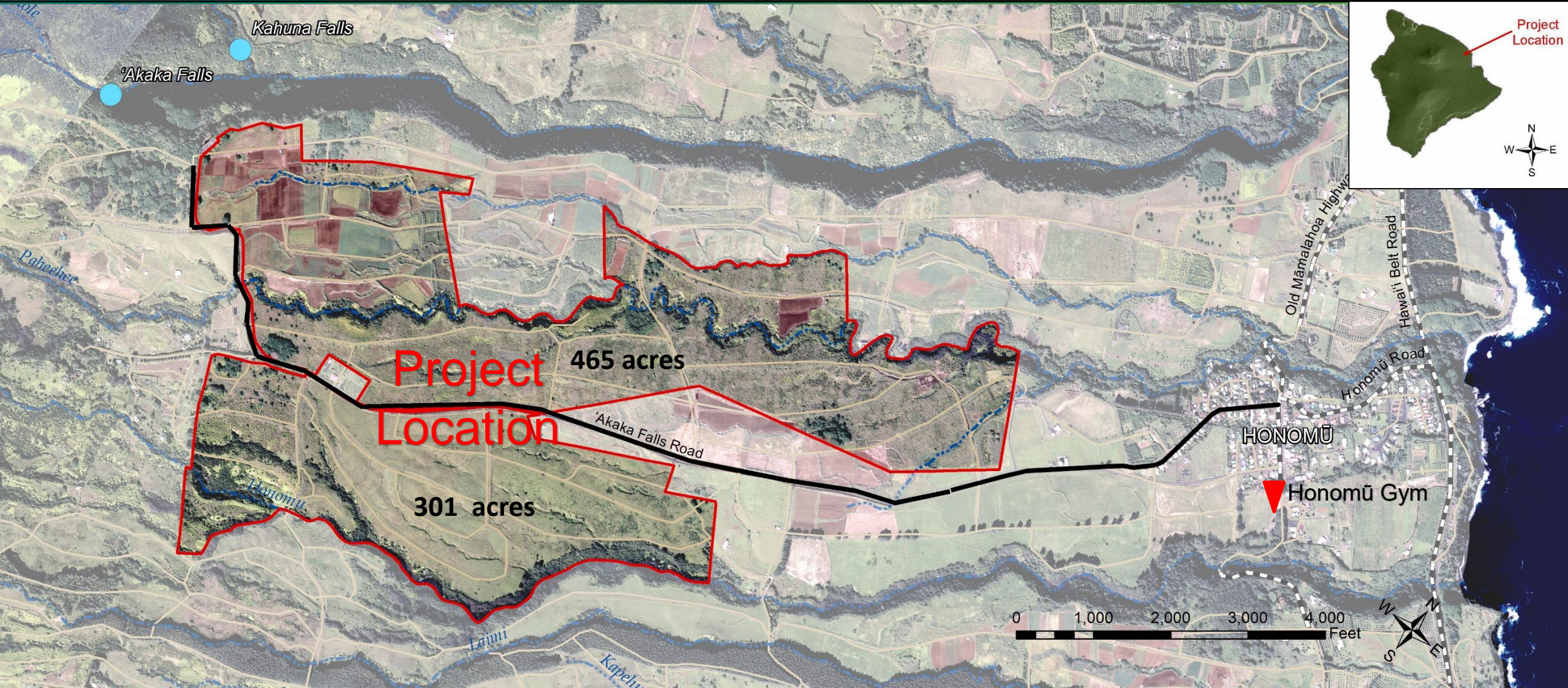
Subsistence Agriculture Priority Areas

#1: Lower Pi'ihonua

- Phase 1 Priority—satisfies demand for East region
- On-site infrastructure costs are extensive
- Requires full range of infrastructure development
- Ranked #1 because it was the least expensive alt.

Upon further study, we discovered that in order to accommodate the projected increase in traffic, significant improvements to the bridge that crosses over the Wailuku River would be required that are cost prohibitive.

Honomū Lands



Honomū Attributes

- ✓ Accessible
- ✓ Arable Land; ALISH-Prime Ag Lands; LESA-Impt. Ag Lands
- ✓ Available Water: High Rainfall (150" – 225"), Honomū Stream (south), Kolekole Stream (north), Pāhe'ehe'e Stream (runs through parcel)
- ✓ Access to Agricultural Support Networks
- ✓ Good relationship with Hawai'i County --Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) clarifies responsibilities

Honomū – Existing Land Uses

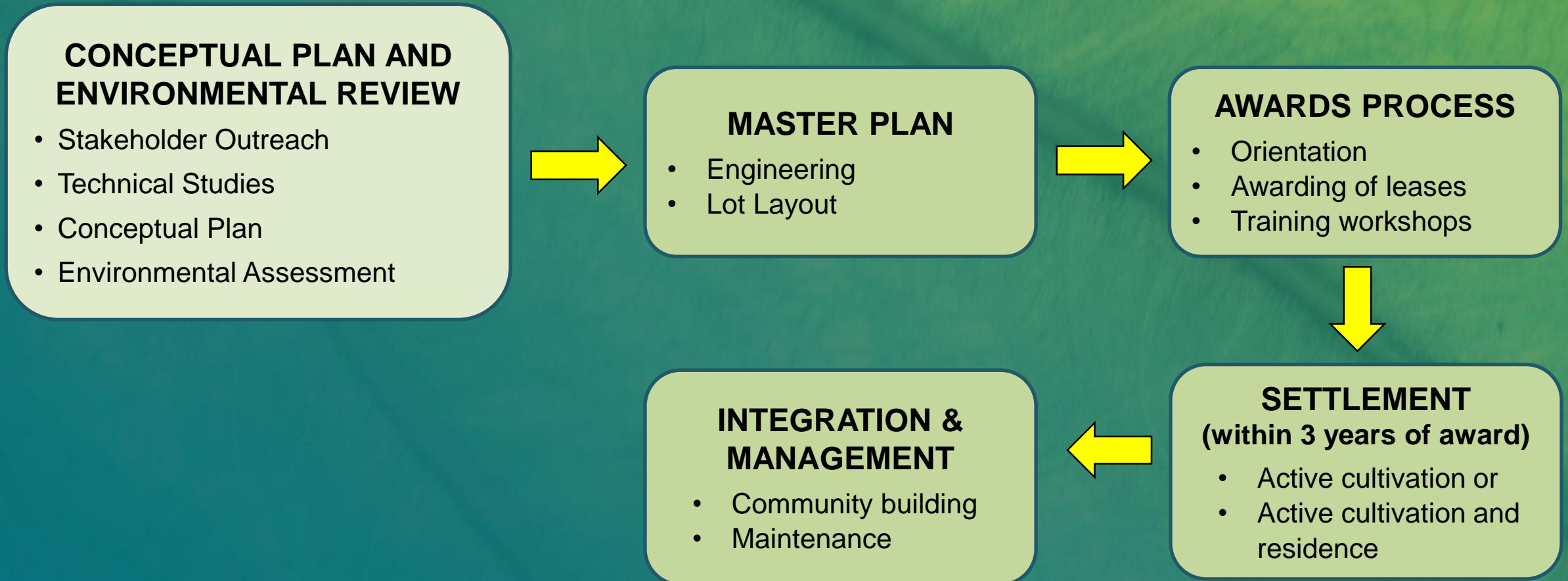


Honomū Subsistence Agricultural Homestead Community

PURPOSE: Award Subsistence Ag. Homestead Lots at Honomū

- In May, 2017, we contracted Townscape, Inc. to develop a Conceptual Plan and to complete the Environmental Assessment
- Met with key stakeholders (county and federal agencies, elected officials)
- Commissioned technical studies
- Invited top 500 applicants on the Hawai‘i Island Ag Waitlist to participate in a series of planning meetings:
 - October 2017
 - March 2018
- Held separate meetings (same agenda) with the Honomū community

Overview of the Honomū Agricultural Homestead Process



Honomū Conceptual Plan and Environmental Review Process

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

- DHHL beneficiaries on the Hawai'i Island Agricultural Waitlist
- DHHL Homestead Associations
- Hawaiian Homes Commission
- Honomū residents
- Elected officials
- Government Agencies
- Other Key Stakeholders

TECHNICAL STUDIES

- Topography
- Biology
- Archaeology
- Infrastructure

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Fundamental rules guiding a plan's policies and implementation measures.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCEPT

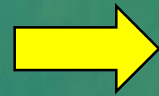
General land use concept based on the Guiding Principles.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- Presentation of project alternatives
- Evaluation of impacts
- Public comment period

PLAN ALTERNATIVES

Options for moving forward with the goal of providing leases to DHHL beneficiaries on the Hawai'i Island Agricultural Waitlist.



Beneficiary Issues and Concerns

- Definition of subsistence agriculture
- Assistance with farming
- Safety and access
- Lessees' cost: infrastructure and lot preparation
- Lease process and requirements
- Environmental management

Community Issues and Concerns

- High rainfall and runoff
- Density of lots, population increases, and impacts to the rural character of Honomū
- Monitoring and compliance with lease terms
- Training on farm and environmental practices
- Crime and agricultural theft
- Infrastructure: water, wastewater, traffic/roads

Guiding Principles

- No net increase in runoff from the 10-year storm
- Minimize erosion and polluted runoff
- Minimize visual, sound, and dust impacts
- Protect biologically sensitive environments
- Support community cohesion
- Provide for agriculture-related economic opportunities
- Provide programmatic supports—ag TA and training

Summary of Proposed Land Uses

ACRES
(PERCENT)

Subsistence Agriculture

417 acres
(55%)

- Lots no larger than 3 acres
- Lessees required to actively cultivate subsistence agriculture OR reside and cultivate food crops and/or small livestock
- Crops provide food to be consumed in the home or provide supplemental household income.

Supplemental Agriculture

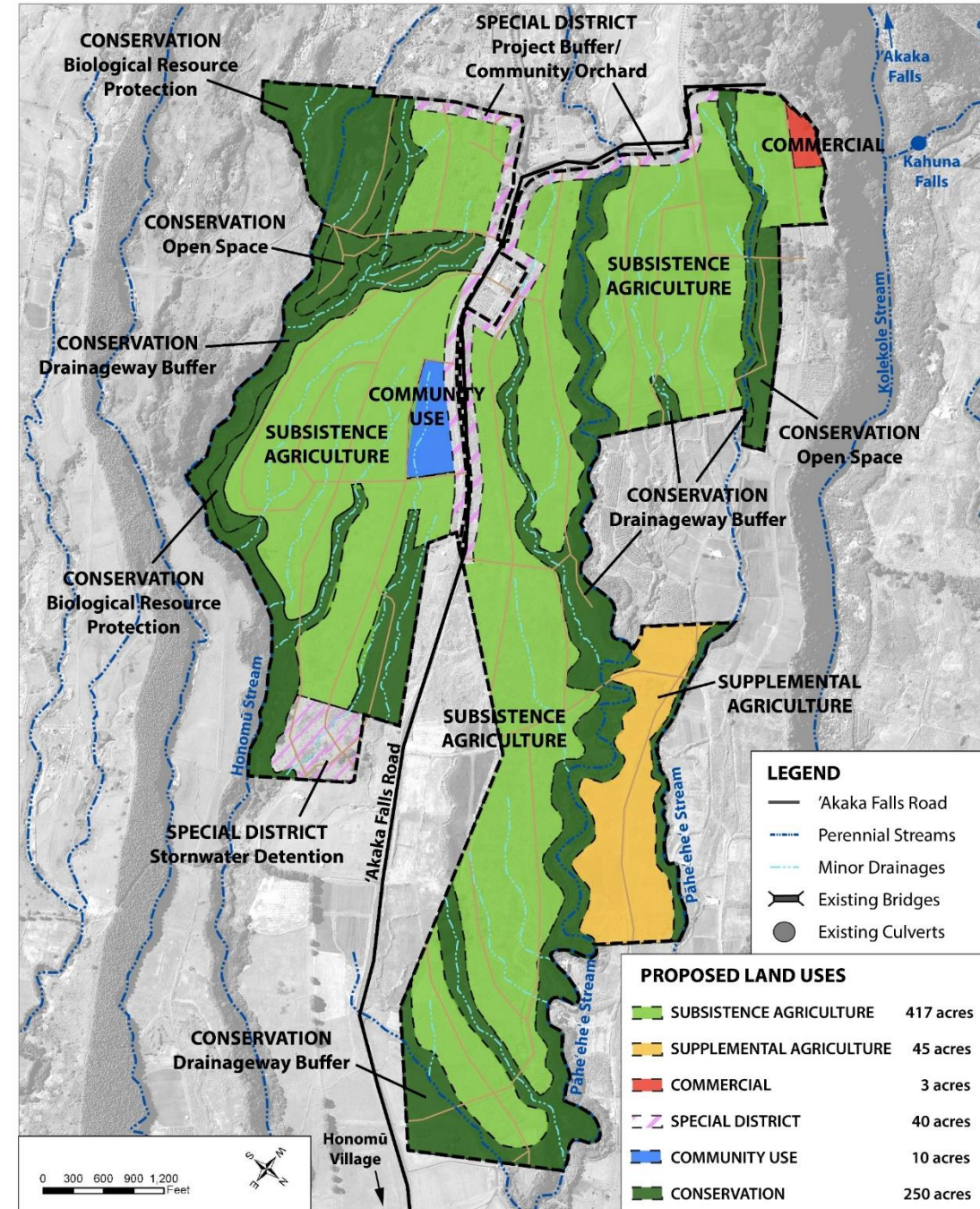
45 acres
(6%)

- Larger-lots, within the same homestead community, to supplement subsistence agriculture
- For Subsistence Agricultural lessees who have fully cultivated their lot and have the desire and capability to cultivate more.

Commercial

3 acres
(0.4%)

- Land uses that are complementary to 'Akaka Falls State Park, that could include parking, scenic lookout, education kiosks, fruit stand, etc.



Summary of Proposed Land Uses (Cont'd)

ACRES
(PERCENT)

Community Use

10 acres
(1%)

- To provide a central gathering place for community-building land uses to be determined by the homestead community.
- Possible uses include parks, community-based economic development, utilities, other facilities and amenities.

Special District

40 acres
(5%)

- Areas requiring special attention because of unusual opportunities and/or constraints.
- Physical and visual buffers between 'Akaka Falls Road and the Project.
- Stormwater management.

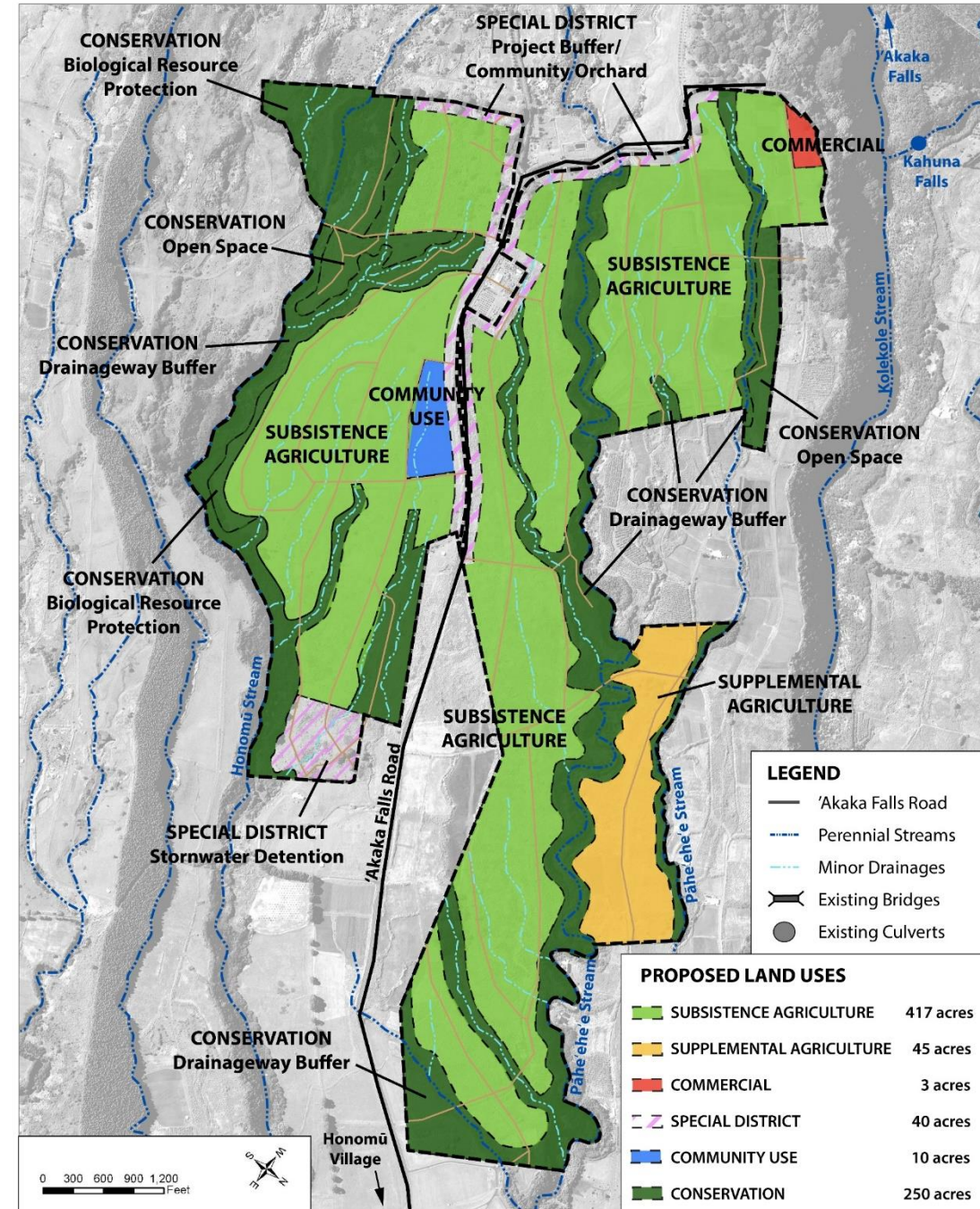
Conservation

250 acres
(33%)

- Environmentally sensitive areas that include: steep slopes, areas for biological resource protection, drainageway buffers, and open space.

TOTAL

766 acres
(100%)



Planning Assumptions

- Subsistence Agricultural Lots:
 - Lot size: 1 to 3 acres
 - 1-acre sufficient for: ag plots, a house, an on-site wastewater disposal system, water catchment tank, and storm water retention.
- Maximum number of lots is 375
- Similar to other ag homesteads, we expect that 50% will reside on their lots (188 houses)
- Average Household Size for DHHL East Hawaii beneficiaries is 3.291 people x 188 households=619 people at full build out

Alternatives Considered

- **No Action**
 - Ag Waitlist continues to grow; Beneficiaries continue to wait for land
 - Good farm land is used by a few ranchers who may not be beneficiaries
 - No land use improvements to protect waterways
- **Maximum Density of Subsistence Ag Lots**
 - Commits 67% of developable land to 1-acre subsistence Ag lots resulting in 474 ag lots
 - Provides greatest benefit to the 7,000 applicants on the Ag Waitlist
 - Would generate environment and social impacts
- **Alternate Location—Lower Pi‘ihonua**
 - Was identified in the Island Plan; bridge work made it cost prohibitive
 - Marginal soil and water conditions compared to Honomū

Natural Resources—Biological Survey

- Long history of intensive sugarcane cultivation
- The site is dominated by non-native vegetation, with a few native species in certain areas of the site.
- A dozen native plant species and the native Hawaiian hawk ('io) were observed; assume that the 'ōpe'ape'a (Hawaiian hoary bat) are present in the area.
- No endangered animals were observed in the project area during the study.

Historic and Cultural Literature Review and Site Inspection

- The majority of the Project area was extensively modified by sugar cultivation and subsequent agricultural and ranching activities.
- No pre-Contact archaeological features were observed, although pre-Contact features may be present in the stream gulches that could not be accessed during the field inspection.
- Historic transportation and sugarcane-related features were identified, such as 'Akaka Falls Road, Pāhe'ehe'e Mauka Bridge, unpaved cane roads, culverts, minor bridges, and plantation berms
- No surface remains of the historic workers' camps were observed, but subsurface deposits may still be present.

Cultural Impact Assessment

- 'Akaka Falls is an important landmark, with historical, cultural, ecological, economic, and spiritual value to the people of Honomū.
- The existing agricultural community at Honomū is tight-knit and ethnically diverse, with a small, declining Hawaiian population.
- Cultural practices recalled by kupuna: 1) hunting, especially for wild pigs, in the mountain areas above 'Akaka Falls and within the Project area; 2) gathering 'ōpae from the streams that flowed from 'Akaka Falls, but the practice has declined with new settlements that have restricted their access to streams and due to invasive freshwater prawns preying upon the 'ōpae.

Cultural Impact Assessment

- All participants consulted in the Cultural Impact Assessment perceived the proposed Hawaiian Homestead as a positive development that will bring many benefits to Honomū
- It could increase the population of native Hawaiians in a town where the native Hawaiian population has been in decline.
- It might bring back many Hawaiian cultural practices, beliefs, and values to the area.
- In the long term, they felt that this project might facilitate the revitalization of Hawaiian culture in Honomū.

Hydrology and Drainage

- The three perennial streams located near the project area have been listed by the National Park Service as candidates for designation as a Scenic River under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 which is meant to “preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.”
- Due to the high rainfall in the area, runoff and drainage is a concern for local residents of Honomū.
- The Project will meet or exceed County drainage requirements by preparing a Master Drainage Plan in cooperation with the Soil and Water Conservation District. In addition, it the Project will set aside property for storm water retention; it will utilize grassed swales to control and convey runoff; and it will protect streams, gulches, and drainageways.

Proposed Infrastructure

Roads and Access

- Rural standard roads: 10-foot travel lanes with 4-foot wide grassed swale and shoulder on each side of the road.
- Not dedicable to the County.
- Road right-of-way of 50-feet will be established to allow for future upgrades.

Grading and Runoff, Drainage, and Erosion Control

- Adherence to County drainage requirements.
- Development of a Master Drainage Plan in coordination with the Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Streams and gulches designated as conservation areas.

Water Supply

- Irrigation water supplied by natural rainfall
- Domestic water supplied by water catchment tanks to be constructed by the lessee.

Wastewater Disposal

- Individual wastewater systems to be constructed by the lessee, if they want to reside on the lot.

Solid Waste

- Solid waste disposal to be the responsibility of each lessee.

Electrical Power

- Electrical power will be provided by DHHL via overhead electrical lines along internal roads.

Communications

- Communications, such as telephone and internet service, will be the responsibility of each lessee.

Summary Conclusions

- In summary, the proposed land uses are not anticipated to have a significant impact on the surrounding environment.
- However, the lack of action will lead to an agricultural waitlist that continues to grow.
- Infrastructure will provide for the health and safety of residents and visitors, but be appropriate for the rural nature of the Project
- Therefore, DHHL anticipates a Finding of No Significant Impact. An analysis of the 13 Significance Criteria is presented in the submittal.

Next Steps to Complete the Environmental Assessment

- DEA anticipated to be published in the October 8, 2018 OEQC bi-monthly bulletin
- We will convene the beneficiaries and community residents in one meeting to go over the DEA (October 25th at Hilo High School)
- 30-day public comment period on the DEA ends November 7, 2018;
- Revise DEA per public comments and complete Final Environmental Assessment (FEA) (November 2018);
- Present FEA to HHC; HHC issues Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) declaration for the project (November 2018)
- HHC FONSI declaration for the project and FEA submitted to OEQC for publication in OEQC bi-monthly bulletin. (December 2018)

Next Steps for the Project

- Complete Master Plan and lot layout.
- Obtain Agricultural Project District and lot TMKs from the County of Hawai‘i.
- Complete Master Drainage Plan with the Soil and Water Conservation District
- Coordinate with various State and County agencies:
 - State Department of Transportation - traffic mitigation and access points to the Project site.
 - State Historic Preservation Division - ensure compliance with historic preservation laws.
 - State Department of Health - wastewater disposal compliance.
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture – rural development loans.
- Continue to coordinate with the existing Honomū community.
- Sufficient budget will need to be allocated by the HHC and DHHL to implement the Project.
- Willingness by current and future decision-makers to follow through with various aspects of the project to ensure successful implementation.

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Project Webpage:

<http://dhhl.hawaii.gov/po/honomu-subsistence-agricultural-homestead-community/>