



Internet options expanding for Hawaiian homesteaders

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HONOLULU — Residents of Hawaiian homelands may soon have more options for connecting to the internet. That's because the state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands is lifting a decades-old exclusivity clause allowed only one internet service provider option for Hawaiian homesteaders.

Hawaii Public Radio reported the clause made Sandwich Isles Communications the only telecom provider for Hawaiian homelands since 1995. It's a step toward increasing digital equity for Native Hawaiians, said department Deputy Director Tyler Iokepa Gomes.

Homesteaders have had no other internet options, even after Sandwich Isles ran into legal and financial trouble in 2015 and wasn't able to provide needed upgrades in service.

The department will receive at least \$90 million in federal funds to provide high-speed internet access to homesteaders.

Home lands residents can continue to remain with Sandwich Isles or choose from other providers.

The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 was meant to provide economic self-sufficiency to Hawaiians by allowing them to use land to live on. Those with at least 50% Hawaiian blood quantum can apply for a 99-year lease for \$1 a year.