

HAWAII NEWS

# DHHL makes largest agricultural lot offering since the late 1980s



By Allison Schaefer  
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Editors' Picks



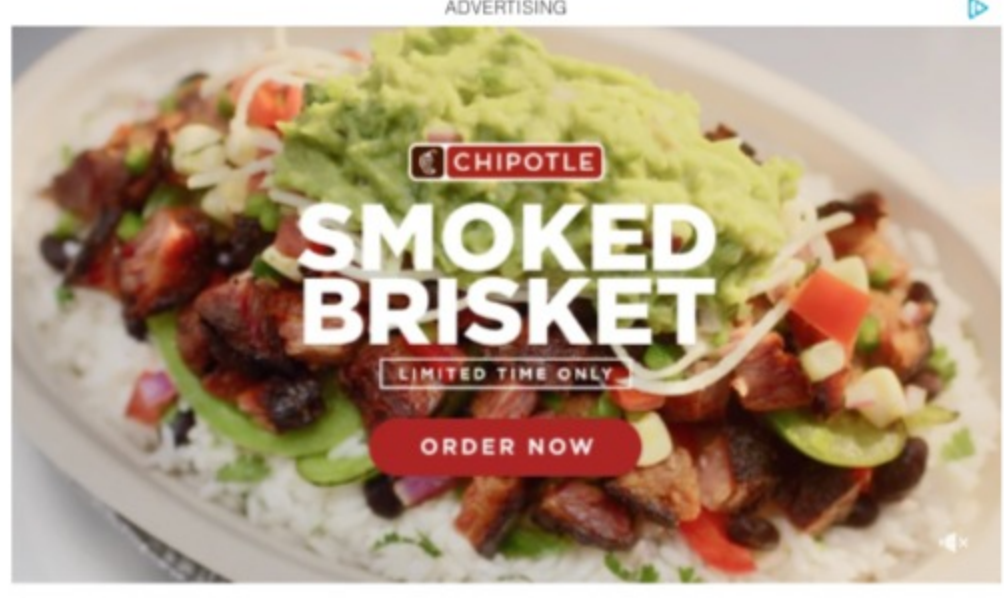
STATE DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

The state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands awarded 68 agricultural lots on Hawaii island Saturday during a gathering at Keaukaha Elementary School attended by 200 beneficiaries and their families. From left, state Rep. Darius Kila, state Sen. Kurt Fevella, Oahu Commissioner Sanoë Marfil, DHHL beneficiary Gabriel Kealoha, DHHL Director Kali Watson and East Hawaii Commissioner Michael Kaleikini posed for a picture at the event.

Hawaiian beneficiaries of the state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands have been awarded 68 agricultural lots on Hawaii island — the department's largest agricultural lot offering since the late 1980s.

Some 200 beneficiaries and their ohana gathered Saturday at Keaukaha Elementary School to celebrate DHHL's awarding of 16 1-acre subsistence agricultural lots in Honouliuli as well as 32 2-acre subsistence lots and 20 5-acre agricultural lots in Makuu.

Gabriel Kealoha, DHHL beneficiary, said Saturday at the event, "This is very important because as somebody who was a beneficiary from my parents as well, both my parents passed away and I'm a beneficiary on my mom's one, so this is very important for me to give to my baby because both my parents, my grandparents and now I get this awarded land for my baby to have this opportunity in the future, and it's very exciting. I did not expect it."



Established by Congress in 1921 with the passage of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, DHHL carries out Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalanianaʻōle's vision of rehabilitating Native Hawaiians by returning them to the land.

DHHL has traditionally awarded residential, agricultural or pastoral homestead lots to beneficiaries under 99-year leases costing \$1 a year, and lessees have to pay for their own house.

Subsistence-ag lots, a relatively new homestead model that DHHL began awarding in 2023, offer lots that are less than 3 acres and in close proximity to existing infrastructure in planned communities. This model allows small-scale farming for home consumption or supplemental income through commercial sales. If beneficiaries opt for commercial activity, they must create a farm plan, like a business plan, and cultivate at least two-thirds of the land.

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DHHL Director Kali Watson said in a statement, "Ohana are built on the aina and it is the department's commitment to keeping our families in Hawaii and on the land. It is DHHL's goal to offer diverse homesteading options and these agricultural lots serve as solutions to addressing the wait-list."

Thousands of applicants are on DHHL's waitlist, including many who have been on it for decades. Watson said the project is a reflection of the diversity of DHHL's options for homesteaders, and the awarding of subsistence and farm lots is "exciting because it provides an opportunity to not only have a place to grow your food as well as raise livestock but also build a house."

Watson added, "It's been over 35 years since we did this the last time and so we plan to do more of these (agricultural and subsistence- ag lots)."

Lt. Gov. Sylvia Luke, who in 2022 championed Hawaii lawmakers giving DHHL a historic \$600 million to primarily produce homesteads for beneficiaries, said in a statement, "This momentous occasion marks an exciting milestone for DHHL beneficiaries, providing not only the opportunity to build homes but also to cultivate a future grounded in food sovereignty and self-sustainability."

The Hawaiian homesteading program run by DHHL includes management of more than 200,000 acres of land statewide. DHHL plans to offer another 40 subsistence agricultural lots for development in Honouliuli within the next two years. Altogether, DHHL has more than 1,600 lots planned for homesteads across Hawaii island, including La'i 'Opua, Kaumana, Honoka'a, Palamanui and Pana'eua.

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