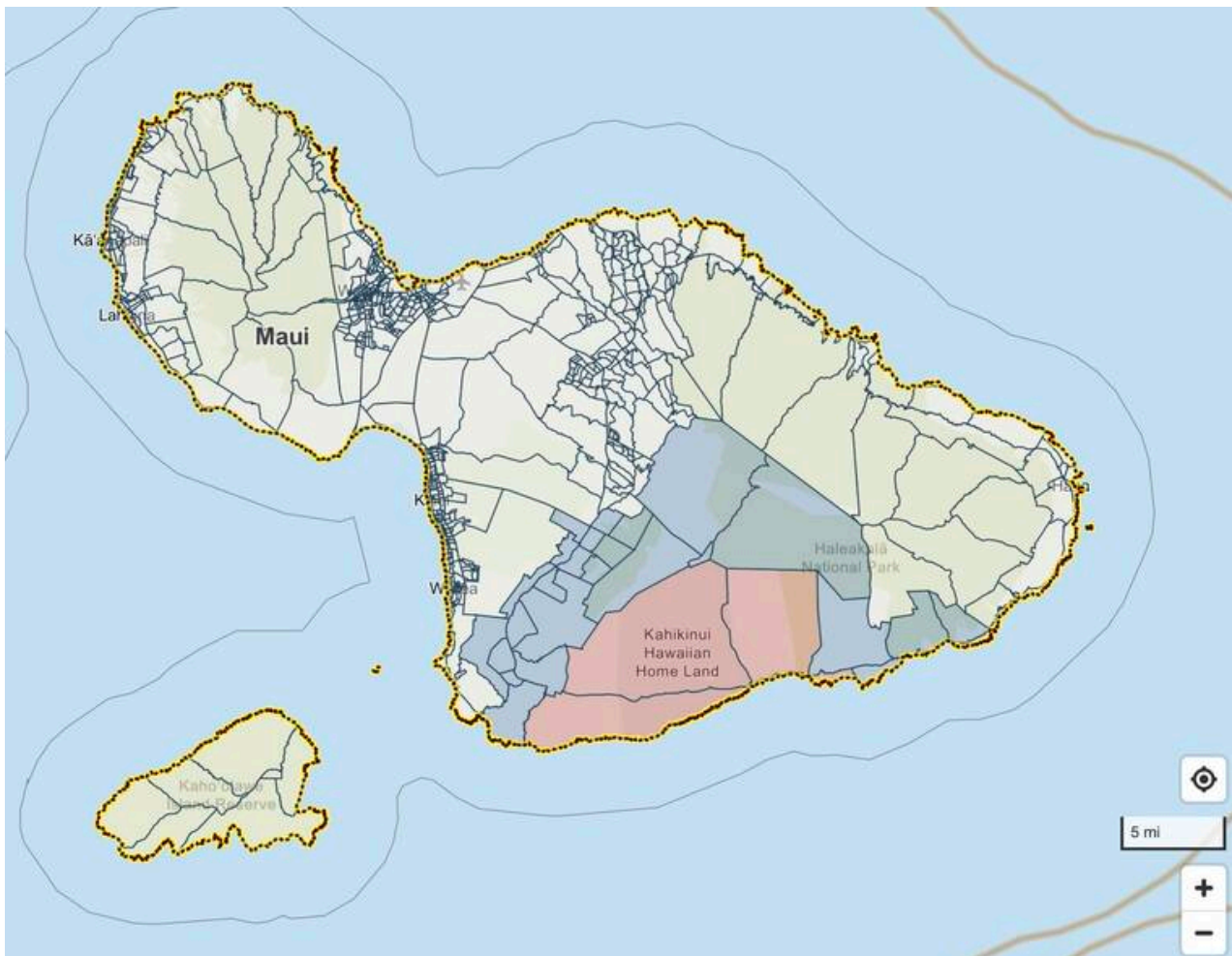


HAWAII NEWS

South Maui brush fire scorches 500 acres

By [Mia Anzalone](#)

June 16, 2025



A screenshot of the Genasys Protect website Sunday night, showing the emergency evacuation order area in red and the surrounding shaded area in blue under an advisory notice.

A quick-spreading brush fire fueled by strong winds in Kahikinui scorched 500 acres of South Maui land Sunday, but no injuries or structural damages have been reported, according to the Maui Fire Department.

In the last update provided by Maui County on Sunday night, it reported a containment percentage had not been determined and a portion of Piilani Highway — from mile marker 20 to 41 — remained closed, according to the Maui Emergency Management Agency.

Initially reported at 9:54 a.m., the brush fire began near the 24- and 25-mile marker area of Piilani Highway and grew from a quarter of an acre to 20 acres by 10:45 a.m., prompting MEMA to issue evacuation orders for 30 to 40 homes in Kahikinui, located on the leeward slopes of Haleakala.

The evacuation orders were released at around 11 a.m. through the Genasys Project app — MEMA's new evacuation planning and notification platform — MEMA alerts, an islandwide wireless emergency alert and door-to-door evacuation calls by the Maui Police Department and the MFD with instructions to head "makai (ocean) of the highway for evacuations" due to "a dangerous threat to life and property."

There are approximately 105 Kahikinui homestead lots in the area, but it remains unclear how many occupants live in the area and how many evacuated as of Sunday night. The American Red Cross also set up a shelter at King Kekaulike High School gymnasium that opened at 5:30 p.m. Sunday, with snacks and water provided by Maui Foodbank.

By Sunday evening, MFD said the fire kept spreading upslope and westward, mauka of Piilani Highway, through challenging terrain. On the Genasys app, an advisory was issued in the area from Keoneoio up through Haleakala National Park and extending to Wailua Falls.

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City and state officials responded Sunday, both with emergency proclamation orders in response to the ongoing fire.

At around 5:45 p.m. Maui County Mayor Richard Bissen signed an emergency proclamation giving the county access to federal assistance programs for individuals and public infrastructure, including funds for emergency response efforts “to ensure continued and effective countywide response,” the release said.

Lt. Gov. Sylvia Luke, serving as acting governor while Gov. Josh Green is traveling, signed the an emergency proclamation at around 6 p.m. that authorizes the adjutant general to activate the Hawaii National Guard to “deploy state resources as needed to aid in fire suppression and protect public health and safety, property and natural resources,” according to a news release.

It also suspends laws that could impede or delay the execution of emergency functions, the release said.

MFD initially responded to the fires but expanded response efforts throughout Sunday. Maui County officials said by Sunday night, six MFD engine companies, three minis, four air assets, two tankers and emergency callback personnel were actively responding.

MFD also said it would be working overnight to contain the fires.

The state Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife, the County Department of Public Works, Haleakala Ranch, Goodfellows and Alpha also provided resources and responded, according to a Sunday news release.

Sunday’s blazes come two months shy of the two-year anniversary of the wildfire in Lahaina that killed 102 people, burning more than 2,200 homes and 2,170 acres of property Aug. 8, 2023.

That fire, which was caused when downed power lines reenergized and ignited dried and overgrown vegetation near a utility pole, was also exacerbated by severe winds, according to previous reports by the Honolulu Star-Advertiser.

The Kahikinui area is more rural than Lahaina, located in South Maui and known for the Kahikinui Forest Reserve, comprised of about 2,900 acres of public land.

The coverage area of the evacuation order, according to the Genasys Project app, extends to the border of the Haleakala Observatories and engulfs the Kahikinui Hawaiian Home Land plots.

The state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands owns about 22,860 acres of the area, which are home to about a dozen households across 75 lots.

It's the only homestead in the state's 203,000-acre land trust for which leases were issued for raw land and where management of the area is placed solely in the hands of the homesteaders.



8 COMMENTS

