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Agriculture

Forest  
Service

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Station

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File Code: 1950

Date: March 28, 2011

Aloha,

I would like to invite you to participate in the planning of a research and education center proposed by the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSW). The proposed project will construct state of the art, environmentally sensitive facilities to support the vision and objectives of the newly established Laupahoehoe Unit (See Figure 1 Attachment) of the Hawai'i Experimental Tropical Forest (HETF). Following is a description of the Purpose and Need for Action and Proposed Action for your consideration, comments are greatly appreciated.

#### **Purpose and Need for Action**

The HETF was officially established in March, 2007. To meet its full potential as a site for research, education, and demonstration; construction of new research and education field station facilities is the next step. The primary purpose of the Laupahoehoe Facility Construction Project is to provide facilities that will support HETF research, demonstration, and educational functions serving the entire Pacific Basin. Facilities that meet these purposes are not currently available at the Laupahoehoe site. For more information related to the establishment and vision of the HETF see: <http://www.hetf.us/>

#### **Location of the Project**

The proposed facilities would be located in Hawai'i County, approximately 2 miles SSW of the town of Laupahoehoe. A location map of the Laupahoehoe Unit and a more detailed map of the proposed project area can be found in Figures 1 and 2.

#### **Proposed Action**

As part of the **Laupahoehoe Facility Construction Project**, PSW is proposing to conduct the following activities:

- Upgrades to existing facilities located on Forest Service owned TMK parcel numbers 336006082 and 336006016. Upgrades include interior reconfiguration for offices/living space, ADA accessibility, construction of additional garage/workshop, remodeling of existing carport into a classroom, construction of an additional toilet building, existing driveway repair, new driveway construction, expansion of septic tank and drainfield, installation of additional photovoltaic arrays and related equipment (back-up generator, batteries), and landscaping.
- Construction of an additional dormitory on Forest Service owned TMK parcel number 336006016 (10 person capacity) with new driveway access from existing facilities.
- Driveway construction connecting TMK parcel numbers 336006016, 336006082, and possibly Forest Service owned TMK parcel number 336006014. These parcels are lands designated as Agricultural. The facilities on these parcels will serve as the administrative headquarters (HQ) for the Laupahoehoe Unit, HETF.



- Supply necessary electric power to these above facilities through on-site solar electric generation with back-up generator; no new electrical transmission lines are proposed.
- Supply necessary water to these above facilities through rain water catchment systems and commercial potable water hauling. This will require installation of water holding tanks and buried distribution lines.
- Construction of additional facilities on 20 acre leased parcel located on State of Hawai'i owned TMK parcel number 336006046. Facilities would be located on lands designated as Agricultural. Facilities include: open sided shelter for outdoor education activities, 2 stall vault toilet facilities, storage building, driveway, parking lot (approximately 10 vehicle capacity), and gate and fencing around new facilities. These facilities are not expected to exceed approximately 3 acres in size.
- Develop an invasive species vehicle wash station at the Laupahoehoe Public School or other developed site. Objective is to wash and collect invasive plant seeds from the undersides of vehicles before they enter the experimental forest area.
- Provide access to the proposed facilities as follows:
  - Access to HQ facilities at TMK parcel numbers 336006014, 336006016, and 33600682 would be via existing county roads.
  - Access to the education and research staging site at the 20 acre leased parcel located on State of Hawai'i owned TMK parcel number 336006046 would use one of these alternatives:
    1. Maintain and improve current access route, which uses Manowaiopae Homestead Road (solid blue and yellow lines on figure 2). Improvements to the County segment (blue line on figure 2) would include installing a new culvert at the low water crossing, some repaving of the existing roadway within the existing right of way, and vegetation management to provide safe lines of sight. Improvements to the segments crossing the Kamehameha Schools (KS) and State of Hawai'i lands (yellow and brown lines on figure 2, respectively) would include several small cuts and fills to reduce road grade steepness, installation of additional small culverts as needed, placement of gravel surfacing and vegetation management to provide safe lines of sight. These route segments would be single lane gravel with turnouts.
    2. Use Manowaiopae Homestead Road to Spencer Road (red solid line on figure 2) to primitive road (amber solid line of figure 2), then construct a new roadway within existing county right-of-way from end of existing primitive road to the boundary of the KS property (dashed red line on figure 2), then construct a new roadway on KS private land (dashed yellow line on figure 2) to an existing road on KS land (solid yellow line on figure 2). The new roadway from Spencer Road to the KS boundary would be a single lane pavement with turnouts for passing oncoming vehicles, and would require three stream crossings, likely accomplished by one low-water crossing and two culverts. The existing primitive road segment between Spencer Road and the new roadway would be upgraded to a single lane paved way. The new roadway from the KS boundary to the existing road would be single lane road with gravel surface and would require a large culvert or a low water crossing. Improvements to the segments crossing the KS and State of Hawai'i lands (yellow and brown lines on figure 2, respectively) would include several small cuts and fills to reduce road grade steepness, installation of additional small culverts as needed, placement of gravel surfacing and vegetation management to provide safe lines of sight. These route segments would be single lane gravel with turnouts.

## Comments

In order to achieve the best possible outcome for people and the environment as a result of this project, please contribute your issues, concerns, suggestions, or additional information you may have regarding this project to: Melissa K. Dean, HETF Coordinator, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station at Hilo, Institute of Pacific Island Forestry, 60 Nowelo Street, Hilo, Hawaii 96720 or by email at:

[hawaiiexperimentalforest@fs.fed.us](mailto:hawaiiexperimentalforest@fs.fed.us). Questions about this Proposal should be directed to Melissa K. Dean at the same address or by phone at (808) 854-2651.

Comments which are site specific or are based on your knowledge of the area will better help us develop and evaluate alternatives to this Proposed Action. Although comments are welcome throughout the planning process, providing your comments by May 3, 2011 will allow time to consider your input during alternatives development and analysis. Please note comments are a matter of public record and as such may be provided to interested parties upon request.

Sincerely,

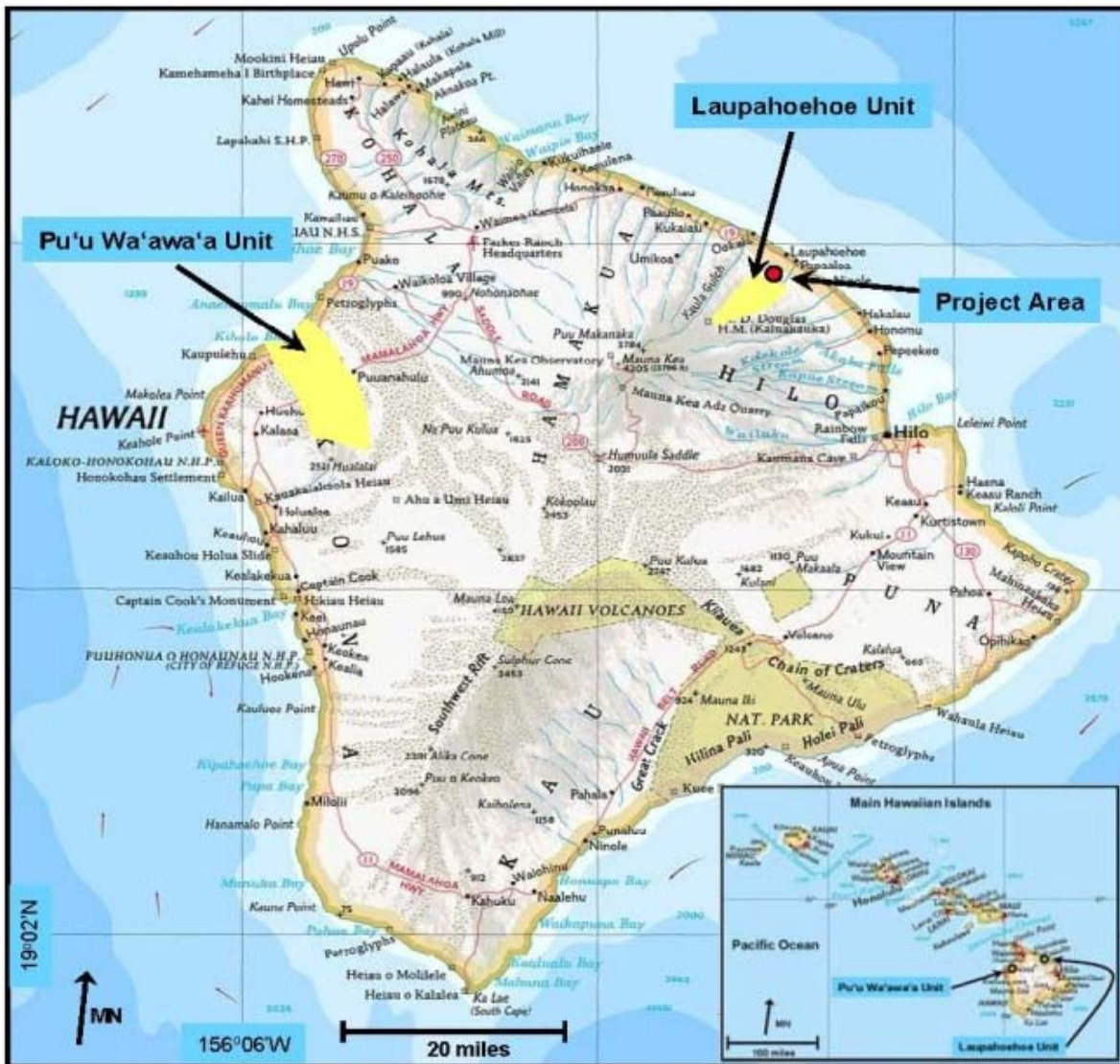
*/s/ Hao Tran for*

DEANNA J. STOUWER  
Station Director

cc: Jerry W Carlson, Pat Manley, John Slown

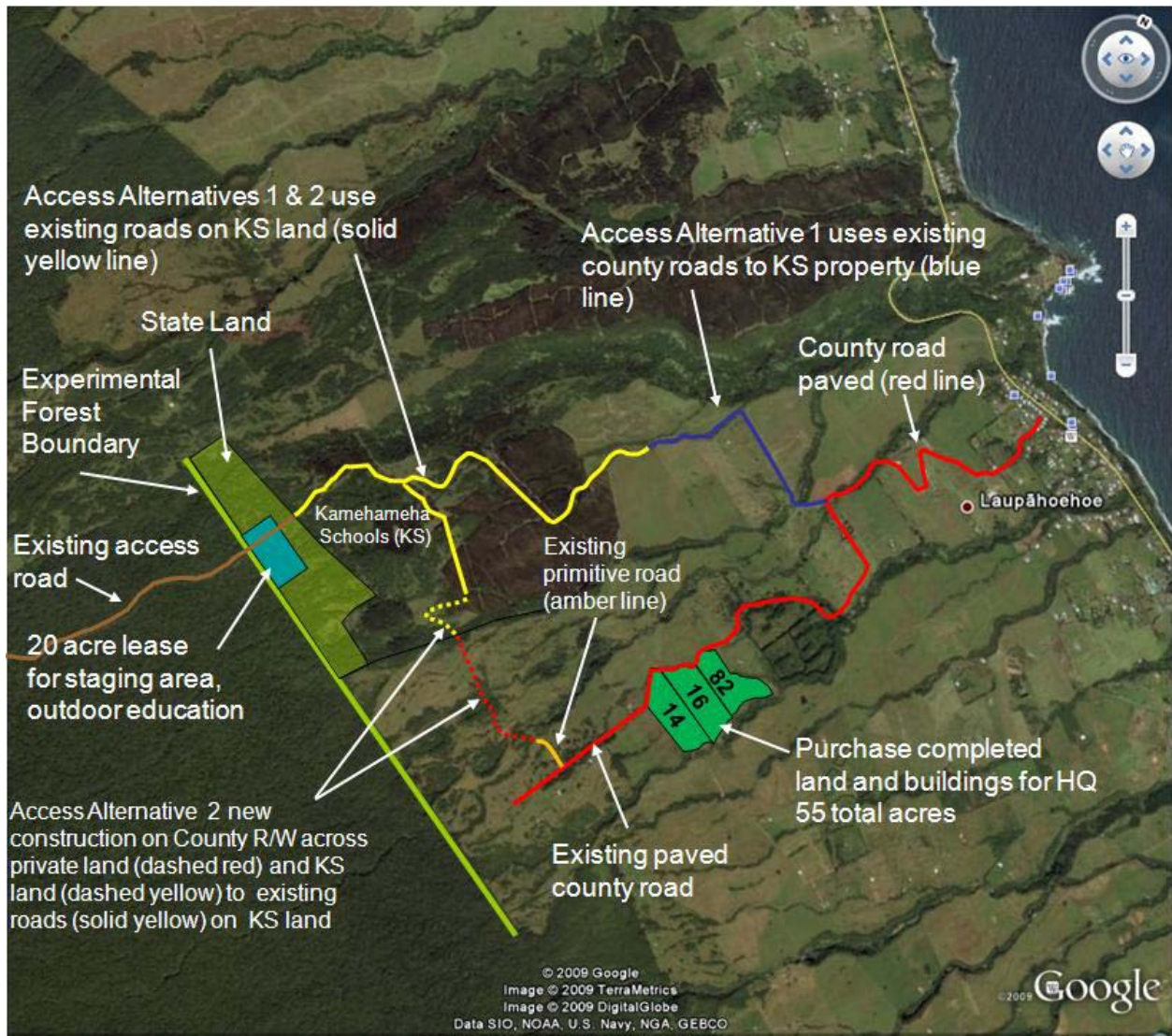
Encl.

Figure 1. Laupahoehoe Facility Construction Project Area Location



## Laupahoehoe Facility Construction Project

Figure 2. Access Alternatives and site locations.



Parcels labeled "14, 16, and 82" are TMK parcel numbers 366006014, 366006016, and 36006082. Parcel labeled "State Land" is TMK parcel number 366006046