



# United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park  
Post Office Box 52  
Hawaii National Park, Hawai'i 96718

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
HAVO 1.B. (L7617)

February 23, 2012

Dear Interested Party:

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park has several planning efforts underway in 2012. In order to keep you informed about our projects, we would like to provide you with the following planning update and seek your comments on two new planning projects scheduled for the coming year.

## *New Projects*

### Mission Critical Administrative Aviation Plan/Environmental Assessment

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park has an important mission that includes protecting and restoring park resources. In order to accomplish our mission, park staff and partners occasionally utilize aircraft to carry out the work. Helicopters are used in particular because they are an essential tool for activities such as volcanic monitoring of eruptive activity and hazards, controlling invasive species, suppressing wildland fires, and search and rescue operations in the backcountry.

The underlying purpose of all of these activities is to provide for public safety and health and for resource protection and restoration. Use of aircraft allows park staff and cooperators to accomplish these activities in a safe, timely, and efficient manner while minimizing the impacts to the park's natural and cultural resources and the visitor experience.

The park is developing a plan (Mission Critical Administrative Aviation Plan) and accompanying Environmental Assessment (EA) to document any potential impacts of its aviation operations. The objectives of the plan are to (1) ensure the safety of park visitors and staff and the public through monitoring of volcanic hazards and safe and timely response to eruptions, wildfires and backcountry emergencies; (2) ensure the ability to effectively protect and restore natural and cultural resources; (3) minimize any impacts to park resources and values such as soundscapes and visitor experience; (4) ensure compliance with the National Park Service policies and federal regulations; and, (5) maximize efficiency of flights and minimize costs to park operations.

To this end, park staff and partners have started working on a plan that will provide internal park guidance for utilizing aircraft to conduct our work where necessary. This plan will formalize best management practices, define sensitive areas to avoid, and include mitigation measures to reduce any potential impact of the park's operational use of aviation.

PLEASE NOTE: This plan/EA will guide internal NPS aviation activities occurring within the park and those of contract aircraft doing business for the park only, *not* the activities of commercial air tours or general aviation aircraft. An Air Tour Management Plan (ATMP)/EIS to address commercial air tours flying over the park is being developed through a separate process and is discussed below.

The public is invited to comment on the park's intent to develop a Mission Critical Administrative Aviation Plan/Environmental Assessment (plan/EA) for Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. Your observations and suggestions are appreciated.



If you would like to provide comments or suggestions for us to consider during the development this plan/EA, you may submit comments on-line at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/havo>. You may also mail your comments to the park, Attn: Superintendent, PO Box 52, Hawaii NP, HI 96718-0052. Please send us comments by March 26, 2012.

#### Bicycle Use in Limited Areas at Kahuku Unit

The Palm Trail at the Kahuku Unit is currently used as a trail and has occasional administrative vehicle use. The park is proposing to allow bicycles to utilize the main road in Kahuku from the main park gate up to the Palm Trail parking area and then continue onto the Palm Trail/Road. If you would like to provide any comments on this proposed bicycle use at the Kahuku Unit on the main road and the Palm Trail/Road, please submit comments on-line at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/havo> or send your comments to the park, Attn: Superintendent at the above address by March 26, 2012.

Before including your address, telephone number, electronic mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comments on any of the projects, you should be aware that your entire comment (including your personal identifying information) may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us to withhold your personal identifying information from public review by checking the box "keep my contact information private," we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

#### *Ongoing Project Updates*

##### General Management Plan/Wilderness Study/Environmental Impact Statement

In the fall of 2011, three preliminary action alternatives were presented for public review. Comments were also solicited as part of formal public scoping regarding wilderness as the GMP/EIS was expanded to include a Wilderness Study. The Wilderness Study will determine if any NPS-managed lands within the park should be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System as part of the General Management Plan. During the five-month public comment period, the park received more than 300 comments via talk-story sessions, mail, email, and through the plan's website. A summary of the 2011 public comments is now available online at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/havogmp>. Click on 'Document List' to see the summary. We value your input as the park moves forward with refining alternatives for the plan, selecting a preferred alternative, and writing the draft General Management Plan, Wilderness Study, and Environmental Impact Statement.

##### Air Tour Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement

The park has been working on an Air Tour Management Plan (ATMP) and Environmental Impact Statement to manage air tours at the park since 2005. The Federal Aviation Administration serves as the lead agency on this project. In the spring of 2011, the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Park Service presented four preliminary draft action alternatives for formal public review and comment. The park received 180 electronic or written comments (e.g. letters, website submissions and e-mails) and comments from 79 participants at three public meetings. A summary of 2011 ATMP public comments is available on-line at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=36002> Click on 'Document List' to see the summary after March 15. We appreciate your continued involvement in the ATMP process as the FAA and the NPS move forward with refining alternatives, selecting a preferred alternative, and writing a draft Air Tour Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

If you would like to be removed from our mailing list or if your contact information has changed, please let us know. You can mail us the updated information or submit it at the following website: <http://www.nps.gov/havo/parkmgmt/plan.htm> Click on the link near the top for address update/removal.

Sincerely,



Cynthia L. Orlando  
Superintendent