



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

October 30, 2014

Dr. Willie R. Taylor
Director, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street Northwest
Washington, DC 20240

RE: Department of the Interior National Park Service Request for Alternative Arrangements for Emergency Access Route along the Lava-Covered Section of Chain of Craters Kalapana Road

Dear Dr. Taylor:

CEQ is authorizing alternative arrangements in accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 1506.11 for the proposed Chain of Craters Road Kalapana Road Project outlined in your attached letter and environmental review.

Specifically, you have requested alternative arrangements that provide for immediate publication of the environmental review to proceed with the proposed action to provide an emergency access route to be used over an extended period of time following the original Chain of Craters Kalapana Road alignment to accommodate essential two-way traffic with crushed aggregate surfacing for a total of 5.5 miles within the park. The need for immediate action is based on expected lava flows that threaten the community of Pahoia and could cut off all access to the Lower Puna community with lava flows impacting existing access routes as early as October 31, 2014. The environmental review prepared by the National Park Service, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, considered:

- a. alternatives available to provide emergency access to address the immediate need for action in light of the projected impacts from lava flows on the health and safety of more than 8,000 people requiring access into and out of the Lower Puna area communities during the time that lava flows would eliminate current land based access and the lack of other reliable access as the area does not have access to a viable harbor or airstrip, and helicopter access is frequently limited by weather conditions;
- b. alternative routes as well as alternatives regarding the composition, size, and alignment of the emergency access road;
- c. potential effects on the communities and environmental resources including impacts from invasive species and impacts on endangered species (particularly the Nene, also known as the Hawaiian goose, and Hawaiian petrels), park visitors and operations, air quality, cultural resources, and soundscapes;

- d. ongoing outreach to local citizens, state and local authorities, and consultations with affected agencies including the ongoing consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Hawai'i State Historic Preservation Division;
- e. mitigation measures that include following the alignment and remaining within the known corridor of disturbance; and
- f. commitments to monitor implementation and impacts.

Alternative arrangements that include the following measures are approved:

- a. continue to enhance public and stakeholder engagement during the implementation of the proposed action to include participating in public information meetings on the lava flows currently held on a weekly basis, soliciting and responding to public comments via the National Park Services' Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) site, and periodically updating the Kupuna Consultation Group on the status of the project;
- b. provide responses to public comments received and periodic reports on the results of the monitoring commitments;
- c. prepare the NEPA review (analysis and documentation) for the future of the emergency access road after the emergency ends as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) accompanying the development of the General Management Plan or as a separate NEPA review in the event the EIS for the GMP is delayed; and
- d. continue consulting with affected agencies and stakeholders, adhere to mitigation and monitoring requirements committed to during consultations, and address future consultation or compliance actions as required.

We appreciate your personal attention to this matter and will work with you as you continue to monitor this important work.

Sincerely,



Horst G. Gregzmiel
Associate Director for NEPA Oversight