



# Hawaii Tourism Authority

Hawaii Convention Center, 1801 Kalakaua Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii 96815  
Website: [www.hawaii.gov/tourism](http://www.hawaii.gov/tourism)

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### HTA INITIATES NATURAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

HONOLULU -- The Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) has launched a natural resources program to protect and enhance the natural environment attractions that draw visitors to our islands. Representatives from Hawaii's various environmental groups and organizations, including The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Hawaii Ecotourism Association and the State of Hawaii Departments of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT), have been acting as advisors to the HTA on its natural environment initiatives which include county-specific projects, a state-wide natural resources assessment, a survey of state parks and the allocation of \$1,000,000 from the transient accommodations tax to the DLNR for park and trail improvements.

The county specific projects included in the first year of the natural resources program were recommended by the respective mayor of each of the counties. The County of Hawaii will conduct a restoration of the "Old Volcano Trail" and establish a network of open space, woodlands, wildlife habitats, parks and other natural areas. The County of Kauai has chosen to rejuvenate the Fern Grotto and Park. The County of Maui has chosen to revitalize and restore Kō'ie'ie Loko I'a, the ancient royal Hawaiian Fishpond located at Kalepolepo Park in Kihei, Maui. The County will also direct efforts towards the Kapahu Living Farm and Alaeiki Hale Ku'ai, an interrelated environmental and cultural project involving the restoration of historic taro ponds and the cultivation of taro and other traditional crops in the Kipahulu region. The project includes plans to build a structure next to the National Park Visitor Center that will house interpretive programs, demonstrations of traditional Hawaiian crafts, and sales of products grown at the farm.

The natural resources assessment project contracted by HTA is an in-depth inventory and assessment of approximately 100 natural resource sites frequented by tourists on the six major Hawaiian Islands. Some of the sites included in the project are the Wailua River State Park on Kauai, the Iao Valley State Monument on Maui, the Pali Lookout on Oahu, and Akaka Falls on the Big Island. The project will assess the quality of natural resource areas frequented by visitors; identify and prioritize needed areas of improvement; and recommend actions to improve natural resource areas. If members of the community would like to add their input they are encouraged to contact Vincent Shigekuni or Sara Slovin of PBR Hawaii at (808) 521-5631 or [sslovin@pbrhawaii.com](mailto:sslovin@pbrhawaii.com).

On-site surveys are currently being conducted to determine user counts at State parks, including the ratio of visitors to residents using the parks. The survey will enable the identification of those areas most frequented by visitors and the resulting impact on those sites in order to assist in determining an equitable allocation of tourism resources.

HTA has rounded out the initial efforts of the natural resources program by dispatching \$1 million from the transient accommodations tax collections to the DLNR. The funds will be used to improve State parks and trails that are frequented by visitors. The HTA and the Natural Resources Advisory Group have also recently approved long-range, prioritized plans for both parks and trails. Ninety percent of the funds will support park improvements and ten percent will go towards the State's trails system as directed by law.

The Hawaii Tourism Authority was created in 1998 to ensure a successful visitor industry well into the future. Its mission is to manage the strategic growth of Hawaii's visitor industry in a manner consistent with our economic goal, cultural values, preservation of natural resources and community interests of the people of Hawaii. For more information on HTA and its programs, visit the HTA website at [www.hawaii.gov/tourism](http://www.hawaii.gov/tourism).

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