

# News Release

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office  
300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3-122  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96850

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For Immediate Release

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## **Final Environmental Assessment and FONSI for Lehua Island Project Available**

Honolulu, Hawai'i – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced the availability of the Final Environmental Assessment for the proposed Lehua Island Ecosystem Restoration Project. The Final EA, together with an accompanying Finding of No Significant Impact, describe the proposed action and are available at [www.fws.gov/pacificislands](http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands). The proposed action will be implemented by the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Forestry and Wildlife, the co-lead on the Service's Final EA, in partnership with the Lehua Island Restoration Steering Committee.

The Service released a draft EA for the project in May 2017 and solicited public comments. The Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources' DOFAW, along with the diverse Lehua Island Restoration Steering Committee, also previously released a draft environmental assessment via the State of Hawai'i, Department of Health, Office of Environmental Control, to gather public comment. They also hosted several public meetings on Kauai in March 2017.

The Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources' DOFAW have released their associated Final EA in the July 23, *Environmental Notice*. A final public information meeting will be held on Kaua'i at the Waimea Neighborhood Community Center on Tuesday, July 25 from 6-8 p.m.

Lehua Island is an uninhabited island located about 19 miles west of Kaua'i and less than a mile north of Ni'ihau. The island is administered by the U.S. Coast Guard and managed by the DLNR as a State Seabird Sanctuary. Lehua supports one of the largest and most diverse seabird colonies in the main Hawaiian Islands, but predation from invasive rats have caused negative and wide-ranging impacts to native plants and birds.

Invasive rats on this small island have far reaching impacts to the native ecosystem. They eat native seabird eggs, chicks and adults as well as destroy the island's native plants and seeds. If rats are eradicated and the threat of predation removed, more than 17 seabird species could rely on the island as a safe place to rest or raise their young, including the endangered band-rumped storm petrel, endangered Hawaiian petrel, and threatened Newell's shearwater. In addition, 25 native plants, including endemic species occurring nowhere else in the world, call this island home.

The proposed action involves broadcasting bait pellets containing the rodenticide diphacinone, and potentially brodifacoum if necessary, into all rat territories on Lehua Island. Rat eradication would occur in the summer dry season to maximize the probability of success by targeting the rats when food resources are lowest and rat abundance is declining. Conducting the operation during this period will also minimize the risk of rain washing rodenticide into the ocean. Residual bait pellets break down quickly in the environment and have low and extremely low solubility in water – less than 10 parts per million could ever be detected in water and any rodenticide that entered the water would sink to the ocean floor, minimizing time in the water column. Additionally, lab trials have demonstrated that fish are unlikely to ingest the residual bait. Once rats are confirmed to have been removed from the island, no additional rodenticide would be needed. The proposed action is modeled on successful island rat eradication efforts worldwide.

The project minimizes risks to non-target species by avoiding the nesting season of vulnerable seabirds, using equipment to reduce bait entry into the ocean, following permit restrictions and careful application of bait pellets by State of Hawai‘i certified pesticide applicators. The project aims to use the smallest amount of rodenticide necessary while minimizing the risks to other species.

Representatives from the following conservation organizations, community groups and agencies support and advise the project management team for the restoration of Lehua Island and comprise the multidisciplinary Lehua Island Restoration Steering Committee:

[Hawai‘i Dept. of Land and Natural Resources-Division of Forestry and Wildlife;](#)  
[Island Conservation;](#)

[National Tropical Botanical Gardens;](#)

Owners of Ni‘ihau;

[U.S. Coast Guard;](#)

[U.S. Dept. of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services;](#) and

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.](#)

Other project supporters include the Kaua‘i Endangered Seabird Recovery Project, Pacific Rim Conservation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Bell Laboratories and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. The partners and supporters especially acknowledge the contributions of the owners of Ni‘ihau and the Ni‘ihau community in helping to evaluate this restoration opportunity.

The Final EA and FONSI are available for review at: [www.fws.gov/pacificislands](http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands). Hardcopies are available by request, please send your request to: [restore\\_lehua@fws.gov](mailto:restore_lehua@fws.gov) or via mail to: Attn: Restore\_Lehua, USFWS - Pacific Islands Fish & Wildlife Office, 300 Ala Moana Blvd, Ste. 3-122, Honolulu, HI, 96850

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**(All images/video courtesy: Hawai‘i DLNR unless otherwise stated)**

[Video News Release](#)

[HD aerials and SOTS](#)

[Aerial photographs of Lehua](#)  
[Photographs of bait test trials \(9-16-15\)](#)  
[Island Conservation Lehua Photographs \(© Island Conservation\)](#)  
[Video News Release on bait test trials \(9-16-15\)](#)

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