

Management Plan Review

Extending Sanctuary Focus Areas to Pīla'a, Kaua'i



Photo: Noelle Shaughnessy

The threatened *honu* (green sea turtle) nests at Pīla'a Beach.



Photo: Paul Wong

The vulnerable and endemic *nēnē* is one of four native waterbirds found in Pīla'a.



Photo: Ed Lyman

Endangered *ʻĪlioheʻioheʻio* (Hawaiian monk seals) frequent the area.

Restoring the nearshore habitat for traditional subsistence harvesting

The lagoons and reefs fronting Pīla'a ahupua'a once sustained subsistence harvesting of fish, crustaceans and limu by Hawaiians.

The degraded reef, lagoon and streams in Pīla'a offer a unique opportunity to employ modern science and traditional Hawaiian management practices to restore the habitat to a state of optimum reef health and appropriate levels of subsistence harvest of marine resources.

Cultural significance

The reefs fronting the ahupua'a of Kāhili, East and West Waiakalua, and Pīla'a are traditional and customary areas for Hawaiians to gather a variety of species of reef fish and crustaceans. The east reef, in particular, is well-known for traditional harvesting of several edible seaweeds. The streams that feed into these reefs are habitat for native 'o'opu

(Hawaiian gobies) which are traditionally harvested for food and use in ceremonies. In addition to the harvesting of aquatic and marine species that the area supported, East and West Waiakalua were terraced and irrigated for agricultural use.

Biological significance

The coastal environment in Pīla'a is home to several key species, many of which are threatened:

- *ʻĪlioheʻioheʻio* (Hawaiian monk seals) frequent the area, particularly near the Kīlauea Point National Wildlife Refuge, and at a monk seal pupping site just east of Pīla'a.
- *Honu* (green sea turtles) nest on Pīla'a beach.
- Native freshwater fish species inhabit Pīla'a stream, including 3 endemic goby species.
- Four native bird species inhabit the adjacent Pu'u Ka 'Ele Reservoir including the vulnerable endemic *nēnē*.

Threats to Species and Habitats in Pīla'a

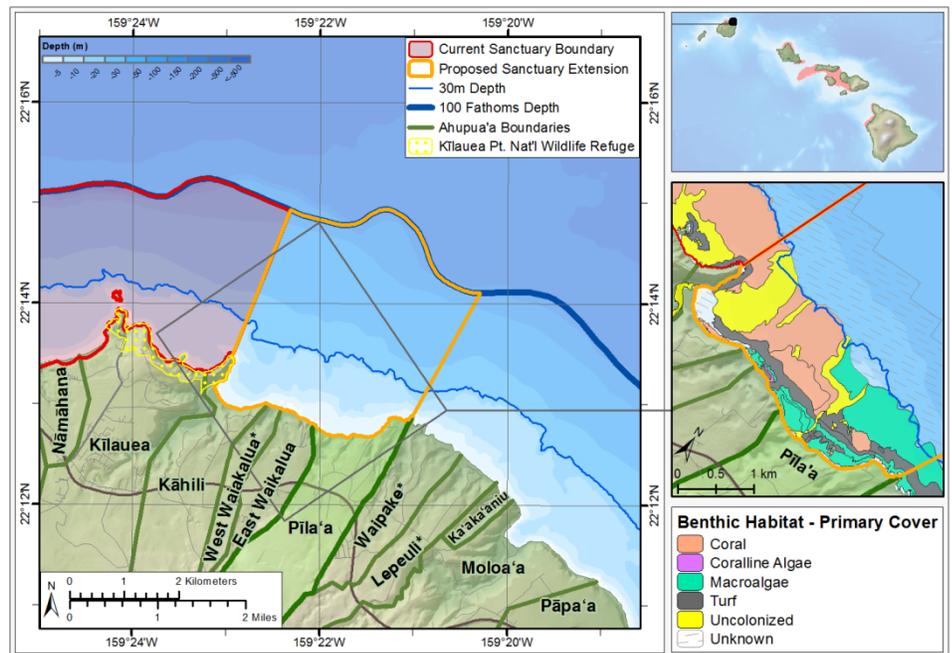
- *Honu*, (green sea turtles) which nest in the area, are listed on the Endangered Species List as a threatened species due in part to the tumor-causing papilloma virus.
- *ʻĪlioheʻioheʻio* (Hawaiian monk seals), which frequent the area and have a pupping site nearby, are listed as an endangered species, having only 1,200 individuals worldwide.
- As a result of construction on private land in Pīla'a between 1997 and 2001, water quality in the coastal streams flowing into the reef and lagoon was severely degraded, contributing to a significant loss of coral cover.
- Three of the waterbirds found in the area are endangered, and the goby species are threatened by fin rot disease, parasitic leeches and competition from non-native species.

What are the sanctuary boundaries in Pīla‘a?

The current sanctuary boundary on the north shore of Kaua‘i extends from Kailliu Point eastward to Mokolea Point out to the 100-fathom (600 ft.) isobath.

The sanctuary proposes to adjust the eastern-boundary on the north shore of Kaua‘i from Mōkōlea Point to Kepuhi Point to include Kāhili, West Waiakalua, East Waiakalua and Pīla‘a ahupua‘a.

The total area of the proposed boundary expansion would be approximately five square miles. The proposed sanctuary area would be used to pilot traditional marine management approaches along with science-informed management to restore the degraded coral reef ecosystem.



Proposed boundary adjustment at Pīla‘a.

How will the sanctuary help restore nearshore habitat in Pīla‘a?

The sanctuary has identified Pīla‘a as one of four Sanctuary Focus Areas statewide. The proposed Pīla‘a Action Plan describes a focused sanctuary initiative to restore the nearshore ecosystem in the Pīla‘a ahupua‘a.

The sanctuary plans to work with partners, including the University of Hawai‘i and Kaua‘i Community College, to gather and inventory scientific and cultural information, such as marine and cultural resource assessments, to characterize the current condition of Pīla‘a. This information will inform restoration of the coral reef and lagoon habitats.



Photo:3 Kauai/Communities/2013

The sanctuary will work with local partners to implement place-based restoration.

How will the sanctuary’s proposed plan affect Pīla‘a?

The implementation of a restoration plan in Pīla‘a will benefit the nearshore habitat, from the estuary out to the reef. It will also benefit the coral reef into which it flows, and the marine life the reef supports.

As reef and estuary health is improved in Pīla‘a, the cultural practices of sustainably harvesting fish, crustaceans and limu from the reefs will be renewed.

Will new regulations be introduced?

New and revised sanctuary-wide regulations will apply in existing sanctuary areas as well as in proposed boundary additions. A boundary change is proposed for Pīla‘a and is illustrated in the figure above.

How will sanctuary regulations change?

The revisions to the current sanctuary-wide regulations, proposed under Alternative 2, 3 and 4, would:

- (1) Clarify humpback whale approach regulation ;
- (2) Combine the two regulations prohibiting the taking and possession of humpback whales into one regulation;
- (3) Remove the prohibition against discharge in the sanctuary;
- (4) Remove the prohibition against discharging from outside the sanctuary anything that enters and injures a sanctuary resource;
- (5) Remove the prohibition on altering submerged lands;
- (6) Add the authority to issue sanctuary permits and authorizations; and
- (7) Add sanctuary-wide regulations prohibiting the disturbance of submerged cultural and maritime heritage resources.

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary is jointly managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the State of Hawai‘i.

<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

