

HAWAII

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT
ACTION PLAN 2026 - 2028

Halehale Haulani ke ano kapu o Lononuiākea kū I ka moana

*Haulani, ruler and
chief of highest
reverence of
Lononuiākea
standing in the sea.*

One need not be of high social rank or status but instead can rise to greatness by working hard and aspiring to the highest. In Hawai'i, mana can be both ascribed or achieved. In the example of Kamehameha, this ruling Chief of his time was not born into the highest and most sacred of chiefly ranking. He instead rose to greatness by virtue of his deeds, feats and accomplishments. His name is honored in the highest as the name to carry all of the islands.

LEIMOANA COLLECTION

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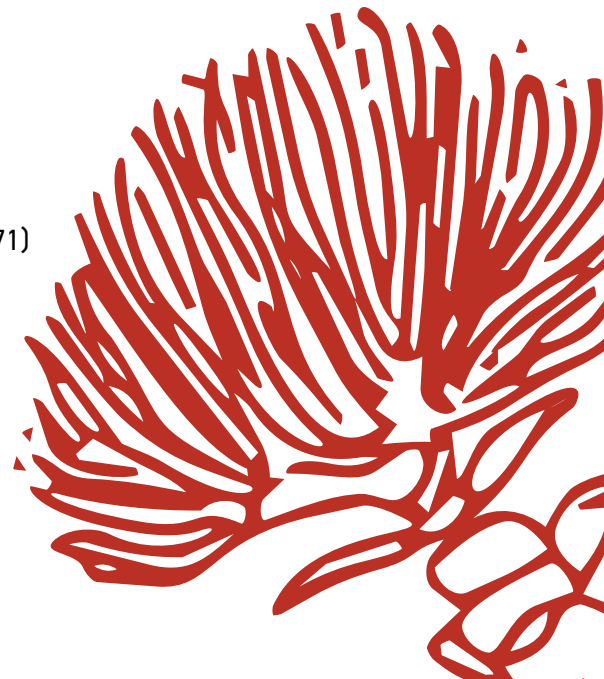
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01. PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

Hawai‘i Island’s relationship with tourism is shaped by its scale, diversity, and distinct identities of the many communities across its six moku. From volcanic landscapes to former plantation towns, paniolo country, coastal fisheries, and thriving cultural centers, the island offers a breadth and depth of ecosystems and experiences unlike anywhere else in Hawai‘i. Yet across engagements for this plan, stakeholders described to the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority (HTA) a perspective that emerged consistently across the island’s wide swaths: although Hawai‘i Island is big, the pressures of tourism are felt in very specific places and moments, and the ability to manage those pressures has not kept pace with the evolving size and characteristics of tourism on the island.

Communities shared stories reflecting this perspective. In some areas, visitor activity overwhelms narrow roads, limited parking, or sensitive ecosystems; in others, the issue is not volume but **visitors arriving without the proper orientation to wholly or safely experience the place**, leading to risky behavior, unintended cultural missteps, or strain on community spaces. Stakeholders from Ka‘ū to North Kohala noted that unmanaged movement, rather than total numbers, is what shapes the daily experience of tourism: sudden congestion at popular overlooks, unplanned detours into neighborhoods, trespassing driven by guidebook shortcuts and social media, or long lines at places with aging facilities. Industry partners echoed this, describing fragmented messaging and uneven expectations that can leave visitors confused about what they are experiencing, denying them the transformative experience that community members and visitor industry representatives alike expressed as deeply valuable for visitors.

At the same time, stakeholders emphasized Hawai‘i Island’s strengths: strong community stewardship, vibrant cultural institutions, excellent resorts, locally rooted experiences in agriculture and the arts, and County partners deeply engaged in regenerative tourism. Many noted that visitors are increasingly seeking learning, meaning, and connection, and that Hawai‘i Island is well-positioned to offer it **if the systems that support visitor movement, preparation, and decision-making are clear, cohesive, and coordinated.**

The work ahead is not just about reducing strain, but about **aligning tourism more fully with the values, capacities, people, and mo‘olelo (narratives) of the island**, ensuring that visitors understand, respect, and deeply experience landscapes they enter and the communities who care for them. This understanding reflects the core intent of **destination management** statewide: supporting resident well-being, stewarding natural and cultural resources, strengthening coordination, and enhancing the visitor experience.

This Hawai‘i Island Destination Management Action Plan (DMAP) builds on these principles. It responds to what Hawai‘i Island asked for: practical, place-specific actions; stronger systems for visitor orientation and communication; and management that is collaborative, visible, and grounded in localized *‘ike* (knowledge). Through this collective effort, Hawai‘i Island can guide tourism in a way that honors its places, supports its communities, and enhances the lives of those who come to be transformed by their experience here.

ALIGNMENT WITH HAWAI‘I’S STATEWIDE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The work of **destination management** on Hawai‘i Island is part of a broad statewide mandate established under Chapter 201b-3(a)(14), Hawai‘i Revised Statutes, which directs Hawai‘i Tourism Authority (HTA) to carry out and coordinate “destination management” in Hawai‘i, defined in the statute as:

A collaborative and coordinated process with public, private, and community stakeholders to manage the various elements of a visitor destination in order to:

- Create, implement, and monitor strategies that attract targeted visitor markets and improve visitor experiences;
- Improve natural and cultural resources valued by Hawai‘i residents and visitors;
- Develop and maintain tourism-related infrastructure to prevent overcrowding and overtaxing sites and resources; and
- Ensure that the provision of services enhances the visitor experience.

The same engagement that informed this plan shaped a collective **vision** for destination management and the **guiding principles** underlying every island’s DMAP. Conversations across the *pae ‘āina* (archipelago), including those held on Hawai‘i Island, helped define this shared vision for tourism stewardship:

“Destination management in Hawai‘i is rooted in deliberate, ongoing stewardship that honors ‘āina, culture, and community as the foundations of both our beloved home and our world-renowned visitor destination. Acting collaboratively as government, industry, residents, and visitors, we embrace the kuleana (responsibility) to guide tourism into greater harmony with Hawai‘i’s people and places, reducing strain while regenerating reciprocity, connection, and abundance for generations to come.”

1. Kūmaka ka ‘ikena iā Hi‘ilawe
Ka papa lohi mai a‘o Maukele

2. Pakele mai au i ka nui manu
Hau wala‘au nei puni Waip‘o

3. ‘A‘ole nō wau e loa‘a mai
A he uhiwai au no ke kuahiwi

4. He hiwahiwa au na ka makua
A he lei ā‘ī na ke kupuna

Hi‘ilawe

The statewide vision is expressed through four guiding principles:

PRINCIPLE	MEANING	PRACTICE
MĀLAMA Stewardship <i>of ‘Āina (Land) and Culture</i>	Caring for what sustains and distinguishes Hawai‘i (its lands, waters, and living heritage) through protection and restoration.	Intentional, strategic action that advances protection, restoration, and resource management to heal ecosystems, safeguard cultural sites and practices, and care for Hawai‘i’s storied places.
LAULIMA Collaboration <i>and Accountability</i>	Acting together in shared <i>kuleana</i> (responsibility) across community, industry, and government agencies.	Interagency coordination, community governance, transparent data, and adaptive management that ensure alignment, accountability, and sustained communication with stakeholders.
LŌKAHI Harmony <i>and Reciprocity</i>	Cultivating relationships among residents, visitors, and ‘āina through respect, care, connection, and attentive response to strain.	Visitor engagement, place-based interpretation, stewardship opportunities, and responsive visitor management that deepen connection to place, reinforce care for communities and ‘āina, and address tourism-related strain as it emerges.
HO‘ŌLA Regeneration <i>and Growth of What is Good</i>	Nurturing the conditions for abundance so tourism replenishes rather than depletes.	Reinvestment of revenues, strengthened infrastructure and labor force, and regenerative tourism practices that respect ‘āina, support local businesses, operationalize traditional knowledge, and advance community well-being.

Rather than dictating the structure of this plan, these statewide principles ground its overall approach to **destination management**. They inform the strategies, objectives, and actions that follow, guiding how statewide priorities are translated into place-based solutions for Hawai‘i Island.

"HI'ILAWÉ"

A SONG CELEBRATING MOKU O KEAWE BY SAM LI'A KALAINAINA
 THIS MELE TELLS OF A LOVE STORY AT HI'ILAWÉ—THE TALLEST
 WATERFALL IN HAWAI'I—AND WAI'O'ULU, TWO WATERFALLS IN
 WAIPI'O VALLEY ON MOKU O KEAWE

NOTE: While the DMAP presents a structured, time-bound action plan for addressing priority management needs, HTA regularly advances destination management through multiple efforts, programs, initiatives, and functions that support the same statutory objectives and guiding statewide principles. These include visitor education and post-arrival marketing (VEPAM), pre-arrival messaging, resident engagement, product development, and stewardship and community capacity-building initiatives such as HTA's Community Partnership Programs (CPP) and Community Tourism Collaborative (CTC) programs. Although these efforts are only occasionally referenced within this DMAP, they remain integral to how destination management is carried out in practice and how community well-being, visitor satisfaction, and stewardship outcomes are shaped over time.

NOTE: A number of existing Hawai'i Island plans including the *Hawai'i Island Tourism Strategic Plan 2020–2025* and the *County of Hawai'i General Plan 2045 Draft 2* emphasize the need to strengthen stewardship of natural and cultural resources, advance regenerative tourism products and policies, elevate community well-being, and ensure infrastructure and services keep pace with both resident and visitor use. This DMAP builds on those long-standing priorities while responding to Hawai'i Island's current tourism realities.

HOW THIS PLAN BUILDS ON AND DIFFERS FROM THE FIRST DMAP CYCLE

Hawai'i Island enters this DMAP cycle with a clearer sense of what its communities need from tourism and how management systems can evolve to support them. Across engagements, residents described localized pressures in small communities and storied places, where impacts of tourism feel concentrated and long-standing gaps in infrastructure and stewardship remain visible. Agencies and industry partners echoed that visitor movement, messaging, and management differ widely by place, making coordination essential. At the same time, Hawai'i Island's strengths (strong community stewardship, active County partners, and growing interest in agritourism and cultural learning) offer opportunities for grounded, place-based management. Stakeholders called for actions that are more coordinated, more visible, and more rooted in community expertise. This plan reflects those priorities, responding with practical, place-specific solutions shaped directly by islandwide engagement.

A 2024 State Auditor report and another independent evaluation highlighted areas where the DMAPs could evolve: clearer agency roles, better measurement, and more realistic, sequential action planning. These reports were also considered in the formation of this plan.

To reflect those lessons and respond to current conditions, the 2026–2028 Hawai'i Island DMAP introduces several key refinements:

- **A hotspot-centered, place-based approach to destination management.**

The previous DMAP identified a set of hotspots through a review of community input, agency feedback, and partner consultation; however, the criteria and process used to identify and prioritize those sites were not explicitly stated, and hotspots were one of several planning considerations rather than the primary organizing focus. **This DMAP places hotspots and sites under strain at the center of its approach,** introducing a stakeholder-informed, quantitative framework for identifying **sites under strain** across the island and designating within them a smaller subset of critical, **priority hotspots** where tourism-related pressure is most acute and implementation most promising. The plan moves beyond identification by centering **targeted, site-specific management actions** for priority sites, reflecting a more place-based focus on managing tourism impacts where they are greatest.

- **Stronger measurability and clearer articulation of progress.**

Each hotspot and site under strain action in this plan is structured with defined steps laid out by fiscal year, anticipated deliverables, and intended outcomes, enabling more consistent tracking and communication of progress and success over time. These measures place greater emphasis on outcome-based indicators than the previous plan to better assess whether actions are producing meaningful change on the ground, while still including select process measures where appropriate. Action steps and deliverables are intended to guide implementation and may be refined over time in response to evolving conditions, operational considerations, and on-the-ground realities.

A comprehensive implementation timeline for all actions included in this plan is provided in Appendix B.

- **Clearer roles and accountability in interagency collaborations.**

Each hotspot and site under strain action also identifies specific management partners and roles, including relevant divisions within agencies (e.g., the Division of Forestry and Wildlife within the Department of Land and Natural Resources) and named community and industry partners where sensible, rather than broad designations alone. During the drafting process, HTA engaged these partners directly and secured provisional commitments to collaborate, helping ensure actions are grounded in organizational capacity and shared kuleana. Where implementation authority sits with other agencies (e.g., for enforcement, land management, transportation, or infrastructure), HTA is often included as a coordinating/convening partner to support alignment, communication, and visitor-facing strategies.

- **Identified opportunities for aligned destination management beyond named actions.**

While this plan identifies a defined set of priority hotspots and site-specific actions for this cycle, it also articulates destination-wide management strategies and lists stakeholder-identified priorities for priority sites. These elements recognize destination management as a collaborative, ongoing endeavor, in which community-led, agency-led, or independently funded efforts that advance identified priorities may be considered aligned with DMAP outcomes, regardless of whether they are named as actions in this cycle. Communities, agencies, and partners are encouraged to utilize this DMAP as a reference framework when advancing actions aligned with the strategies, priorities, outcomes, and sites articulated in this plan.

- **A different stakeholder engagement process.**

Unlike the previous DMAP cycle, where the island's Steering Committee drafted actions that were subsequently taken to the broader public for input, during this DMAP cycle, island-wide community meetings, industry sessions, and Advisory Group discussions were conducted concurrently. This ensured that stakeholder inputs directly and iteratively guided the structure and content of the plans. For more details about the engagement and creation process, see Section 2: Development Process for the Plan.



02. DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FOR THE PLAN

The Hawai'i Island Destination Management Action Plan (DMAP) was developed through an iterative planning process spanning **July 2025 through early 2026**. Rather than following a linear “consult once and decide” approach, the plan evolved through repeated cycles of engagement, analysis, drafting, and refinement.

Throughout the planning period, many inputs informed development. Community and industry perspectives, advisory guidance, agency and partner dialogue, HTA staff insights, and ongoing research were considered together to identify emerging priorities, refine strategies, and develop feasible actions.

Input gathered through this process shaped the plan at several levels:

- **Strategies (Section 4)** synthesize recurring themes raised through engagement and organize how the DMAP responds to those concerns.
- **Hotspots and sites under strain (Section 5)** align with locations repeatedly identified by stakeholders as experiencing concentrated tourism-related impacts.
- **Actions (Sections 5 and 6)** were developed to address these themes while remaining feasible within the DMAP timeframe and partnership context.

As additional input was gathered, draft materials were revisited with various stakeholders and refined. This approach helped ensure that the DMAP's structure, priorities, and actions emerged from shared patterns across engagement rather than isolated comments or individual meetings.

This section describes how engagement, analysis, and drafting informed each other during the planning process. **A schedule of meetings and engagement activities is provided in Appendix A.**

The DMAP was shaped by weaving together four strands of knowledge...

over multiple phases of engagement, insight, and action.

Community & Industry Voices

Virtual Engagement • In-Person Sessions • Public Comment Portal

Research & Analysis

Tourism Data • Existing DMAPs & Plans • Thematic Synthesis

Agency & Partner Coordination

State & County Agencies • Community Organizations • Implementation Feasibility

HTA Leadership & Staff Guidance

Destination Managers • Program Insights • Operational Context

Initial Insights & Priorities

Legislative direction, research, and HTA priorities informed early understandings and identified a preliminary focus on hotspots.

Early Engagement & Emerging Themes

Initial sessions with industry, community members, and Advisory Group stakeholders surfaced broad island priorities and helped shape early stage management themes.

Focused Dialogue & Action Development

In-person community sessions and ongoing Advisory Group dialogues refined themes into island-specific strategies, solidified priority hotspots, and offered more specific insights that informed related management actions.

Draft Development & Refinement

Multiple draft iterations, continued stakeholder input, and consultation with potential action partners refined actions, strengthened plan framing, and clarified feasible pathways for implementation.

This Destination Management Action Plan is crafted with intention, iteration, and aloha. Like a *kaula* (rope), it seeks to weave knowledge from many sources to create lasting change for our communities.

Inspiration for this illustration comes from “Aha Weave featuring John Kaimikaua” on YouTube.

HOW THE DMAP WAS WOVEN TOGETHER

The planning process was iterative and collaborative, with **engagement, analysis, and drafting occurring in ongoing cycles** rather than discrete phases. Input gathered at each stage helped to identify recurring themes, locations experiencing tourism-related strain, and possible directions for action. As new insights emerged, draft ideas were revisited with stakeholders and refined.

This approach allowed the plan to evolve over time and helped ensure that strategies, hotspot priorities, and actions reflect patterns consistently raised across engagement rather than isolated feedback.

1. Establishing the Initial Frame

Planning for the DMAP began with a review of existing conditions, policy direction, the 2021-2023 DMAP and other island-specific management plans, and available visitor and other tourism-related data. This work informed the situational analysis and SWOT (Section 3), providing an initial picture of the possibilities, pressures, and management context facing the destination.

Key contextual drivers for the plan included legislative direction to focus management efforts on hotspots and sites under strain, as well as findings from the State Auditor and internal HTA review related to destination management accountability and implementation described in Section 1.

While this research provided an early baseline for the plan, additional plans, studies, and policy context continued to be incorporated as they were identified through engagement with partners.

2. Advisory Guidance and Iterative Direction

An island Advisory Group provided ongoing guidance throughout the planning process. Convened by HTA, the group included representatives from the visitor industry, ‘āina stewardship groups, State and County agencies, visitor bureaus and destination organizations, business and community leadership, and other partners with relevant experience in tourism and resource management. A list of these individuals is provided at the end of this plan.

The Advisory Group met several times and provided their *mana’o* (input) as the plan evolved, reviewing emerging themes, discussing locations raised as experiencing tourism-related strain, and helping shape the direction and scope of proposed actions. This input helped refine early concepts, identify priority locations for management attention, and ensure that draft strategies and actions reflected a broad range of perspectives.

Additional information on Advisory Group meeting dates is provided in Appendix A.

3. Listening to Recurring Concerns and Emerging Themes

Early engagement with community members and industry stakeholders focused on understanding how tourism is experienced in daily life across the island and where its impacts are most visible.

Rather than simply listing comments, the project team looked for patterns in what people raised repeatedly, how they described those concerns, which locations were consistently cited as places of concern, and what types of actions stakeholders suggested in response.

Through this process, several recurring themes began to emerge across conversations, including concerns related to traffic, infrastructure, and access; enforcement and safety; natural and cultural resources; visitor education; local economic benefit; and resident engagement, among others.

These themes helped shape later in-person community sessions, where participants explored these topics in greater depth and discussed potential approaches for addressing them.

As the process progressed, **these recurring themes were refined several times until they were synthesized into the management strategies presented in Section 4.** While the strategies do not correspond directly to individual comments raised during engagement, they reflect the broader patterns and priorities that emerged and helped organize how the DMAP responds to those concerns.

Additional information on the timing, format, and locations of community and industry engagement is provided in Appendix A.

4. Partner Coordination

Throughout the planning process, HTA Destination Managers and other HTA staff engaged directly with State and County agencies, ‘āina-based stewardship organizations, and other potential implementation partners. Several of these entities are listed at the end of this plan.

These conversations focused on:

- understanding roles, internal processes, staffing capacities, and operational limitations,
- alignment with existing programs, policies, and capital investments,
- clarification of jurisdictional responsibilities,
- identification of feasible pathways for implementation and partnership,
- and securing provisional commitments to included actions.

This coordination helped ensure that proposed actions reflect both stakeholder priorities and practical implementation realities.

5. Draft Development, Review, and Refinement

Insights from stakeholder engagement, advisory dialogue, analytical work, and partner coordination were brought together to develop draft strategies and actions. These materials were refined through multiple rounds of drafting and review as the plan evolved.

Draft concepts were shared with Advisory Group members, HTA staff, and relevant partners to confirm that they accurately reflected stakeholder concerns and appeared feasible within the DMAP planning period. A draft version of the DMAP was presented publicly in February 2026 through a virtual session and an online commentary portal, providing an opportunity for additional feedback from community members and stakeholders. Input received during this stage informed late stage revisions before finalization of the plan in March 2026.

HOW ACTIONS WERE DEVELOPED

Actions included in this plan were informed by stakeholders' *mana'o* (insight). Ideas for action suggested by stakeholders were evaluated for feasibility and the ability to advance the statewide vision for **destination management** (Section 1). Actions proposed in this plan are those that:

- Align with one or more of the three Hawai'i Island management strategies (Section 4),
- Directly address identified sites under strain (Section 5) through targeted, site-specific action at priority hotspots, or support those efforts through complementary management approaches, and
- Can reasonably demonstrate measurable outcomes within the FY 2027–2029 planning period.

Site-specific actions at priority hotspots form the core of this DMAP. These actions were honed for sites on the island where tourism-related strain is most acute and where the feasibility of near-term management intervention is strongest. They reflect the plan's primary emphasis on addressing tourism-related pressure, safety concerns, and cultural and environmental impacts at specific strained locations.

In addition to these site-specific actions, the plan includes a smaller number of other management actions that support hotspot management by addressing broader destination conditions and opportunities (Section 6). While hotspots identify places where visitor pressure is currently concentrated, visitor behavior is shaped by factors that extend beyond any single site, including how visitors receive information and what alternatives they perceive to be available. Research from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa finds that when access is limited at one heavily visited location, visitor demand can shift to nearby sites rather than dissipating (Moromizato 2025). These other actions therefore focus on visitor education, coordination, engagement, and targeted place-based initiatives that shape how visitors move through and interact with the island. While these actions may be applied at specific locations, they are not primarily driven by site strain and are intended to reinforce, complement, and strengthen the effectiveness of hotspot-focused management.

In developing proposed actions, HTA conducted a review of existing plans and studies – including those led by the Department of Land & Natural Resources (DLNR), Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT), County agencies, and local organizations – to ensure that actions build on existing work where appropriate and avoid duplicating ongoing efforts.

Draft actions were reviewed by the Advisory Group and identified action partners, who provided feedback on feasibility, implementation considerations, and alignment with desired outcomes at identified sites under strain. HTA incorporated this feedback in refining the actions before presenting the draft plan for community review through public meetings and an online review portal in February 2026.

While actions in this plan are presented with defined timelines, proposed steps, and anticipated deliverables to support clarity and measurability, DMAP implementation will follow an **adaptive management approach**. Specific implementation details may evolve over time in response to changing conditions on the ground, emergent priorities, shifts in visitor behavior, resource conditions, and community needs, among other reasons. In some cases, actions may be sequenced differently, postponed, rescope, or refined to reflect new information, while maintaining alignment with the plan's core intent and intended outcomes.

As destination management is a “collaborative and coordinated process with public, private, and community stakeholders,” as defined by Chapter 201B-3(a)(14), Hawai‘i Revised Statutes, implementation is shaped by factors beyond any single entity’s direct authority. These include funding availability, procurement outcomes, partner capacity, regulatory processes, and interagency coordination, among others. While leads and action partners were identified during plan development and commitment provisionally secured, implementation of several actions is contingent on partner participation and readiness, available funding, and legislative appropriations. Any material changes to action steps, timelines, or deliverables will be documented and communicated through ongoing reporting and engagement to ensure transparency.

Although actions included in this plan represent priority initiatives identified for advancement within the DMAP planning period, they do not represent the full spectrum of destination management activity occurring or needed on Hawai‘i Island. Consistent with the statutory definition of destination management, community-based stewardship, hosting, education, safety guidance, and place-based management efforts are understood to be **core components of destination management**, whether implemented through DMAP actions or other public, private, or philanthropic pathways. Initiatives that advance the intent of the Hawai‘i Island management strategies (Section 4) and the statewide destination management framework (Section 1) may be considered aligned with destination management goals regardless of funding source or implementing entity. Communities, agencies, the visitor industry, and other partners are encouraged to reference and draw from this DMAP when advancing actions aligned with these strategies, priorities, and outcomes.

Finally, some suggestions raised throughout the DMAP process did not advance as actions and were instead organized into two additional categories:

- **Additional Opportunities Identified Through Stakeholder Engagement:** ideas raised by stakeholders that could advance destination management but fall outside the specific actions included in this DMAP. These may include recommendations for action by other agencies, potential pathways for future HTA consideration, or broader policy requests that could influence destination management outcomes. Select recommendations are included in **Appendix C** of this plan, while a full listing of opportunities is available on the HTA website.
- **Infeasible or Out-of-Scope:** ideas that proved impractical, outside legal authority, or otherwise unworkable within this DMAP cycle. These are not included in the plan.

Collectively, the actions and positions outlined in this document seek to advance **destination management** on Hawai‘i Island in ways that support harmony, stewardship, regeneration, and collaboration.



03. TOURISM & DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ON HAWAI'I

Before turning to the strategies and actions of this plan, it is important to understand the conditions related to tourism that shape daily life on Hawai'i Island today. Over the course of the DMAP development process, residents, industry, and agencies shared observations about the island's current pressures and capacities: insights echoed in and expanded by State and County data. Taken together, they offer a grounded picture of the **situation** in which destination management will operate during this DMAP cycle.

That picture shows an island where the lived realities of tourism are shaped less by total volume and more by **where** and **how** impacts occur. Hawai'i Island's vast geography contrasts with the small shoreline and rural communities that constitute it, where limited infrastructure, sensitive landscapes, and archaeological remnants can lead to immediate strain. Residents spoke of unmanaged movement, uneven stewardship, and visitors arriving at sites without necessary grounding, while industry partners noted that scattered infrastructure, unclear roles, and inconsistent messaging can leave visitors, and even guides, unsure of where to go or how to behave. Across the island, a shared theme emerged: the challenge is not the size or presence of tourism, but whether the systems guiding it honor place, support community capacity, and prepare visitors to move with clarity and respect. This understanding underscores the need for stronger coordination, clearer orientation, and shared kuleana in caring for the island and the experiences it offers.

The following sections capture some of the island-wide conditions affecting **destination management** on Hawai'i Island today. They draw on quantitative indicators, stakeholder input, and analytical tools used during planning to understand where demand concentrates and when strain peaks. What emerges is a snapshot of Hawai'i Island's present moment: the patterns of movement, economic realities, management challenges, and community sentiment that inform the work, strategies, and actions ahead.

KEY ISLAND-WIDE CONDITIONS

CONGESTION AND VISITOR VOLUME

- **Hawai'i Island hosted approximately 1.7 million visitors in 2024**, consistent with 2023 and on par with 2019 levels. The island accounts for about **16% of statewide visitor days**, with the average number of visitors on the island at 36,740 visitors. Thus there is approximately one visitor for every six residents (2024 Annual Visitor Research Report, Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism).
- The island's large geography and **widely dispersed scenic and cultural sites** lead to heavy reliance on rental cars; **roughly 79% of U.S. visitors rent a vehicle**, while only 7–8% join bus or van tours (2024 *Visitor Satisfaction and Activity Study*, DBEDT).
- High visitation at select small communities and access areas like **Keaukaha, Hōnaunau, and Pololū** creates congestion in areas with limited roadways, parking, and emergency access.
- Parks with established infrastructure (e.g., 'Akaka Falls) experience more orderly flow, while sites like **Kealahou Bay lack basic facilities**, amplifying related traffic, safety, and sanitation issues.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

- Visitor spending reached **\$3.2 billion in 2024**. **Per-person, per-day spending rose to \$240** the same year, 34% higher than in 2019, reflecting broader economic shifts in travel costs and visitor behavior. (2024 *Annual Visitor Research Report*, DBEDT).
- The county's 3% transient accommodations tax generated **\$33.9 million in 2024**, supporting local services and operations (2024 *Annual Comprehensive Financial Report*, Hawai'i County).
- Industry partners emphasized the importance of maintaining a **consistent and quality visitor experience**, noting unmanaged hotspots and misinformation can undermine visitor satisfaction.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Deferred maintenance and aging facilities** are visible across the island, with strained restroom, parking, and trail infrastructure at several high-use sites like Ka Lae and Punalu'u.
- Limited shoreline infrastructure and small coastal access points create frequent **bottlenecks and safety concerns** for residents and visitors alike.
- Housing pressures remain significant; the **lack of affordable units near resort areas** forces long commutes for hospitality workers and contributes to workforce instability.
- Approximately **3,100 short-term rental units** operate on the island (about **27% of available visitor accommodations**) governed by a 2018 ordinance defining where these units are permitted (2025 *Visitor Plant Inventory Report*, DBEDT).
- Agencies and residents noted that signage, parking design, and access management are **uneven across sites**, contributing to confusion, unsafe roadside behavior, and preventable impacts.

MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES & ISSUES

- Despite care and diligence in information sharing by large tour, activity, and accommodation operators, visitors can receive **inconsistent or inaccurate information** from providers and from social media, contributing to unsafe behavior and misunderstandings at a variety of sites.
- **During DMAP engagement meetings:**
 - Community stewards emphasized **practitioner presence and place-based guidance** are highly effective, yet capacity is uneven and often dependent on volunteer labor.
 - Residents and industry stakeholders highlighted the need for **coherent islandwide visitor messaging**, noting fragmented orientation leads to confusion and unmanaged movement.
 - Both visitor industry stakeholders and community members expressed a desire for **more reliable communication from HTA and other State and County agencies**, including regular updates, transparency, and opportunities for dialogue at the moku level.
 - Data collection is strong in some areas but lacks integration; stakeholders described a need for **shared platforms** that combine agency data with community observations to inform decisions.

RESIDENT SENTIMENT REGARDING TOURISM

- Community and lineal descendant commitment to **protecting cultural landscapes and natural resources** is strong, reflected in ongoing stewardship and advocacy around Waipi'o, Pololū, Hōnaunau, Keaukaha, Miloli'i, Kealahou, Kahalu'u Bay, and other sites.
- DBEDT's *Spring 2024 Resident Sentiment Survey* shows that **41% of Hawai'i Island residents** believe tourism is "mostly positive" for them and their families, consistent with statewide levels but well below desirable results. Meanwhile, **61% of residents** feel "the island is being run for tourists," signaling misalignment between visitor activity, local priorities, and daily lived experience.
- **During DMAP engagement meetings:**
 - Residents expressed strong desire for **more effective visitor orientation and education**, noting that negative interactions typically stem from visitors being uninformed rather than behaving in intentionally disrespectful ways.
 - Many residents described not just lifestyle, but emotional strain related to **environmental degradation, crowding, and cultural disrespect**, especially in places central to family life.
 - Despite concerns, community members across moku consistently stated that they overall support tourism as an important part of the Hawai'i Island (and broader State of Hawai'i) economy **when it is well-managed, culturally grounded, and respectful of place**.

5. No Puna ke 'ala i hali 'ia mai
Noho i ka wailele a'o Hi'ilawe

6. I ka poli nō au o Ha'i wahine
I ka poli aloha o Ha'inakolo

HAWAI'I ISLAND SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis below summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of Hawai'i Island as a destination, alongside opportunities to strengthen management and threats to effective stewardship. It was used as a planning tool to inform priorities and actions, rather than as a comprehensive assessment of all conditions impacting destination management.

STRENGTHS

- Strong traditions of community stewardship and cultural practice
- Large island allows visitor dispersion potential
- Rich, diverse cultural landscapes across six distinct *moku* and numerous *ahupua'a* and communities
- Distinct visitor experiences: volcanoes, *paniolo* (cowboys), marine experiences, resorts
- Strong agritourism across the island
- Consistent domestic airlift into Kona and newly restored mainland direct airlift access into Hilo
- Increasing visitor interest in regenerative experiences
- Strong County support of diversifying locally-led visitor experiences

OPPORTUNITIES

- Strengthen place-based visitor orientation and messaging
- Expand agritourism and local maker experiences
- Build standing *hui* (groups) for community-industry and cross-island coordination
- Integrate greater practitioner-led stewardship at key sites
- Leverage Hele-On as sustainable visitor mobility option
- Use data hub to align decisions and hotspot response
- Refresh Pono Pledge into a more visible stewardship message
- Enhance STVR-based visitor onboarding and dispersal
- Aim for all experiences to leave visitors transformed, not just awed

WEAKNESSES

- Small shoreline communities face outsized visitor pressure
- Limited infrastructure at many high-use natural sites
- Heavy visitor reliance on rental cars islandwide
- Limited hotel infrastructure in Hilo
- Fragmented communication across agencies and operators
- Inconsistent visitor orientation and safety messaging
- Limited affordable housing increases workforce strain, particularly in Kona
- Hilo port facilities were not designed for cruise passenger disembarkation
- Large island scale means many visitors are just "passing through" areas, leading to experiences of breadth, not depth

THREATS

- Continued congestion for small coastal and rural communities
- Climate change impacts on beaches, parks, access roads
- Hazard risks at remote, unmanaged sites
- Volcanic activity disrupting travel and infrastructure
- Federal government shutdown impacting federal sites (e.g., Volcanoes National Park, Pu'uuhonua o Hōnaunau) and access to funding for infrastructure improvements
- Increasing social media-driven surges at fragile areas
- Erosion of resident trust if communication remains limited or unidirectional
- Rising costs widening tension between residents and tourism
- Untrained operators spreading misinformation or unsafe guidance, harming the "brand" of the island



04. MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR HAWAI'I 2026 - 2028

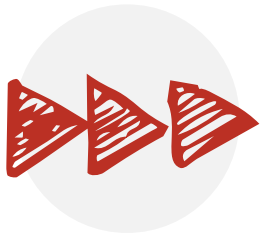
Rooted in extensive stakeholder engagement across Hawai'i Island, this plan advances three interrelated strategies for **destination management** on the island over the next three years:

1. Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities
2. Strengthen Place-Based Visitor Understanding
3. Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship

Community, agency, and industry stakeholders who engaged in the DMAP process, as well as Advisory Group members, were prompted to identify **problems, issues, or needs** related to tourism-related strain in their communities as a component of DMAP outreach. In some cases, they proposed **specific ideas for action** that informed or complemented those observations and concerns.

Evaluating these stakeholder contributions for common themes led directly to the destination management strategies that follow, which in turn anchor the actions included in this plan.





STRATEGY 1:

MANAGE VISITOR FLOW FOR SMALL COMMUNITIES

Designing visitor flow and infrastructure for a large island with small communities and limited transportation.

Objective: Create predictable, place-appropriate systems that reduce pressure on local communities, improve safety, and support a more balanced visitor experience across the island.

Stakeholders emphasized Hawai‘i Island’s mismatch between **large land area** and **small communities** that absorb the impacts of visitor pressure. Residents described sudden cruise surges, parking congestion, reef damage, lifeguard shortages, and emergency response strain in areas like Keaukaha, Hōnaunau, Waipi‘o, Pololū, and Ka‘ū – all exacerbated by the island’s limited and largely circular road network. Industry partners echoed these concerns, noting that inconsistent flow and unmanaged hotspots lead to **poor visitor experiences**, safety risks, and reputational issues for the entire island. Both residents and industry stakeholders stressed that managing pressure and clarifying movement across dispersed sites is essential for protecting resident well-being **and** ensuring visitors feel safe, welcomed, and oriented.

Select Associated Actions:

- **Keaukaha:** Port District Mobility & Visitor Flow Study (*Action KH-3*)
- **Kealakekua Bay:** Develop the On-Site Visitor Experience Pathway (*KBK-2*)
- **Island-wide:** Hawai‘i Island Visitor Management Hui (*IW-1*)



STRATEGY 2:

STRENGTHEN PLACE-BASED VISITOR UNDERSTANDING

Helping visitors understand the distinct cultural landscapes, priorities, and conditions of each moku (district) while supporting coherent, island-wide expectation-setting.

Objective: Ensure that visitors receive guidance before arrival and throughout their stay, so their choices reflect local context, sensitivities, and cultural narratives.

Residents emphasized that visitors often arrive with **little understanding of where they are** across all six moku: how different places function, for example, or what each community values. Hilo meeting participants shared that visitors frequently “come and leave without staying,” while Kona partners pointed to inconsistent messaging and reliance on inaccurate online sources. Stakeholders noted that each moku holds distinct histories, *mo‘okū‘auhau* (genealogies), environmental sensitivities, and community priorities that shape visitor expectations. Clear, place-based orientation was seen as a way to support respectful behavior, improve safety, and help visitors move with care, curiosity, and understanding across the island.

Select Associated Actions:

- **Hilo:** Community-Defined Destination Identity for Greater Hilo (H-1)
- **Island-wide:** Pono Pledge Stewardship Brand Refresh (IW-2)
- **Kealahou Bay:** Kealahou Bay Code of Conduct Dissemination (KBK-3)

**STRATEGY 3:****BUILD PATHWAYS FOR COLLABORATION AND COLLECTIVE STEWARDSHIP**

Creating consistent systems for communication, alignment, and shared kuleana among industry partners, operators, agencies, and community stewards.

Objective: Strengthen islandwide coordination and communication so community, agency, and industry partners can act together, respond quickly to issues, and support consistent messaging, stewardship, and decision-making across the island.

Stakeholders emphasized that **fragmentation is one of Hawai'i Island's largest barriers to effective management**, expressing that agencies often work in silos, operators receive and deliver inconsistent guidance, and community groups often shoulder stewardship responsibilities without clear channels for support. Participants described not knowing "who to call" when issues arise, noting that one-off meetings are insufficient to sustain much needed alignment. Industry echoed that inconsistent communication leads to misinformation, uneven visitor experiences, and preventable safety issues. Stakeholders across sectors called for **standing systems** that bring together practitioners, stewards, agencies, and operators to share information, strengthen collaboration, coordinate action, and steward visitor behavior collectively.

Select Associated Actions:

- **Island-wide:** Regular Resident Communication + Engagement Series (IW-5)
- **Keaukaha:** Standing East Hawai'i Cruise Coordination Hui (KH-4)
- **Ka Lae:** Re-engage DHHL's Ka Lae Management Plan (KL-4)



05. SITES UNDER STRAIN: DESTINATION MANAGEMENT IN FOCUS

Tourism-related strain on Hawai‘i Island is experienced most tangibly in specific places: along roadways, in bays, at beaches, and in other areas where visitors, residents, and natural resources interact every day. These are the settings where Hawai‘i Island’s destination management strategies can have the greatest and most immediate impact when translated into **concrete action**.

With that in mind, this DMAP is intentionally centered on the locations where tourism-related pressures are most evident. These **sites under strain** – the roads, beaches, valleys, trails, and corridors repeatedly raised as places of concern during stakeholder engagement – are places where tourism-related activity intersects with natural, cultural, or community resources, creating or intensifying impacts that diminish resident quality of life, the visitor experience, and the overall health of our natural resources. Strain, as defined in this plan, may arise from the scale or behavior of visitation, or from visitation occurring in places that are unsafe, culturally inappropriate, environmentally sensitive, or otherwise restricted from public access.

Within this broader set of sites, the plan identifies a smaller number of **hotspots**. Hotspots represent **the most acute subset of sites under strain**: locations where tourism-related pressure is concentrated, multifaceted, and persistent; and where the need for coordinated, site-specific management is most apparent. By distinguishing hotspots from other sites under strain, the plan identifies where targeted actions are prioritized, versus where ongoing coordination, monitoring, or broader initiatives are more appropriate.

This approach builds on the 2021–2023 DMAPs, which identified named hotspots through a review of community input, agency feedback, partner consultation, and implementation-phase evaluation, but did not include the comprehensive process used to select those sites in the final plan. This plan strengthens that foundation by outlining a clear, collaborative framework for **identifying, prioritizing, and advancing action** at sites where tourism-related pressures are concentrated, placing site-specific management at the forefront of the DMAP and strengthening coordination among public, private, and community partners to sustain resident well-being, the visitor experience, and the health of Hawai‘i’s natural, cultural, and infrastructural resources.

HOW SITES UNDER STRAIN WERE IDENTIFIED AND EVALUATED

Input on potential sites came from multiple types of stakeholder engagement. **Community participants** shared input on a wide range of locations where they observed visitor-related strain, including impacts to natural and cultural resources, traffic and infrastructure challenges, and areas where more visitor education or management could improve conditions or behavior. Responses reflected where the impacts of tourism are experienced locally and provided the foundation for identifying areas of concern.

As part of their charge, **Advisory Group members** were explicitly asked to identify hotspots using a shared definition: *places where impacts from visitors or the visitor industry significantly contribute to pressure on natural, cultural, or community resources*. Potential sites were also informed by HTA recommendations.

From this combined input, the planning team compiled a list of potential hotspots and evaluated each using **thirteen (13) shared criteria**, grouped into three (3) dimensions:

1. Where tourism-related strain is occurring,
2. How serious or consequential that strain is, and
3. How feasible it is for HTA and its partners to act within the scope of the DMAP.

Each location was assessed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative inputs, including Advisory Group review, the frequency and intensity of stakeholder mentions, and other available data and analysis. Feasibility was assessed separately through HTA and agency input, considering jurisdiction, resources, and alignment with the DMAP's scope.

A color scale was then applied to show both **strain** and **feasibility** ratings for each site. These scales move in opposite directions: **high strain (red)** indicates greater pressure and concern, while **high feasibility (green)** indicates a stronger ability to act through collaborative, coordinated management.

COLOR SCALE

COLOR	IDENTIFICATION/COMPOUNDING FACTOR	FEASIBILITY
	Very high: Severe conditions, risks, or vulnerabilities clearly present and widely evident	Very low: Limited ability for HTA or partners to act within current scope or resources
	High: Notable and recurring conditions requiring coordinated management attention	Low: Some capacity for action, but significant barriers remain
	Moderate: Emerging or situational conditions manageable with targeted effort	Moderate: Feasible with coordination or additional resources
	Low: Minimal pressures or sensitivities at present	High: Clarity of solution; authority, partners, and resources available for action
	Not applicable or insufficient information	Not applicable or insufficient information

HOW PRIORITY HOTSPOTS AND SITES FOR THIS DMAP WERE DETERMINED

Following the evaluation to identify sites under strain, those sites that showed **significant levels of Tier 1 and Tier 2 criteria rated red (very high strain) or orange (high strain)** were classified as **hotspots**. Sites exhibiting some strain but which did not reach those thresholds remained “**sites under strain**” for purposes of this document. These areas reflect real and ongoing pressures or community concerns but were not elevated to hotspot status for this DMAP cycle based on relative severity and implementation feasibility.

The Hawai‘i Island Advisory Group, in consultation with HTA, selected **priority hotspots and sites of strain** for focused DMAP action during the 2026–2028 DMAP cycle. A limited number of priority sites were chosen to ensure that limited available resources (e.g., staffing, funding, and partnerships) could be applied effectively and efficiently; and that included actions could be sequenced based on feasibility and readiness, allowing each action to achieve measurable results within the DMAP implementation period. The identification of priority sites and development of associated actions reflects this sequencing approach and is not intended to limit other agencies, organizations, or communities from advancing management actions aligned with DMAP outcomes at other sites under strain, nor to foreclose consideration of site-specific actions for other locations in future DMAP cycles.

While several sites under strain are not addressed through site-specific actions in this DMAP due to resource and sequencing considerations, they were considered in constructing **broadier destination-wide management actions** presented later in this document. These actions are designed to shape visitor movement, knowledge, expectations, and coordination across the island, thereby improving conditions at all sites under strain through changes in visitor behavior, distribution, and management practices broadly.

Communities, agencies, industry, and other partners are encouraged to continue organizing, coordinating, and advancing place-based efforts aligned with included DMAP strategies, priorities, and outcomes, regardless of whether a site is named for focused action in this cycle. All DMAP-identified sites under strain are indexed at the end of this section and will continue to be monitored by HTA in collaboration with partners for changes in conditions, feasibility, and partnership readiness that may adjust their designation as hotspots or sites under strain. Hotspot identification and site-specific DMAP action are part of a repeatable, island-wide destination management approach that will evolve over time, with additional sites considered in future DMAP cycles as readiness and capacity align.

CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING HOTSPOTS

CATEGORY 1 - Identification

“Is this site under strain related to tourism?”

CRITERION	DEFINITION / FOCUS
Access Infrastructure & Arrival Pressure	Strain created by how people reach the site. Reflects whether approach routes and arrival infrastructure (e.g., road capacity, parking, trailheads, marine landings, neighborhood adjacencies) are overwhelmed, unmanaged, unsafe, or reliant on informal / illegal access points.
On-Site Capacity & Crowd Pressure	Strain created by what happens once people are at the site. Reflects whether conditions within the area (e.g., trails, lookouts, beaches, pools, facilities) are overcrowded or exceed what on-site infrastructure and management can safely or sustainably support.
Community Strain & Resident Impact	Degree to which visitation disrupts surrounding communities through noise, trespass, blocked driveways, neighborhood congestion, or interference with local use.
Site Degradation & Maintenance Stress	Observable environmental, cultural, or infrastructural wear and tear (or escalating maintenance burden) linked to visitation (e.g., erosion, litter, vandalism, or declining water quality).

7. Ho‘okolo ‘ia aku i ka nui manu
I like ke ka ‘ina meka uahoa

8. He hoa ‘oe no ka lā le‘ale‘a
Na ka nui manu iho haunaele



CATEGORY 2 - Context & Compounding Factors

“How serious or consequential is that strain?”

CRITERION	DEFINITION / FOCUS
Cultural Sensitivity	Presence of sacred, historic, or community-valued cultural sites or practices vulnerable to visitation impact.
Environmental Sensitivity	Ecological fragility or biodiversity importance that heightens the consequence of overuse.
Safety & Risk	Degree of danger to visitors, responders, or nearby residents based on incident history or inherent hazards such as cliffs, flash floods, surf, or traffic conflicts.
Visibility & Promotion	Level of amplification through social media, influencers, or commercial marketing that fuels visitation.
Local Economic Benefit & Reciprocity	Extent to which visitation can generate tangible community benefit (e.g., jobs, local commerce, stewardship funding). High strain with low benefit indicates higher priority for intervention.

CATEGORY 3 - Feasibility & Viability

“Can HTA and its partners realistically act within the mandate of the DMAP?”

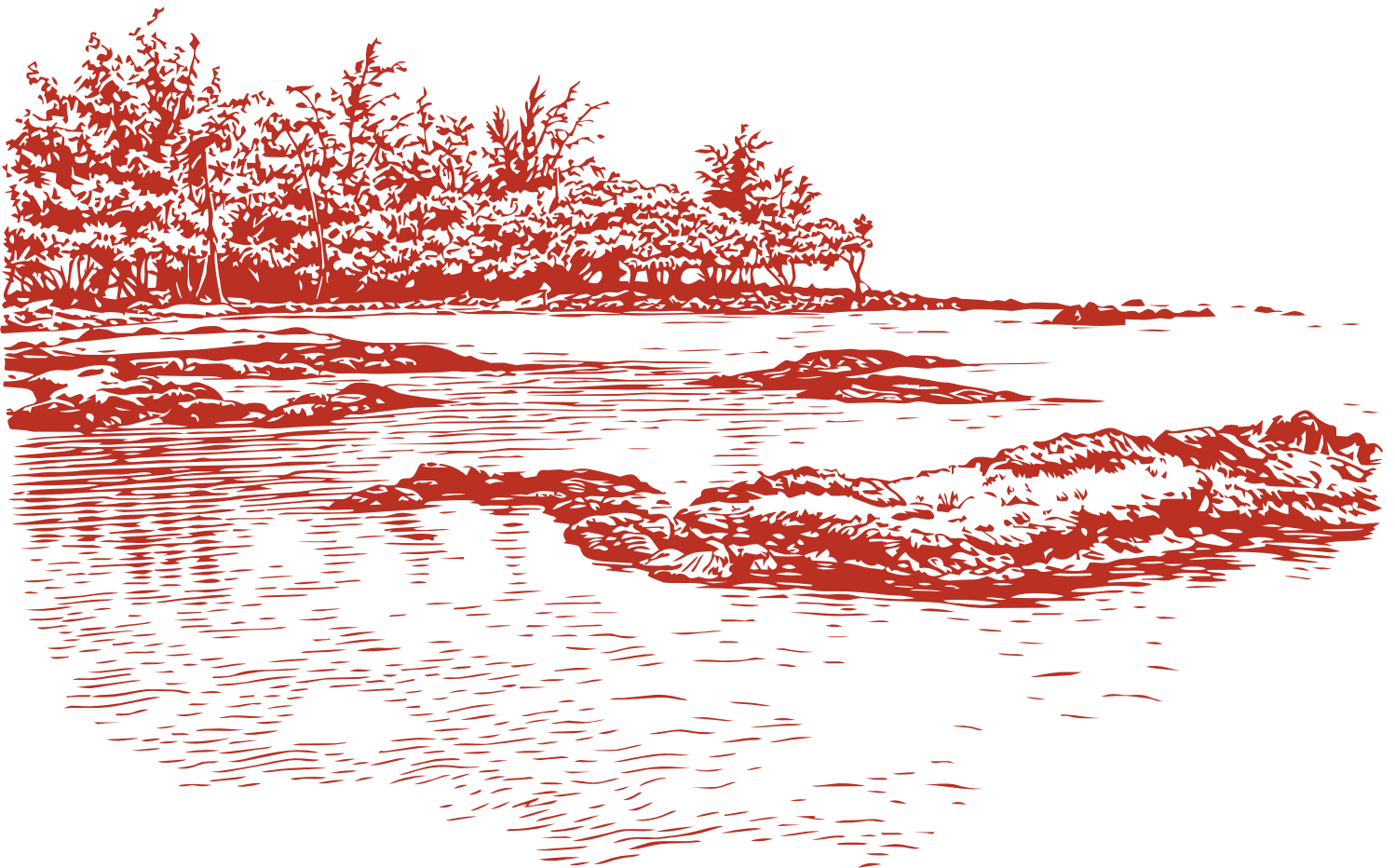
CRITERION	DEFINITION / FOCUS
Jurisdictional Clarity & Legality of Access	How clear and actionable the site’s ownership, access rights, and management responsibilities are for HTA and its immediate DMAP partners. Ambiguity or contested access reduces feasibility.
Cost & Resource Demand	Financial and staffing requirements relative to what HTA and its partners can plausibly support or co-fund within the plan period.
Implementation Timeline & Complexity	Realistic timeframe and administrative lift for DMAP-aligned action, considering permitting, coordination, and policy processes within the DMAP window of FY 2027 – FY 2029.
DMAP Alignment & Partnership Leverage	Extent to which effective action falls within HTA’s mandate or can be catalyzed through formal collaboration mechanisms. Sites requiring action entirely outside HTA’s role score lower.

HOTSPOT: KEAUKAHA (PORT OF HILO TO LEHIA)

LOCATION: WAIĀKEA, HILO, HAWAI'I

Keaukaha is a cherished shoreline community on Hilo's eastern shore, home to one of the oldest Hawaiian Homestead neighborhoods in the state and a series of spring-fed beach parks that hold deep cultural and familial significance. Its proximity to Hilo Harbor and the airport places these beaches within minutes of major visitor arrival points, making them some of the most heavily visited coastal sites on Hawai'i Island. Residents shared that this easy access, combined with lack of consistent management, has contributed to crowding, parking congestion, reef and *honu* (turtle) disturbance, early-morning traffic conflicts, and growing pressure on shoreline spaces that local *‘ohana* (families) have relied on for generations.

In 2023, the **Keaukaha Steward Pilot Program** funded through the previous DMAP offered a meaningful step forward in management by stationing local cultural practitioners and safety educators at key sites. However, when the pilot ended as a result of the end of the DMAP cycle, many in the Keaukaha community expressed disappointment, sharing that short-term efforts without continuity only heightened frustration and mistrust with tourism. Community and Advisory Group members were clear that Keaukaha needs a durable, coordinated approach to support active, long-term management of the area.



The following actions aim to address the priorities for destination management in Keaukaha that were raised by stakeholders:

1. **Community-led shoreline stewardship**, grounded in cultural practice and local knowledge
2. **Protection of nearshore ecosystems and marine habitats**, particularly at beaches and beach parks subject to repeated disturbance
3. **Resident access and prioritized parking**, including approaches that reduce displacement
4. **Improved visitor orientation**, especially related to shoreline etiquette, wildlife, and safety
5. **Better alignment of guided tour activity with community expectations**, including arrival timing, group size, stopping behavior, and shoreline use
6. **Enhanced management of cruise-day impacts**, particularly related to visitor dispersal, timing, and communication between port operations, tour providers, and the community
7. **Long-term local capacity for management and governance**, reducing reliance on short-term pilots and external intervention

Other community-led, agency-led, or otherwise funded efforts that advance these priorities may be considered aligned with destination management outcomes for the area.

HOTSPOT INDICATORS

OVERALL PRIORITY

IDENTIFICATION

CONTEXT & COMPOUNDING FACTORS

FEASIBILITY & VIABILITY

	Access Infrastructure & Arrival Pressure
	On-Site Capacity & Crowd Pressure
	Community Strain & Resident Impact
	Site Degradation & Maintenance Stress
	Cultural Sensitivity
	Environmental Sensitivity
	Safety & Risk
	Visibility & Promotion
	Local Economic Benefit & Reciprocity
	Jurisdictional Clarity & Legality of Access
	Cost & Resource Demand
	Implementation Timeline & Complexity
	DMAP Alignment & Partnership Leverage

SITE SWOT

STRENGTHS

- Culturally significant shoreline valued by residents
- Spring-fed beaches rare in East Hawai'i
- Existing community stewardship and leadership
- Visitor appeal concentrated at predictable locations
- Strong desire for improved management partnerships

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand cultural stewardship presence across shoreline through restoration/expansion of 2023 pilot program
- Develop coordinated port-day visitor flow systems
- Create resident-focused parking and access policies
- Build long-term local management organization capacity
- Integrate County planning with DMAP investments

WEAKNESSES

- Single access road creates chronic bottlenecks
- Unmanaged port-day surges strain shoreline use
- Limited parking leads to resident displacement
- Inconsistent on-site visitor orientation
- Fragmented oversight across agencies and operators
- Limited community-cruise communication

THREATS

- Rising visitation without adequate management tools
- Environmental impacts to reef, springs, and *honu* (turtles)
- Increasing traffic during school and commute hours
- Short-term programs eroding community trust



VERY HIGH/VERY LOW



HIGH/LOW



MODERATE



LOW/HIGH



N/A

*PLEASE SEE COLOR SCALE ON PAGE 23 FOR HOTSPOT ANALYSIS

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS, KEAUKAHA (KH)

KH-1: BUILD LONG-TERM CAPACITY FOR A KEAUKAHA STEWARD & EDUCATION PROGRAM

KH-1

Management Strategy: Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities; Strengthen Place-Based Visitor Understanding; Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship



Goal: Support a community-based stewardship and cultural education program at Keaukaha parks by providing multi-year operational support and partnering to strengthen organizational and financial capacity, with the long-term objective of advancing toward program sustainability beyond direct DMAP support.

Justification: The 2023 *Keaukaha Steward Pilot Program* demonstrated that locally grounded stewardship can positively influence visitor behavior, shoreline safety, and community well-being. Community members and Advisory Group participants emphasized, however, that short-term or stop-start stewardship efforts can create confusion and frustration when they are not paired with a clear pathway for continuity. Residents expressed that effective stewardship at Keaukaha requires reliable on-site presence, trusted local leaders, and organizational capacity that can endure beyond temporary pilots.

This action responds by re-establishing **formal DMAP support** for stewardship and education work at Keaukaha shoreline parks through a structured, multi-year approach. In addition to supporting on-the-ground stewardship and data collection, there is an additional focus on strengthening the organizational, administrative, and financial foundations needed for long-term viability. By pairing operational support with capacity development and sustainability planning, this action seeks to move formal Keaukaha stewardship toward a stable, community-led program that can adapt to ongoing visitor pressures.

Lead: Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA): *program oversight and recruiting funding partnerships*

Projected partners:

- Selected stewardship organization(s) (through procurement): *on-site stewardship*
- County of Hawai'i – Research & Development (R&D): *capacity support*
- County of Hawai'i – Parks & Recreation (DPR): *park site operations*

8. "YOU ARE MY COMPANION IN THE DAY OF JOY
THE MANY BIRDS THERE CAUSED A COMMOTION"

Implementation framework:

PHASE	PROPOSED ACTION STEPS
FY 2027	HTA: • Conduct a competitive procurement or selection process to identify qualified, ‘āina-based organization(s) to regularly conduct stewardship, cultural orientation, and visitor education at Keaukaha priority sites • Establish formal agreements outlining roles, expectations, reporting, and coordination with County Parks & Recreation, as necessary • Provide time-limited DMAP funding support for on-site stewardship coverage, data collection, and program coordination Selected stewardship organization(s): • Implement regular on-site steward presence across priority Keaukaha parks • Lead data collection activities (e.g., steward logs, observations, QR-based micro-surveys) to track visitor behavior, access issues, and community conditions • Coordinate steward scheduling, training, and daily operations consistent with site needs and community guidance HTA + County R&D: • Initiate organizational and financial capacity support, including assistance with administrative systems, reporting practices, and early sustainability planning • Begin exploring long-term funding pathways with the selected organization(s), such as County support, philanthropy, voluntary industry contributions, and other mechanisms
FY 2028-FY 2029 (ONGOING)	Selected stewardship organization(s): • Continue stewarding, education, and data collection with consistent on-site presence and refined deployment based on observed conditions and feedback • Strengthen systems and operations to support long-term program continuity HTA + County R&D: • Continue limited funding support during the DMAP period • Work collaboratively with the stewardship organization(s) to develop and refine a long-term sustainability plan, including realistic pathways toward self-sufficiency over time • Support organization in achieving long-term sustainability, in areas such as partnership development, funding strategy exploration, and coordination with other relevant entities

FY 2029

Evaluation & Transition Planning:

- Assess progress toward organizational readiness, funding diversification, and long-term viability
- Conduct program evaluation using steward logs, survey data, and/or observational insights to inform future stewardship and visitor engagement strategies
- Finalize a forward-looking operational and sustainability plan outlining governance, revenue pathways, and capacity needs beyond the DMAP period

Anticipated deliverables:

- Regular on-site steward presence across priority Keaukaha sites
- Visitor education, cultural orientation, and safety messaging delivered through steward interactions and supporting materials
- Ongoing collection and reporting of stewardship data, with summaries shared periodically with HTA and County partners
- Strengthened organizational, administrative, and financial systems within the selected organization(s)
- A completed long-term sustainability plan outlining feasible pathways toward continued community-led stewardship beyond direct DMAP funding

Intended outcomes:

- Revitalized consistent, community-led stewardship presence at high-use shoreline sites
- Improved visitor behavior and shoreline safety
- Stronger administrative and financial capacity for long-term community operation
- Improved resident and visitor experience during peak-use and cruise-day periods

KH-2: SUPPORT COUNTY-SUPPORTED, COMMUNITY-LED MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Management Strategy: Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship



Goal: Provide targeted HTA support to county-supported, community-led efforts to manage the Keaukaha area, including those initiatives funded through the Hawai'i County Impact Grant program.

Justification: Residents and Advisory Group members emphasized the need for a community-led, culturally grounded approach to managing visitor use along the Keaukaha shoreline. Hawai'i County has supported this type of work through locally led planning efforts, including the use of the County R&D Impact Grant to fund community-based initiatives. In 2025, the Kelii William Ioane Legacy Foundation received this grant to advance the *Ku'u Home Sustainable Tourism Design* project, which will develop a sustainable tourism model, formal visitation guidance, and community-developed tourism management policy recommendations for Keaukaha. Although County-funded, the project is designed and led by a Keaukaha-based organization, reflecting community priorities and values.

Through this action, HTA supports the County in advancing community-led visitor management initiatives by providing data and industry insights, assisting with convening and coordination, and aligning this work with broader DMAP efforts without duplicating or overshadowing community leadership.

Lead: Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA): *data and insight provision, coordination assistance*

Projected partners:

- County of Hawai'i – Research & Development (R&D): *grantor and County support agency*
- Keli William Ioane Legacy Foundation: *2025 Impact Grant recipient*
- Other Keaukaha community organizations: *other or future management initiatives*

Implementation framework:

PHASE	PROPOSED ACTION STEPS
FY 2027	HTA: • Coordinate with the Keli William Ioane Legacy Foundation to identify where HTA support is most useful (e.g., visitor data, sector information, industry engagement) • Participate in meetings as requested, sharing relevant DMAP findings, past engagement or industry insights, other support, and available tourism data • Provide facilitation or convening support for any industry- or tourism-facing conversations the Keli William Ioane Legacy Foundation identifies as necessary • Support the Keli William Ioane Legacy Foundation in sharing draft visitation-guide elements and policy recommendations with tourism stakeholders
FY 2028-FY 2029 (ONGOING)	HTA: • Offer non-monetary support to additional community management initiatives • Provide implementation support for priority recommendations that benefit from HTA coordination, visitor channels, or industry alignment

Anticipated deliverables:

- Relevant visitor data or analysis products shared with the Keli William Ioane Legacy Foundation and other community organizations engaged in management initiatives, upon request
- Tourism-industry engagement convenings, if requested
- Support for rollout of the developed visitation guide or messaging components, as appropriate
- Support for developed policy recommendations, as appropriate

KH-2

Intended outcomes:

- Expressed HTA support of County-supported, community-developed regenerative tourism plans
- Strong alignment between community leadership, County R&D, HTA, and tourism partners
- Improved HTA readiness for implementing community-led management recommendations
- Enhanced visitor experience in Keaukaha through clearer guidance, cultural understanding, and responsible engagement
- Integration of Actions KH-1, KH-3, and KH-4 with community-driven priorities, as appropriate

KH-3: ESTABLISH A STANDING EAST HAWAI'I CRUISE COORDINATION *HUI* (GROUP)

KH-3

Management Strategy: Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities;
Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship



Goal: Form a standing *hui* that strengthens dialogue and coordination between cruise partners, Keaukaha community stakeholders, HTA, and other relevant agencies to explore further management improvements to cruise-day operations at the Port of Hilo and support planning for visitor and community well-being.

Justification: Residents and Advisory Group members noted that cruise-day operations at the Port of Hilo can create confusion, unsafe pedestrian movement, and visitor dispersal toward Keaukaha, underscoring the need for more consistent communication and coordination between industry and community. Although direct dialogue between cruise lines and the community has historically been limited, a facilitated meeting in 2025 during DMAP engagement between community, industry, and government stakeholders revealed both the value and productive potential of ongoing conversation, making a standing *hui* a valuable venue for continued collaboration, particularly as findings of a mobility and visitor flow feasibility study for the port (Action KH-4) are developed and implemented.

As destination management is defined in statute as a collaborative and coordinated process among public, private, and community stakeholders, establishing a regular forum for shared discussion and problem-solving directly supports effective, place-based management of cruise-related impacts.

Lead: Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA): *hui convening and facilitation*

Proposed *hui* members:

- Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT) – Harbors: *port operations perspective*
- County of Hawai'i – Department of Research & Development (R&D): *policy alignment*
- On-island destination marketing organization (DMO): *visitor communications, experience input*
- Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce: *local business community perspective*
- Keaukaha community organizations: *community perspective*
- Contracted greeter organization (if applicable): *visitor arrival interface*
- Cruise operators: *cruise operations and industry input*

Implementation framework:

PHASE	PROPOSED ACTION STEPS
FY 2027	HTA: - Determine if hui should operate as a subsidiary (e.g., standing committee, working group, subcommittee) of the Visitor Management Hui (<i>Action IW-1</i>) - Convene hui members and formalize structure: meeting cadence, communication pathways, shared expectations, and Year 1 goals Cruise Hui: Explore key topics identified through stakeholder engagement, such as: - If and how cruise marketing, announcements, and excursion materials influence visitor movement toward Keaukaha - Passenger information on safety, cultural expectations, and authorized operators - Strategies to reduce unsafe walking and pedestrian movement from the port - Ways to improve visitor orientation and information before disembarkation - Operational adjustments at embarkation/disembarkation - Preliminary technical questions for the feasibility study contractor (KH-4) - Identify achievable improvements or pilot adjustments along key topics to advance in FY 2027, which could include (but are not limited to): - Place-based educational video content for onboard use - Adjusted disembarkation announcements and materials - Pedestrian routing, bus staging and loading, and wayfinding at the port At year's end, assess whether to expand the hui in FY 2028 to include Kona-side cruise stakeholders and create an islandwide coordination forum
FY 2028-FY 2029 (ONGOING)	Cruise Hui: - Identify and advance at least one action each year that can be implemented with coordination of hui members - Support port Mobility and Visitor Flow Feasibility Study contractor (KH-4) - Each year, prepare a summary documenting hui progress, lessons learned, and recommended pathways for ongoing coordination

Anticipated deliverables:

- Hui operating structure, mission, membership, and quarterly meeting schedule established
- At least one operational, communication, or other improvement per year
- Consolidated technical questions and community insights for KH-4 contractor
- FY 2029 summary documenting progress, outcomes, and future coordination pathways

KH-3

Intended outcomes:

- Strengthened communication between cruise partners, HTA, and the East Hawai'i community as measured by community and industry feedback sessions or similar digital venue
- Reduced unmanaged visitor dispersal toward Keaukaha
- Improved visitor safety, advisories, and onshore orientation

KH-4: FUND A MOBILITY AND VISITOR FLOW FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE PORT OF HILO

KH-4

Management Strategy: Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities


Goal: Assess the feasibility, design options, community benefits, and operational requirements for a more orderly, visitor-friendly, and community-sensitive port-day mobility system at the Port of Hilo, including (but not limited to) land-tender models, mobility hubs, routing alternatives, and integrated transit solutions.

Justification: Stakeholders noted that cruise-day operations at the Port of Hilo create crowded and disorganized conditions, with buses, taxis, rideshares, authorized and unauthorized operators, and hundreds of visitors occupying limited space in an active industrial setting. These conditions are most acute during disembarkation and embarkation, when visitor staging and circulation patterns overlap with residents' morning school drop-off, work commutes, and port-area commercial activity. Keaukaha residents shared how congestion quickly spills into neighborhoods, contributing to pressure on corridor beach parks. While visitor welcome and orientation efforts are currently provided on cruise days, stakeholders emphasized that flow management issues remain. In particular, an absence of coordinated circulation, staging, and transportation management at peak arrival times creates safety concerns, neighborhood impacts, and a fragmented visitor arrival experience within the active industrial port.

County officials emphasized that earlier attempts to restrict pickups at the port were unsuccessful because no viable alternative system existed. With ship capacities ranging from 300 to over 3,600 passengers, a contracted feasibility and planning study is needed to evaluate a **range of operational models**. The study will further assess operational thresholds, traffic impacts, visitor experience improvements, and community benefits, and will identify governance and partnership structures capable of guiding future decisions by County of Hawai'i, HTA, HDOT, cruise operators, and the community.

Lead: Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA): *study procurement and funding*

Projected partners:

- Contracted transportation planning / mobility-design contractor: *study execution*
- Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT) Highways, Harbors: *port and roadway operations*
- County of Hawai'i – Mass Transit: *transit integration input*, Public Works (DPW): *traffic modeling input*, Planning: *land-use policy input*

Additional stakeholders:

- Cruise operators servicing the Port of Hilo: *arrival operations input*
- Keaukaha community organizations and stewardship groups: *community impact input*
- Ground operators and transportation companies: *operational constraints input*

Implementation framework:

PHASE	PROPOSED ACTION STEPS
FY 2028 - FY 2029	HTA: • Develop scope, procurement requirements, and evaluation criteria for a comprehensive <i>Port District Mobility & Visitor Flow Feasibility Study</i> • Conduct pre-procurement consultation with County Mass Transit, County Public Works, HDOT, cruise partners, and Keaukaha community members to refine study format • Conduct a competitive procurement or selection process to identify a transportation planning/mobility-design contractor to conduct the study Contractor: Conduct the study. The contractor may: • Evaluate multiple operational models for improving port-day flow, such as: land-tender concepts (mandatory shuttles to another location); port staging and routing; distributed or hybrid mobility hubs; fixed-route systems possibly integrated with Hele-On • Conduct ship-size and seasonal threshold analysis to determine when different or size-adjustment of models may be activated • Evaluate possible mobility hub locations (e.g., Mo‘oheau Bus Terminal, Reeds Bay) • Model traffic, circulation, and safety conditions for disembarkation and embarkation • Evaluate routing, shuttle frequency, staging areas, and ADA access • Benchmark other port or harbor mobility systems • Explore opportunities for integrated visitor orientation (safety, cultural messaging, local business promotion) during transit • Assess potential for the system to support local transit needs on non-cruise days • Develop a set of refined operational scenarios and assess community, economic, and visitor-experience impacts, in part through stakeholder engagement • Provide cost estimates for both implementation and ongoing operations, staffing and fleet requirements, and governance/partnership options • Produce and publish final feasibility report and stepwise implementation roadmap • Identify permitting, policy, and coordination needs for County, State, cruise lines, operators, and other relevant stakeholders

Anticipated deliverables:

- Contractor selected through competitive procurement or selection process
- At least two (2) comprehensive operational management models evaluated
- Activation thresholds and operationalization estimates by ship size modeled using passenger volumes across vessel classes
- Traffic and circulation modeling conducted for peak-day scenarios, including morning commute and school drop-off windows
- Cost ranges developed for various models, including staffing and fleet assumptions
- Transit-integration assessment completed, including identifying feasible ways that systems could support resident mobility
- A final feasibility and implementation report summarizing scenarios, preferred option, governance pathways, and next steps

Intended outcomes:

- Data-driven options for improving visitor flow at and resident well-being near the Port of Hilo:
 - Reduced congestion and safety conflicts during resident commute windows
 - A significantly improved arrival experience for cruise passengers
 - Strengthened economic linkage to Downtown Hilo
 - Reduced unmanaged dispersal toward Keaukaha shoreline parks
 - Feasible, community-aligned groundwork for future port-area management decisions

9. *E 'ole ko'u nui piha akamai
Hala a'e nā 'ale o ka moana*

10. *Hao mai ka moana kau e ka weli
Mea 'ole na'e ia no ia ho'okele*

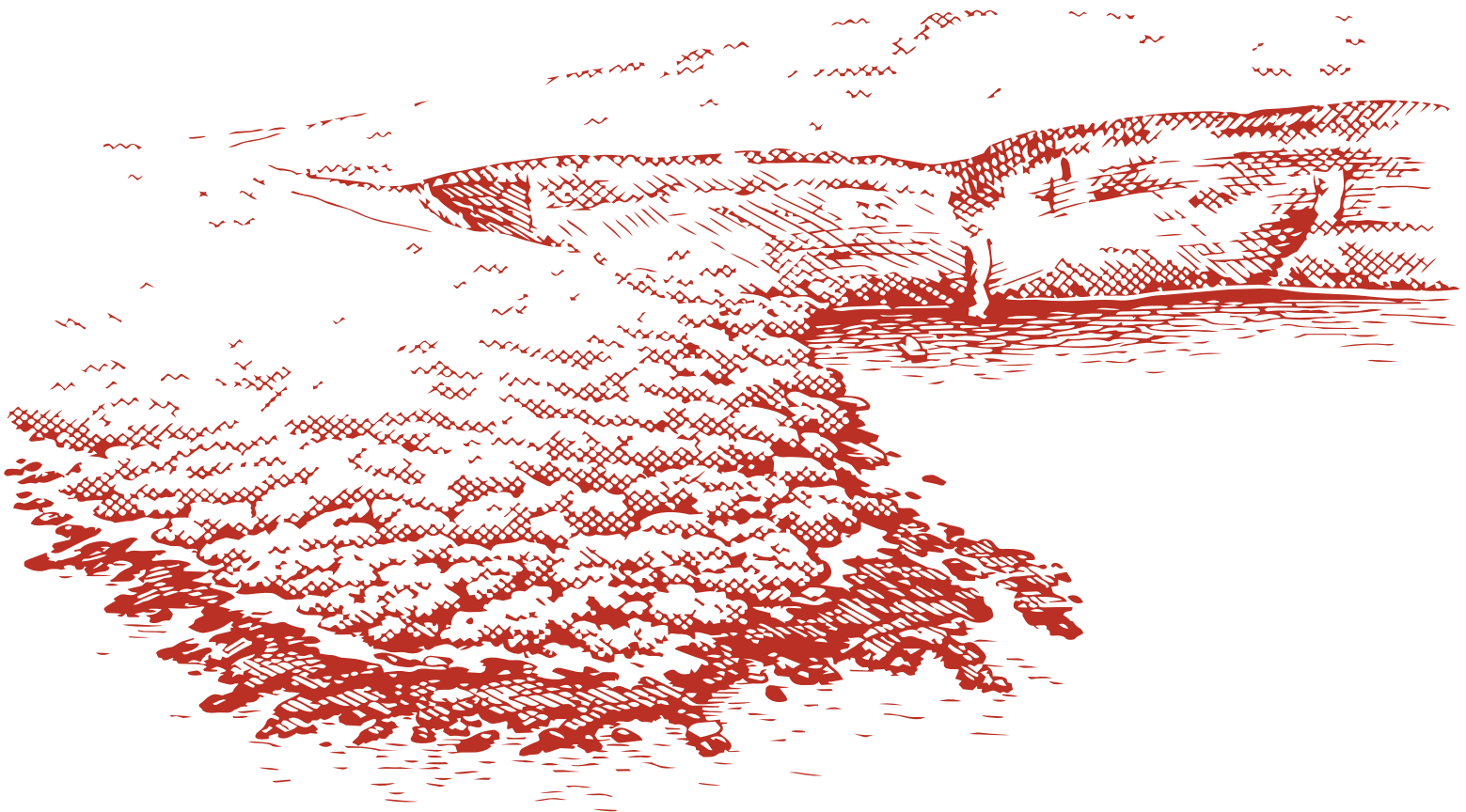
HOTSPOT:

KEALAKEKUA BAY & KA'AWALOA

LOCATION: KEALAKEKUA, KONA, HAWAI'I

Kealakekua Bay and Ka'awaloa form a culturally rich coastal landscape once home to a thriving chiefly center sustained by local fisheries, *'opelu ko'a* (mackerel gathering sites), anchialine pools, *puna wai* (water sources), and ceremonial sites. The shoreline includes Hikiau Heiau, historic village platforms, and portions of the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail, all framed by steep cliffs and narrow coastal flats that constrict movement and concentrate use. The bay's geology and hydrology, including deep-water coral reefs, freshwater upwellings, and calm nearshore areas, supported extensive traditional subsistence and ceremonial practices for generations, and which remain deeply important to lineal descendants today.

Today, Kealakekua Bay is one of the island's most heavily visited marine destinations. Shoreline access at Nāpo'opo'o, a steep and eroded trail to Ka'awaloa and the Captain Cook Monument, and a high volume of kayak, snorkel, and other vessel tours bring thousands of visitors into a Marine Life Conservation District (MLCD) each week. Dozens of commercial operators, including kayak outfitters, snorkel charters, shore-based guides, and motor vessels, use the bay, creating overlapping traffic in an ecologically sensitive zone. These visitation patterns contribute to reef damage, concentrated wildlife disturbance, erosion on the Ka'awaloa Trail, unsafe and illegal roadside parking, congestion on Nāpo'opo'o Road, and strain on the small neighboring residential community and its limited infrastructure.



In DMAP engagement on Hawai'i Island, residents described cumulative pressure from visitor crowding, improper behavior in culturally sensitive spaces, blocked driveways, and safety issues on the Ka'awaloa Trail. Community members emphasized loss of quiet needed for ceremonies and fishing, the displacement of traditional uses, and growing burdens linked to short-term vacation rental (STVR) density in Nāpo'opo'o. Stakeholders also pointed to gaps in orientation, enforcement, signage, and interagency coordination that leave both land- and water-based access largely unmanaged. While industry participants did not address Kealahou specifically, they broadly supported clearer expectations for visitors, predictable systems at sensitive sites, and consistent pre-arrival education: approaches that align directly with concerns raised by Kealahou residents.

In 2023, the **Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR)** established a long-term management framework for Kealahou Bay through the *Kealahou Bay State Historical Park Master Plan*, which is designed to guide stewardship of park lands, facilities, visitor access, interpretation, and coordination with ocean management agencies. The plan emphasizes protecting cultural and natural resources, improving visitor behavior and understanding, and strengthening interagency coordination, and was informed through extensive community engagement, including consultation with local organization Ho'āla Kealahou Nui and a review of the *Kealahou Bay Community Action Plan (CAP)*. DMAP actions for Kealahou Bay & Ka'awaloa focus on supporting visitor-facing, coordination, and education components that align with DLNR's management framework, while complementing ongoing community-led stewardship efforts beyond park boundaries.

Other community-led, agency-led, or otherwise funded efforts that advance the following related priorities may also be considered aligned with destination management outcomes for the area:

1. **Protection of cultural and lineal descendant practice**, including safeguarding ceremonial spaces, subsistence activities, and quiet needed for cultural use
2. **Stewardship of marine and coastal ecosystems**, particularly coral reefs, wildlife habitats, freshwater influences, and shoreline conditions within the MLCD
3. **Managed visitor access across land and water**, reducing congestion, unsafe parking, and cumulative pressure at shoreline and trail access points
4. **Improved visitor orientation**, grounded in cultural protocol, safety expectations, and ecological awareness before and upon arrival
5. **Better alignment of guided tour and commercial activity with resource capacity**, including group size, timing, routes, and interaction standards on land and in the water

HOTSPOT INDICATORS

OVERALL PRIORITY

IDENTIFICATION

Access Infrastructure
& Arrival Pressure

On-Site Capacity
& Crowd Pressure

Community Strain
& Resident Impact

Site Degradation
& Maintenance Stress

Cultural Sensitivity

Environmental
Sensitivity

Safety & Risk

Visibility & Promotion

Local Economic
Benefit & Reciprocity

Jurisdictional Clarity
& Legality of Access

Cost & Resource
Demand

Implementation
Timeline & Complexity

DMAP Alignment &
Partnership Leverage

CONTEXT & COMPOUNDING FACTORS

FEASIBILITY & VIABILITY

SITE SWOT

STRENGTHS

- Deep cultural significance and ancestral stewardship
- Active lineal descendant presence and community leadership
- *Kealahou Bay State Historical Park Master Plan* outlines clear, agency-defined, community-informed management direction
- High visitor interest in cultural and ecological education
- MLCD status supports ongoing resource protection

OPPORTUNITIES

- Reservation and shuttle system to manage flows
- Unified pre-arrival education to guide behavior
- Code of Conduct adoption across visitor channels
- Steward-led on-site orientation reinforcing cultural values
- Community-defined rest days to relieve resource pressure
- Alternative offerings to support affected operators
- Increased historical awareness among visitors (e.g., Ka'awaloa, not just Captain Cook Monument)

WEAKNESSES

- Steep trail and shoreline access create hazards
- Overlapping water uses strain fragile reef systems
- Limited parking and frequent roadside congestion
- Inconsistent visitor orientation across many operators

THREATS

- Coral and other marine life damage and disturbance from high ocean visitor volumes
- Erosion and safety risks on Ka'awaloa Trail
- Wildlife disturbance from concentrated marine activity
- Conflicts from unmanaged shoreline and road use
- Continued strain without coordinated management system

VERY HIGH/VERY LOW

HIGH/LOW

MODERATE

LOW/HIGH

N/A

*PLEASE SEE COLOR SCALE ON PAGE 23 FOR HOTSPOT ANALYSIS

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS, KEALAKEKUA BAY & KA'AWALOA (KBK)

KBK-1: IMPLEMENT A RESERVATION-BASED ACCESS SYSTEM FOR KEALAKEKUA BAY

KBK-1



Management Strategy: Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities

Goal: Procure and support a place-based, contracted organization to establish and operate a reservation-based access system for Kealahou Bay that improves visitor flow, supports culturally grounded expectations, and aligns with DLNR management protocols.

Justification: DLNR's *Kealahou Bay State Historical Park Master Plan* identifies the need for stronger visitor access and capacity management, clearer expectations for visitor behavior, and improved coordination across land- and water-based entry points to protect cultural and natural resources and reduce impacts on the surrounding communities. Successfully realizing these objectives is made easier with visitor-facing systems that operate upstream of arrival and function as tools for proactively managing visitor volume, circulation, and cumulative impact, complementing on-site management and enforcement.

Through this action, HTA will lead a **competitive, place-based procurement process** to contract a local organization responsible for establishing and operating a reservation-based access system in coordination with DLNR. This approach supports locally grounded stewardship while creating a practical mechanism for managing visitor traffic and impacts over time. HTA also directly supports dissemination, outreach, and user testing in collaboration with the contracted visitor management organization, leveraging its relationships with visitor-facing channels and businesses to support effective rollout and ongoing refinement.

Lead: Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA): *procurement and program support*

Projected partners:

- Contracted management organization: *system development & operations*
- Department of Land & Natural Resources (DLNR) – State Parks: *management alignment*
- Local stewardship organizations and lineal descendants: *place-based and cultural guidance*

Implementation framework:

PHASE	PROPOSED ACTION STEPS
FY 2027	HTA: • Conduct a competitive procurement or selection process to identify an ‘āina-based organization in Kona moku to establish and operate a reservation-based access system for Kealahou Bay • Define scope, expectations, and alignment requirements with DLNR policies, protocols, and managed-access best practices • Select and contract a visitor management organization with demonstrated community relationships and operational capacity • + contracted organization: Support user testing with DLNR, technical partners, community representatives, operators, and visitor-industry partners Contracted organization: • Identify, select, and implement a reservation system platform suitable for Kealahou Bay access-management needs • Align system requirements with the Kealahou Bay State Historical Park Master Plan, DLNR policies, and statewide managed-access best practices • Assess and integrate existing visitor education and guidance materials developed by agency partners and community organizations, refining where needed • Identify remaining content needed or functional gaps (e.g., arrival procedures, group bookings, cancellations, safety notices, accessibility needs) • Configure system features for reservation windows, visitor caps, closures, required visitor information, and acknowledgment of visitor expectations or codes of conduct
FY 2028-2029 (ONGOING)	Contracted visitor management organization: • Publicly launch and operate the reservation-based access system • Monitor system performance during implementation, including visitor compliance, capacity use, and operational issues • Refine system features and operational protocols over time based on observed use patterns, capacity needs, and on-the-ground conditions • Share basic, aggregated visitor data (e.g., visitation levels, general place-of-origin trends) with HTA on a regular basis HTA + DLNR: • Coordinate dissemination and visitor-facing communications through appropriate channels (e.g., GoHawaii.com, industry communications), consistent with DLNR protocols

FY 2028-2029
(ONGOING)

- Support adjustments to reservation parameters, visitor guidance, and coordination processes as needed during operations
- Align reservation operations with on-site management, stewardship presence, and related Kealahou Bay actions
- Evaluate system effectiveness in managing visitor volume, traffic, and impacts, and identify opportunities for longer-term stability, refinement, or expansion

Anticipated deliverables:

Materials

- Executed, place-based contract with a contracted visitor management organization to establish and operate a reservation-based access system for Kealahou Bay
- Fully configured and launched reservation-based access system aligned with DLNR protocols
- Reservation confirmations and pre-arrival guidance that address visitor flow, access conditions, safety, and behavior expectations
- Multilingual and accessibility-enhanced visitor-facing content embedded within the reservation system

Processes

- Competitive, place-based procurement process completed by HTA
- Governance and coordination protocols among HTA, DLNR, and the contracted organization
- Established reservation workflows (e.g., visitor caps, reservation windows, closures, cancellations, accessibility requests)
- User testing completed with testers including DLNR, local stewardship groups, operators, visitor industry, lineal descendant, and resident stakeholders
- Coordinated dissemination and rollout through visitor-facing channels and industry partners
- Regular sharing of aggregated reservation and usage data with HTA and agency partners to support understanding of visitor volume, timing, and access patterns

Intended outcomes:

- A locally-operated reservation-based access system that actively manages visitor volume, traffic, and cumulative impacts at Kealahou Bay
- More predictable and orderly visitor arrival patterns that improve safety and reduce congestion.
- Clear pre-arrival expectations that support appropriate visitor behavior and compliance
- Improved State understanding of visitor traffic, timing, and behavior patterns to inform adaptive management and future decision-making
- A durable visitor-management framework that supports long-term stewardship and related Kealahou Bay DMAP actions (KBK-2, KBK-3, KBK-4)

KBK-2: IMPLEMENT AN ON-SITE VISITOR EXPERIENCE PATHWAY FOR KEALAKEKUA BAY (INCLUDING SHUTTLE, ORIENTATION, STEWARDS, SIGNAGE, AND APP EXPERIENCE)

KBK-2



Management Strategy: Strengthen Place-Based Visitor Understanding

Goal: Procure and implement a coordinated on-site visitor experience pathway that supports safe access, reinforces cultural and safety expectations, and aligns with the *State Historical Park Master Plan*.

Justification: DLNR's *Kealahou Bay State Historical Park Master Plan* identifies the need to address visitor pressure, improve safety, strengthen cultural interpretation, and enhance coordination at key access points within the park in order to protect cultural and natural resources and reduce conflicts and congestion. While the plan does not prescribe specific operational mechanisms, it clearly establishes the need for improved visitor orientation, circulation, and access management to support effective stewardship.

This action advances those objectives by developing a coordinated, visitor-facing on-site experience pathway including arrival management, shuttle-based orientation, stewards, signage, and digital tools. Through this action, HTA leads a place-based procurement process to contract a local organization to design, implement, and operate these on-site elements in coordination with DLNR. This approach supports locally grounded stewardship, improves on-site visitor flow, safety, and experience, and ensures that visitor-facing systems are aligned with State protocols while remaining responsive to site-specific conditions.

Lead: Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA): *procurement and program support, recruiting funding partners*

Projected partners:

- Contracted management organization: *system development & operations*
- Department of Land & Natural Resources (DLNR) – State Parks: *management alignment*
- Local stewardship organizations and lineal descendants: *place-based and cultural guidance*

Implementation framework:

PHASE	PROPOSED ACTION STEPS
FY 2027	HTA: • Conduct a competitive procurement or selection process to identify an 'āina-based organization in Kona moku to develop and operate on-site visitor experience elements • + DLNR: Define scope, expectations, and alignment requirements with the Kealahou Bay State Historical Park Master Plan and DLNR protocols • Select and contract an organization with demonstrated community relationships and capacity to implement and operate an on-site visitor experience pathway • Support user testing and feedback collection with community representatives, operators, visitor-industry partners, and agency staff

FY 2027
(CONT.)

Contracted visitor management organization (with HTA & DLNR support):

- Review existing cultural, interpretive, safety, and access guidance developed by agencies and community partners to identify on-site needs and remaining gaps
- Design or refine coordinated arrival, staging, and shuttle-orientation processes aligned with DLNR protocols, site constraints, and observed visitor movement
- Develop orientation materials and/or media for shuttle users, which may include short-form video content for on-site screening and/or online access
- Design or refine DLNR-permitted wayfinding, cultural interpretation, and safety communication elements, such as signage or visual cues, for staging areas, shuttle points, and shoreline access
- Identify potential steward roles, locations, and interaction points, and refine training needs based on site conditions and observed visitor behavior
- Explore digital or QR-linked tools to support on-site visitor orientation
- Conduct structured testing of on-site visitor experience elements, such as arrival flow, staging, orientation materials, signage clarity, and steward interactions

FY 2028-2029
(ONGOING)

Contracted visitor management organization:

- Launch and operate the on-site visitor experience pathway
- Refine on-site orientation materials, signage, and steward tools based on observed conditions, visitor patterns, and capacity needs, as needed,
- Integrate on-site orientation with the reservation system (KBK-1), as appropriate
- Adjust arrivals, staging, visitor flow, and safety or cultural messaging, as needed

HTA:

- Support ongoing outreach and coordination with visitor-industry partners
- Support refinement of visitor-facing elements based on evaluations and input

Anticipated deliverables:

Materials

- Executed, place-based contract with a qualified organization
- Community-informed orientation materials for shuttle users and on-site visitors
- DLNR-permitted wayfinding, cultural interpretation, and safety communication elements for staging areas, shuttle points, and shoreline access
- Digital or QR-linked visitor guidance tools supporting orientation and visitor understanding

Processes

- Defined arrival, staging, and shuttle-orientation processes aligned with DLNR protocols
- Steward deployment framework outlining roles, placement, and visitor interaction approaches
- Integrated processes linking the reservation system (KBK-1) with on-site orientation
- Structured user testing completed with testers including the community, lineal descendants, experience operators, visitor industry partners, 'āina stewards, visitors, and agencies
- Fully launched and operational on-site visitor experience pathway, with mechanisms in place for ongoing refinement based on observed conditions and feedback

Intended outcomes:

- Visitors receive a culturally grounded on-site orientation that supports respectful engagement
- Predictable arrival and shuttle processes reduce congestion and confusion
- Stewards are equipped to reinforce CAP priorities and guide visitors effectively and informatively
- On-site visitor flow is smooth, safe, and aligned with community expectations

KBK-3: DISSEMINATE THE BAY'S CODE OF CONDUCT ACROSS VISITOR-FACING CHANNELS

Management Strategy: Strengthen Place-Based Visitor Understanding;
Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship



Goal: Disseminate the Kealahou Bay Code of Conduct across relevant visitor channels (e.g., businesses, accommodations, tour providers, transportation services, and digital platforms so that early, community-guided orientation to the bay becomes consistent and widespread before visitors arrive on-site.

Justification: During DMAP engagement, stakeholders emphasized that respectful visitor behavior begins with early orientation, well before arrival at sensitive sites. Short-term vacation rental (STVR) owners and other businesses also expressed a desire to be more included in efforts to manage visitor impacts and share expectations with guests. The Kealahou Bay Code of Conduct was developed through the process that produced the *Kealahou Bay Community Action Plan (CAP)*, which is included as an appendix to DLNR's *Kealahou Bay State Historical Park Master Plan*. This action supports dissemination of the community-developed Code of Conduct through the Kona visitor environment, helping ensure that expectations for respectful behavior are shared consistently across visitor-facing touchpoints. Stakeholders also noted strong community support for the Island of Hawai'i Pono Pledge; where appropriate, aligning or co-locating Code of Conduct materials with existing Pono Pledge channels can reinforce consistent, values-based messaging for both the island and the bay.

Lead: Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA): *dissemination coordination*

Projected partners:

- Department of Land & Natural Resources – State Parks: *content alignment*
- Place-based community stewardship organization(s): *content stewardship*
- County of Hawai'i – Research & Development (R&D): *pono Pledge alignment*
- On-island destination marketing organization (DMO): *business outreach*

Additional stakeholders:

- Visitor-industry partners and other Kona-area businesses: *voluntary adoption*

Implementation framework:

PHASE	PROPOSED ACTION STEPS
FY 2027	HTA: • Integrate the Code of Conduct into GoHawaii.com website • + Place-based community stewardship organization(s): ◦ Develop adaptable guidance and dissemination tools for use by visitor-facing businesses and operators ◦ Coordinate with DLNR to ensure materials align with the Kealahou Bay Code of Conduct and related site protocols • + DMO: Conduct targeted outreach to Kona-side accommodations, STVRs, nearby businesses, and bay-serving operators to encourage awareness, voluntary adoption, and consistent use of Code of Conduct materials • + R&D: Explore opportunities to align or co-locate Kealahou Bay guidance with existing Island of Hawai'i Pono Pledge channels where appropriate
FY 2028-2029 (ONGOING)	HTA: • Conduct periodic follow-up with refresh materials, support consistency, and respond to evolving site conditions, visitor operations, or communication needs • + DMO: ◦ Expand and sustain adoption among visitor-facing businesses and operators using updated materials and outreach approaches ◦ Support businesses and operators in incorporating the Code of Conduct into pre-arrival and pre-visit communications, confirmations, and briefings, as appropriate

Anticipated deliverables:

- Code of Conduct dissemination package (QR cards, digital assets, scripts, printable materials) distributed to **100% of bay-serving operators** (snorkel charters, kayak operators, guides)
- Adoption of the Code of Conduct by **at least 50 STVR units** in Kealahou, Captain Cook, and/or Hōnaunau, representing multiple **participating property managers/hosts**.
- Adoption by **at least five Kona area hotels** (e.g., lobby materials, in-room placement)
- Participation from **at least ten local restaurants, cafés, shops, or community-facing businesses** in the immediate Kealahou/Captain Cook corridor
- Code of Conduct integrated into **GoHawaii.com's Hawai'i Island education pages** and featured in at least three HTA or DMO social media posts supporting rollout
- Completion of a targeted outreach campaign reaching **150+ local businesses and operators** across the Kona coast

KBK-3

Intended outcomes:

- Early visitor orientation becomes widespread through consistent off-site messaging
- Kona-side businesses and bay-serving operators widely share the Code of Conduct
- Visitors receive clear, community-guided behavior expectations before arriving at the bay
- Improved behavior and reduced strain at Kealahou Bay
- Strong alignment between CAP values and broader visitor-industry practices

KBK-4: ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT A PROACTIVE REST-DAY COMMUNICATIONS AND VISITOR INDUSTRY SUPPORT PROCESS FOR KEALAKEKUA BAY

KBK-4

Management Strategy: Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship



Goal: Proactively establish a clear communication and visitor industry business-support program that can be activated to support any future rest days or closures at Kealahou Bay and/or Ka'awaloa.

Justification: The *Kealahou Bay Community Action Plan*, included within DLNR's *Kealahou Bay State Historical Park Master Plan*, identifies rest days and periods of reduced access (grounded in cultural concepts such as kapu) as a potential tool for reducing ecological, cultural, and community strain at the site. During DMAP engagement across Hawai'i Island, residents and cultural practitioners emphasized that continuous, unmanaged use of resources is unsustainable, while industry participants noted that long-term environmental degradation undermines both community well-being and the visitor economy.

Although decisions related to rest days or closures fall under DLNR authority, this action reflects a proactive approach to preparedness. HTA's role is to establish visitor-facing communication pathways and business-support mechanisms in advance, so that if rest days were to be implemented at any site, clear information and economic transition support can be deployed quickly and consistently. This supports stewardship goals while minimizing confusion for visitors and disruption for local businesses as access conditions evolve.

Lead: Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA): *framework development & coordination*

Projected partners:

- Department of Land & Natural Resources – State Parks, Aquatic Resources (DAR), Boating & Ocean Recreation (DOBOR): *land and marine management, ocean access input*
- Tour and ocean recreation operators: *operational transition input*
- On-island destination marketing organization (DMO): *local tourism network context*

Implementation framework:

PHASE	PROPOSED ACTION STEPS
FY 2028	HTA: - Define the scope and purpose of a rest-day communication and business-support framework, clarifying that it is scenario-based and non-binding - Identify the types of visitor-facing channels (e.g., digital platforms, accommodations, operators) that would be involved in disseminating rest-day information if needed - Map categories of visitor-industry businesses that could be affected by rest days and outline potential support pathways - Conduct informational conversations or listening sessions with operators and community partners to understand what types of communication and transition support would be most useful under changing access conditions - Develop example guidance for place-appropriate alternative offerings or adjustments that businesses could consider during rest periods, explicitly for planning purposes only + DLNR: Draft sample, non-deployed communication templates and messaging approaches for potential rest days or temporary closures
FY 2029 (IF NEEDED)	HTA: - Finalize and document the framework based on feedback and agency input - Identify how the framework could interface with existing visitor-facing systems (e.g., reservation messaging, on-site orientation, Code of Conduct dissemination) if activated in the future - Document conditions in which the framework could be updated or activated, noting that use would require separate decisions, coordination, and resources - Periodically review the framework to ensure continued relevance as site conditions, management approaches, or visitor patterns evolve

Anticipated deliverables:

- A documented rest-day communication and business-support framework for Kealahou Bay
- Sample, non-deployed communication templates for visitor-facing channels
- Scenario-based guidance outlining potential business-support approaches
- Summary of operator and community input informing framework design

Intended outcomes:

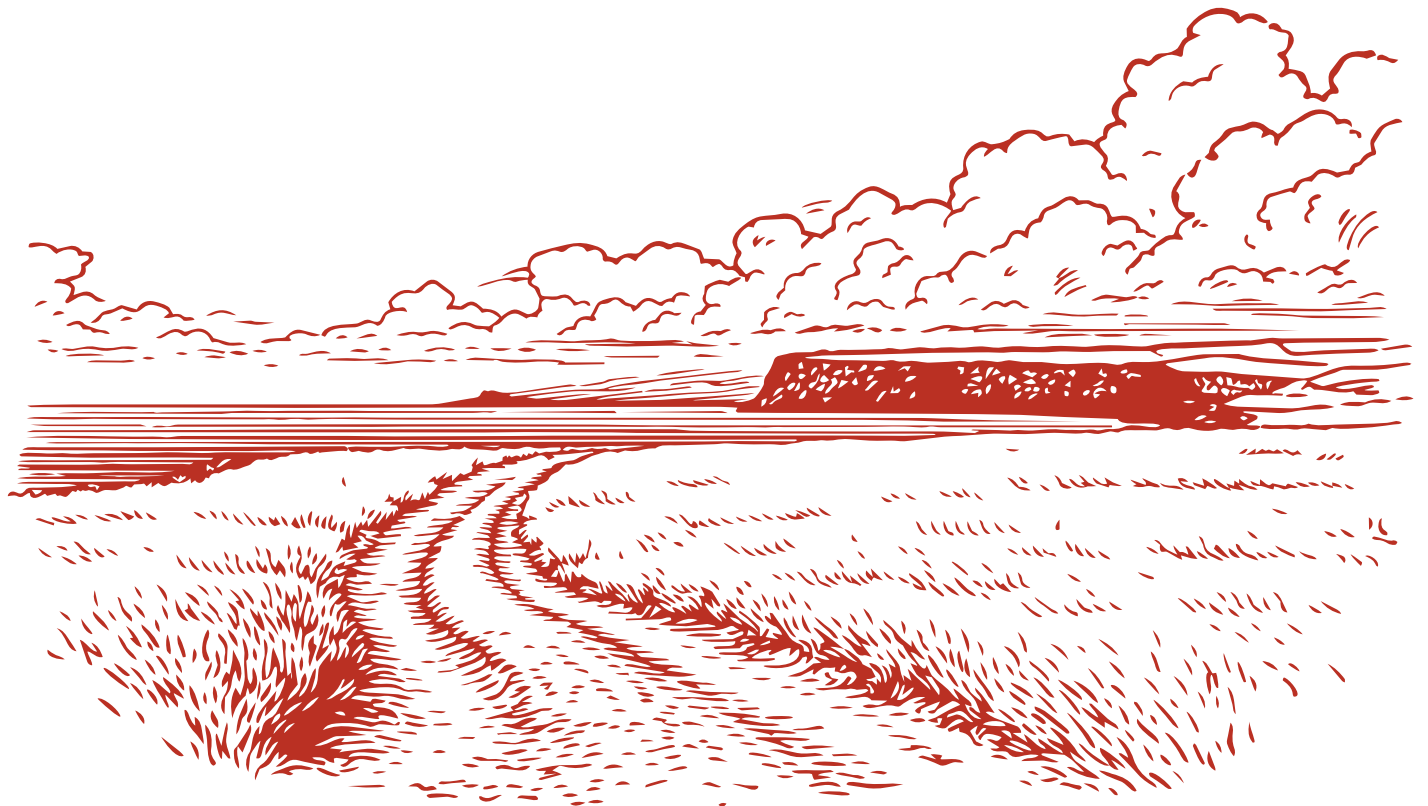
- Greater clarity around how visitor communication and business support could function if access conditions change
- Reduced risk of confusion or ad hoc responses in the event of future management decisions
- Stronger shared understanding among HTA, DLNR, community partners, and the visitor industry
- A thoughtful, place-aware foundation for future decision-making without presuming outcomes

SITE UNDER STRAIN: KA LAE

LOCATION: KAMĀ'OA, PU'U'EO, KE; KA'Ū, HAWAI'I

Ka Lae, the southernmost point in the Hawaiian Islands, is a *wahi pana* (storied place) of deep cultural and genealogical importance to lineal descendants and Ka'ū Hawaiian Home Lands beneficiaries. The area has long been a place of settlement, fishing, ceremony, and voyaging, with mo'olelo passed down that describe Ka Lae as an early place of arrival for Polynesian ancestors. Fishing shrines, canoe tie-off points carved into the cliffs, and generations of continued fishing practice reflect Ka Lae's role as a living cultural landscape on sensitive coastal lands managed by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL).

The coastline's iconic landscape, geographic significance, and remote access draw increasing numbers of visitors seeking scenic views, cliffside recreation, and access to nearby destinations such as Papakōlea and Pu'u Mahana. This visitor interest has played a role in recurring challenges identified in DHHL's *South Point Resources Management Plan* (2016), including unmanaged vehicle access, informal parking on sensitive lands, erosion, driving across cultural landscapes (including burial areas), and damage to historic and cultural sites. Impacts on coastal and marine resources, including habitats used by threatened and endangered species, as well as the accumulation of waste, have further intensified pressure on the area. The absence of restrooms and other infrastructure contributes to environmental, cultural, and community impacts, while also diminishing the visitor experience and increasing health and safety concerns in a remote location not designed for sustained or unmanaged visitor use.



Advisory Group members emphasized that Ka Lae deserves renewed attention due to the mismatch between visitor demand and the area's cultural sensitivity, environmental conditions, and management capacity. While DHHL's existing plan provides a clear framework grounded in beneficiary priorities and resource protection, progress has stalled and visitor pressures continue to be a factor contributing to site degradation. Ka Lae is sought out by visitors yet lacks the visitor-facing systems needed to set expectations, guide behavior, and reduce harm to the area.

In alignment with DHHL's kuleana and the direction of the existing plan, this DMAP includes an action focused on reconvening partners, re-engaging the management plan, and supporting visitor-facing elements of DHHL-led improvements related to access management, education, safety, and protection of cultural and natural resources.

Other community-led, agency-led, or otherwise funded efforts that advance the following priorities may be considered aligned with destination management outcomes for the area:

1. **Protection of cultural landscapes and ancestral sites**, including burial areas, fishing *'ahu* (altars), canoe tie-off points, and living cultural and subsistence practices tied to the coastline
2. **Managed vehicle access and parking** to prevent off-road driving, erosion, and damage
3. **Clear visitor expectations** grounded in mo'olelo, place-based values, and beneficiary priorities
4. **Reduction of environmental degradation**, including impacts to coastal ecosystems, nearshore waters, and habitats for threatened and endangered species
5. **Improved safety**, particularly related to cliffside hazards and emergency access limitations
6. **Sanitation and waste management** appropriate to the site's remoteness and cultural sensitivity

HOTSPOT INDICATORS

OVERALL PRIORITY

IDENTIFICATION

CONTEXT & COMPOUNDING FACTORS

FEASIBILITY & VIABILITY

	Access Infrastructure & Arrival Pressure
	On-Site Capacity & Crowd Pressure
	Community Strain & Resident Impact
	Site Degradation & Maintenance Stress
	Cultural Sensitivity
	Environmental Sensitivity
	Safety & Risk
	Visibility & Promotion
	Local Economic Benefit & Reciprocity
	Jurisdictional Clarity & Legality of Access
	Cost & Resource Demand
	Implementation Timeline & Complexity
	DMAP Alignment & Partnership Leverage

SITE SWOT

STRENGTHS

- Remote, iconic landscape with strong cultural identity
- Deep ancestral ties among Ka'ū beneficiaries
- Long-standing fishing practices and living cultural 'ike
- Existing DHHL plan guides management direction
- High visitor interest in scenery and heritage
- Large open coastal area disperses some use

OPPORTUNITIES

- Re-engaging DHHL plan to restart progress
- Coordinated access and parking management system
- Installation of trash cans and comfort stations
- Education rooted in *Ka'ū mo'olelo* (narratives) and place-based values
- Cultural interpretation rooted in Ka'ū mo'olelo
- Collaborative stewardship with local beneficiaries

WEAKNESSES

- Remote location limits services and oversight
- Unmanaged parking and vehicle access strain natural and cultural resources
- Lack of restrooms and trash facilities contributes to environmental degradation
- Unsafe cliffside movement and lack of facilities
- Limited on-site orientation for visitor behavior
- Long-standing plan with stalled implementation

THREATS

- Sensitive coastal ecosystems damaged by off-road use
- Improper waste disposal affecting land, nearshore waters, and community well-being
- Commercial promotion increasing visitation without capacity or management
- Increasing traffic wearing down narrow access road
- Continued strain without unified agency coordination
- Resource degradation impacting lineal descendant practices, ancestral remains, and marine resources

VERY HIGH/VERY LOW

HIGH/LOW

MODERATE

LOW/HIGH

N/A

*PLEASE SEE COLOR SCALE ON PAGE 23 FOR HOTSPOT ANALYSIS

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS, KA LAE (KL)

KL-1: RE-ENGAGE AND ADVANCE PRIORITY COMPONENTS OF DHHL'S KA LAE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN (2016)

KL-1

Management Strategy: Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship



Goal: Re-engage partners to review, update, and begin advancing the 2016 DHHL *South Point Resources Management Plan*, with attention to its visitor-related access, safety, signage, and components related to care of natural and cultural resources.

Justification: DHHL's *South Point Resources Management Plan* (2016) offers an established, community-informed framework for stewarding Ka Lae. Hawai'i Island DMAP Advisory Group members noted that key components of the plan have not advanced in a decade and renewed interagency coordination is needed to move priority elements forward. Re-engaging the plan under DHHL's leadership ensures that decisions remain grounded in the original community consultation and in DHHL's responsibility for Ka Lae.

This plan is based in the statewide mandate under Chapter 201b-3(a)(14) of Hawai'i Revised Statutes directing HTA to support destination management efforts that reduce visitor-related strain, improve visitor experiences, protect natural and cultural resources, and prevent the overtaxing of sites. As a result, its attention falls on portions of the plan that intersect with visitor impacts, access, safety, communication, and resource pressure. This focus reflects the purpose of the DMAP, **not a reprioritization of DHHL's broader kuleana**. Within that scope, HTA can support DHHL by helping to coordinate partners and develop visitor-facing communication/design assets for any DHHL-led actions related to visitor movement, access, behavioral recommendations, prohibitions, or safety.

Lead: Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL): *plan owner & convenor*

Projected convening participants:

- Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA): *coordination & visitor-facing support*
- Community cultural practitioners and local stewardship groups, including (but not limited to) 'Iewe Hānau O Ka 'Āina and the Hawai'i Wildlife Fund: *cultural & place-based input*
- Ka'ū Hawaiian Home Lands Association: *community and homestead representation*
- County of Hawai'i – Public Works (DPW) Roads, Planning, Police: *parking, land-use, safety*
- Hawai'i Department of Land & Natural Resources – relevant divisions: *resource protection input*
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: *federal resource stewardship input*
- U.S. Department of the Interior – Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail: *trail and landscape input*

Implementation framework:

PHASE	PROPOSED ACTION STEPS
FY 2027	DHHL: Convene agency partners to revisit the 2016 plan All Partners: As part of a broader review, discuss visitor-related plan elements relevant to the DMAP, such as: (1) access and parking management; (2) signage, interpretation, and wayfinding; (3) visitor flow and movement patterns; (4) ‘āina care guidance and sensitive-area protection; (5) pedestrian safety and shoreline pathways; (6) sanitation and restrooms HTA: Provide coordination support for the reconvening process within the scope of the Authority’s mandate
FY 2028-2029 (ONGOING)	DHHL: Advance selected plan components emerging from the FY 2027 reconvening HTA: - Support DHHL in manners aligned with HTA’s mission and scope (e.g., parking fee feasibility, wayfinding signage design and installation, visitor education materials, visitor industry-facing materials) - Disseminate visitor communication about any changes to management, access, etc. across industry channels

Anticipated deliverables:

- At least one major FY 2027 DHHL-led reconvening with aligned partners
- Updated or reaffirmed plan components reflecting current needs
- Documented implementation pathways for DHHL-led priorities
- Visitor-facing communication materials drafted for DHHL use

Intended outcomes:

- Renewed agency and community engagement with the 2016 DHHL plan
- Momentum restored for a long-dormant stewardship framework

ADDITIONAL SITES UNDER STRAIN

In addition to **priority hotspots**, stakeholders identified other hotspots and sites under strain across Hawai'i Island experiencing varying levels of tourism-related strain, access challenges, or community concern. These sites are listed below. While they were not advanced for targeted action in this DMAP cycle due to resource limitations, **other management actions** included in the following section are designed to shape destination-wide conditions in ways that are intended to improve conditions at multiple sites under strain.

Furthermore, work undertaken by community organizations, agencies, or other partners at these sites that advances the statewide destination management principles described in Section 1 and the island-specific management strategies outlined in Section 3 may be considered aligned with destination management objectives, where such efforts demonstrably contribute to improved safety and experience, reduced strain, cultural or environmental stewardship, and community well-being. The absence of site-specific actions in this plan is not meant to preclude aligned management efforts from occurring, provided such efforts remain consistent with all applicable legal restrictions, cultural protocols, and site-specific access limitations.

On that note, some sites may have **restricted or prohibited access** due to legal restrictions, access across privately held land, safety hazards, or presence of sensitive resources. Their inclusion reflects **observed or reported visitation and associated management concerns**, not an indication that they are appropriate for visitation or that intervention is warranted outside of authorized management actions.

HTA will continue to monitor these sites for changes in conditions, compounding pressures, and readiness for coordinated management action. As feasibility, resources, or partnerships evolve, these locations may be addressed within this DMAP cycle or considered for more targeted action in future DMAP cycles.

Additional Hotspots

- Ho'okena Beach*
- Kahalu'u Bay*
- Keauhou Bay*
- Pololū Valley*
- Pohoiki ("Isaac Hale Beach Park")
- Punalu'u*
- Waipi'o Valley*

Additional Sites Under Strain

- 'Anaeho'omalu Bay
- Hāpuna Beach State Recreation Area
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park*
- Hōnaunau (& Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau)*
- Kailua Pier*
- Kaloko-Honokōhau
- Kekaha Kai (Kona Coast) State Park
- Kīholo State Park Reserve
- Kua Bay
- Kumukahi*
- La'aloa Beach ("Magic Sands")*
- Laupāhoehoe
- Māhukona*
- Maunakea*
- Miloli'i*
- Mo'okini Heiau
- Wailuku River State Park

* Hotspot in 2021-2023 Hawai'i Island DMAP

06. OTHER ACTIONS



This Destination Management Action Plan (DMAP) is **first and foremost focused on hotspots and sites under strain**. As described in the preceding sections, these are critical locations where tourism-related pressure, safety risks, and impacts on cultural and natural resources are most acute, and where targeted, site-specific management is most urgently needed. These sites emerged consistently through community and industry stakeholder engagement and remain the central priority of this plan.

At the same time, stakeholders were clear that **conditions at individual sites do not occur in isolation**.

Visitor behavior at hotspots is shaped by decisions made elsewhere in the destination system: where visitors are encouraged to go, what they understand before arrival on-island or at specific sites, how broad access is managed, and how agencies and partners coordinate across the island. Research conducted at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa has observed that when access is restricted at a heavily visited location, displaced visitor demand often shifts to nearby sites rather than dissipating, reinforcing the need to consider how management at individual sites influences conditions elsewhere (Moromizato 2025). Without attention to these broader dynamics, even well-designed site-specific actions are more difficult to sustain and new hotspots can arise.

For this reason, the DMAP includes a limited set of other actions that **support and reinforce hotspot and site-specific management**. These actions align with Hawai'i Island's destination management strategies (**Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities; Strengthen Place-Based Visitor Understanding; and Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship**) and respond to recurring calls for action raised through stakeholder engagement. Each action was refined in consultation with the Hawai'i Island DMAP Advisory Group and relevant partners to best ensure alignment, feasibility, and shared accountability.

Unlike the hotspot and site-specific actions presented earlier in this plan, the actions in this section are not accompanied by multi-year implementation frameworks with year-by-year action steps or designations for leads or partners. This distinction is intentional. Many of these actions will be advanced through existing programs, initiatives, and planning processes that operate on their own update cycles within HTA and other agencies, where duplicative timelines would add limited value. Others rely on interagency coordination that cannot be effectively sequenced in advance. In these cases, flexibility is essential to ensure actions can be assigned, integrated, timed, and adapted as conditions evolve.

This portion of the plan is organized into two complementary sections:

1. **Sites of Opportunity** recognize that managing visitor pressure also involves shaping where visitors are encouraged to go. By intentionally strengthening underutilized areas with community interest and capacity to host more visitors, the plan seeks to redistribute visitor traffic and reduce pressure on sensitive sites. In this context, destination activation functions as a management tool used to support hotspot relief, not simply a strategy for growth.

This plan designates **Greater Hilo** as a **Site of Opportunity**. Compared to the heavily visited Kona side, Hilo receives far fewer visitors despite its rich cultural and historical assets, strong local business base, and community interest in hosting visitors more intentionally. Designating Hilo as a Site of Opportunity enables targeted, place-based management initiatives that strengthen the area as a cultural anchor for the island, support local economic activity, and help redirect visitor presence away from local hotspots like the Keaukaha coastline.

2. Island-Wide Actions (IW) strengthen destination-wide systems and initiatives that support site-specific management. While this DMAP is centered on hotspots and sites under strain, these island-wide actions reflect the issues and ideas for action most frequently raised by community members and industry stakeholders throughout the engagement process. These actions focus broad action related to items like visitor education and communication, activation of existing programs, community support, stewardship improvements, resident engagement, and interagency coordination. While the effects of these actions are often realized at specific locations, they are designed to work in tandem with site-based actions by enhancing the broader management system in which those sites operate.

Together, these actions reinforce a core principle of destination management: **effective action at sites under strain is enhanced through aligned action across the destination as a whole**. While distinct from the actions presented earlier for hotspots and sites under strain, the actions in this section aim to make those site-based efforts more effective, durable, and responsive to community priorities.

For detail on how action items were developed through stakeholder engagement, drafting, and review, refer to Section 2: Development Process for the Plan.



11. *Ho‘okele o ‘uleu pili i ka uapo
Honi malihini au me ku‘u aloha*

12. *He aloha ia pua ua lei ‘ia
Ku‘u pua miulana poina ‘ole*

SITE OF OPPORTUNITY: HILO

LOCATION: WAIĀKEA, HILO, HAWAI'I

Hilo holds rich cultural, natural, and agricultural assets, yet many visitors experience only a fraction of what the community has to offer. Stakeholders revealed a consistent theme: visitors often pass quickly through Hilo on their way to other parts of the island, limiting the economic and educational benefits that downtown businesses, museums, cultural institutions, and agricultural producers in the surrounding area rely on. At the same time, visitors who wish to explore Hilo often encounter fragmented, inconsistent, or outdated information, making it difficult to understand how the town's historic landmarks, food traditions, cultural sites, museums, and agricultural experiences in and around town connect to one another.

This creates a unique opportunity. While stakeholder engagement made it clear that Hilo is not seeking to become a high-volume visitor hub, it has the capacity, desire, and community interest to welcome visitors in ways that strengthen local businesses, increase downtown vibrancy, and uplift livelihoods in and around town. Hilo's concentrated set of assets (historic districts, museums, markets, and specialty crop farms) can be better connected through shared identity, coordinated storytelling, and supportive visitor tools.

Because many of these assets are located within a compact downtown area, strengthening walkable visitor exploration can also help visitors move comfortably between businesses, cultural institutions, and public spaces while supporting local economic activity. Previous community-informed planning efforts, including the *Hilo Bayfront Trails Master Plan (2014)* and *Downtown Hilo Multimodal Master Plan (2018)*, have identified ways to strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections between Banyan Drive, the Hilo Bay waterfront, and downtown, supporting a more connected and accessible visitor experience that could have positive benefits for the Keaukaha area hotspot as well.

As Hawai'i Island seeks to reduce pressure on strained areas and redirect visitors toward places with capacity and interest, Hilo presents a rare alignment of community readiness, economic opportunity, and place-based potential. Strengthening visitor preparation, improving wayfinding, and supporting locally driven coordination helps ensure that Hilo visitors stay longer, spend locally, and engage with the region more meaningfully, thus advancing economic resilience while protecting sensitive communities elsewhere.

Subsequent actions seek to advance the following priorities for destination management in Hilo:

1. **Strengthening Hilo as a place where visitors more meaningfully spend time**, rather than pass through, in ways that support local businesses, institutions, and livelihoods
2. **Articulating a clear, community-informed sense of place** that helps visitors understand what Hilo is, what it values, and what it has to offer
3. **Featuring existing community assets and offerings**, helping connect visitors with established walking tours, markets, museums, farms, restaurants, and community institutions
4. **Leveraging Hilo's capacity and readiness** to help redirect visitor activity away from more strained communities nearby
5. **Elevating agritourism and food-based experiences** in ways that increase economic activity while respecting working lands, production cycles, and community priorities
6. **Strengthening the accuracy, consistency, and coordination of visitor information**, ensuring that guidance about Hilo is clear, current, and aligned across a variety of visitor touchpoints
7. **Supporting walkable and multimodal exploration of downtown Hilo and the bayfront area**, strengthening connections between Banyan Drive, waterfront parks, Port of Hilo, and the historic downtown district

HOTSPOT INDICATORS

OVERALL PRIORITY

IDENTIFICATION

CONTEXT & COMPOUNDING FACTORS

FEASIBILITY & VIABILITY

	Access Infrastructure & Arrival Pressure
	On-Site Capacity & Crowd Pressure
	Community Strain & Resident Impact
	Site Degradation & Maintenance Stress
	Cultural Sensitivity
	Environmental Sensitivity
	Safety & Risk
	Visibility & Promotion
	Local Economic Benefit & Reciprocity
	Jurisdictional Clarity & Legality of Access
	Cost & Resource Demand
	Implementation Timeline & Complexity
	DMAP Alignment & Partnership Leverage

SITE SWOT

STRENGTHS

- Rich concentration of museums, cultural institutions, and historic sites
- Strong agricultural concentration, with farms, specialty crops, ranching, and traditional foodways
- Existing walking tour, markets, and food experiences that can be enhanced rather than built from scratch

OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop a cohesive identity to connect experiences, food culture, and agriculture into a unified destination narrative
- Modernize the Hilo historic walking tour to strengthen downtown vibrancy and encourage lingering
- Use digital-first tools (maps, QR codes, unified messaging) to improve visitor guidance and reduce confusion

WEAKNESSES

- Fragmented visitor information and outdated digital/physical resources
- Limited unified destination identity
- Inconsistent hours, booking processes, and visitor expectations among existing experiences
- Downtown infrastructure and signage not optimized for seamless visitor navigation

THREATS

- Increased visitation to Hilo without clear guidance could spill over into sensitive nearby areas
- Inadequate preparation or expectations may heighten strain between demand and agricultural work cycles
- Loss of historic or agricultural assets if economic viability for local producers is not strengthened

 VERY HIGH/VERY LOW

 HIGH/LOW

 MODERATE

 LOW/HIGH

 N/A

*PLEASE SEE COLOR SCALE ON PAGE 23 FOR HOTSPOT ANALYSIS

H-1: DEVELOP A COMMUNITY-DEFINED DESTINATION IDENTITY FOR GREATER HILO

H-1

Management Strategy: Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities; Strengthen Place-Based Visitor Understanding; Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship



Goal: Develop a community-defined destination identity for greater Hilo (including a destination narrative and supporting visual assets) that reflects local values, culture, and contemporary realities, and provides a shared foundation for visitor orientation, partner alignment, and future destination initiatives.

Justification: Hilo stakeholders noted that many visitors pass through town quickly and rely on fragmented or outdated information, limiting visitors' understanding and reducing benefits to local businesses, cultural institutions, and producers. Participants expressed interest in clearer, more accurate visitor guidance that conveys Hilo's identity, including its agriculture, culture, science, food, history, and community life.

While organizations like Destination Hilo and the Hilo Downtown Improvement Association have supported the area for years, partners acknowledged that Hilo's visitor-facing identity is uneven and not consistently expressed across platforms. A coordinated working group can help articulate a shared destination narrative, develop supporting visual elements, and identify appropriate pathways for future coordination and product development that draws visitors to the area and away from hotspots.

This action supports **research, convening, synthesis, and identity development** to establish a shared foundation for how Hilo is presented to visitors, with the resulting narrative and visual elements intended to be usable by community, industry partners, and HTA. Subsequent implementation decisions, investments, or operational activities would be determined collaboratively and are not pre-committed through this action.

Anticipated deliverables:

- Working group established with defined scope and representation from cultural, business, agricultural, accommodation, and community partners throughout Hilo and the surrounding area
- Visitor representation summary documenting how Hilo is currently portrayed across key visitor-facing channels, including gaps and misalignments
- Consolidated reference inventory of visitor-accessible assets in greater Hilo
- Destination narrative articulating Hilo's contemporary identity in clear, visitor-facing language
- Visual reference set of adaptable elements (e.g., tone, motifs, iconography) aligned with statewide promotion assets to support more consistent, place-appropriate visitor materials

Intended outcomes:

- Hilo has a clearly articulated, community-informed destination narrative and visual identity
- Visitor-facing information about Hilo is more accurate, consistent, and grounded in local context
- HTA and partners share a common foundation for future destination coordination and investment
- Future visitor engagement efforts are better aligned with community priorities and capacity

H-2: ADVANCE PEDESTRIAN AND MULTIMODAL CIRCULATION OPPORTUNITIES IN GREATER HILO THROUGH URBAN TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

H-2

Management Strategy: Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities; Strengthen Place-Based Visitor Understanding; Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship



Goal: Advance opportunities that enhance pedestrian and multimodal circulation between Banyan Drive, the Hilo Bay waterfront, and downtown Hilo by improving connectivity, wayfinding, and visitor orientation, encouraging walkable exploration, supporting local businesses and institutions, and helping anchor visitor activity within the downtown area.

Justification: Greater Hilo is one of Hawai‘i Island’s strongest opportunities to welcome visitor engagement while strengthening community-serving assets and supporting local businesses. However, movement between Banyan Drive accommodations, the Port of Hilo, Hilo Bay waterfront, and downtown can feel fragmented, with limited pedestrian-oriented connections and few visitor orientation tools encouraging deep exploration. Visitors may experience the area as a series of separate stops best navigated by car, rather than parts of a connected place. Existing assets and plans including the Hilo Downtown Improvement Association’s historic walking tour and the County’s *Hilo Bayfront Trails Master Plan (2014)*, as well as the *Downtown Hilo Multimodal Master Plan (2018)*, lay a strong foundation for improving connectivity, navigation, and place-based storytelling across the area. Community organizations are also actively advancing elements of this vision through ongoing advocacy, partnership-building, and project development.

Supporting the advancement of circulation-focused opportunities that align with the visitor-facing identity work to be conducted through Action H-1 can help create a more intuitive, walkable, and engaging visitor experience. By making it easier for visitors to move between areas such as the bayfront, Banyan Drive, and downtown on foot or by bicycle, Hilo can be better experienced as a unified destination, encouraging longer stays, deeper engagement, reduced vehicle circulation, and increased support for local businesses and organizations while helping reduce pressure on more sensitive sites elsewhere in the region.

Potential opportunities may include, but are not limited to:

- Enhancing existing walking routes or interpretive experiences to improve visitor orientation and encourage greater exploration on foot
- Advancing priority pedestrian or bicycle connectivity improvements identified in existing plans, in coordination with the County of Hawai‘i and community partners
- Incorporating wayfinding, interpretive, or storytelling elements that help connect Banyan Drive, the bayfront, and downtown destinations through urban trail development

Anticipated deliverables:

- Identification of priority opportunities that improve pedestrian and multimodal circulation and visitor orientation in greater Hilo, in coordination with relevant partners
- Support for the development or enhancement of visitor-facing tools (e.g., wayfinding, interpretive elements, or self-guided experiences) that encourage walkable exploration
- Alignment with existing plans, community-led efforts, and partner initiatives to advance feasible and high-impact improvements

Intended outcomes:

- Hilo's waterfront, downtown, and surrounding areas are experienced as a more connected and navigable destination
- Increased visitor engagement with local businesses, cultural institutions, and community assets supports local economic vitality
- Walkable, place-based, culturally-informed exploration becomes a more defining element of the Hilo visitor experience
- Visitor activity is more effectively anchored within Hilo's downtown area, helping reduce pressure on surrounding sensitive sites

ISLAND-WIDE ACTIONS (IW)

The following actions apply Hawai'i Island's destination management strategies at an island-wide scale.

With limited resources, this plan advances only a select number of these actions with high potential for impact in the next three years.

To seek alignment statewide, complementary initiatives are included in the DMAPs for Hawai'i's other five main islands. The actions advanced here reflect concerns heard consistently in community engagements on Hawai'i Island while contributing to shared statewide principles of stewardship, harmony, regeneration, and collaboration. As these initiatives are implemented and evaluated, successful approaches may be refined and expanded to other parts of the state.

IW-1: SUSTAIN THE DMAP ADVISORY GROUP TO SUPPORT PARALLEL CONVERSATIONS

IW-1

Management Strategy: Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities;
Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship



Goal: Sustain the existing Hawai'i Island DMAP Advisory Group while expanding its scope and function to serve as a cross-sector visitor management group that strengthens coordination, integrates community and stewardship knowledge, and supports adaptive, place-based visitor management across the island.

Justification: During DMAP engagement, community members, stewards, agencies, and industry partners consistently shared that visitor-related issues often persist not because solutions are unknown, but because coordination is fragmented and responsibilities are unclear. Stewards described addressing issues on their own without reliable pathways to elevate observations, while agencies and operators acknowledged that communication across sectors is often informal and episodic. Advisory Group members emphasized that the value of the DMAP process itself came from having a regular, trusted space for shared discussion and that this structure should not end with plan adoption.

As destination management is defined in Hawai'i Revised Statutes as a **collaborative and coordinated process among public, private, and community stakeholders**, sustaining and strengthening this cross-sector forum is itself a core destination management function. Rather than creating a new management body, this action sustains the existing Advisory Group beyond the DMAP cycle and expands its role and scope to strengthen stewardship and geographic representation and empower its ability to convene working groups as needed. This approach responds directly to stakeholder feedback calling for continuity, clarity, and better integration of local 'ike into islandwide visitor management decisions.

IW-1

Anticipated deliverables:

- A sustained and expanded DMAP Advisory Group serving ongoing visitor management coordination functions, with meeting at least three times annually
- Documented framework outlining purpose, participation expectations, and coordination approach
- Regular coordination summaries shared via HTA website
- Identification and use of appropriate subcommittee or working group structures to support related DMAP actions, as needed

Intended outcomes:

- Improved clarity and coordination among State, County, community, and visitor-industry partners addressing visitor pressures
- Integration of community and stewardship knowledge into islandwide management decisions
- Timely identification of emerging management issues and practical, cross-sector responses

IW-2: REFRESH AND EXPAND THE PONO PLEDGE INTO AN ISLANDWIDE STEWARDSHIP BRAND

IW-2

Management Strategy: Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities; Strengthen Place-Based Visitor Understanding



Goal: Increase the visibility, use, and adoption of the Island of Hawai'i Pono Pledge across the destination to influence visitor behavior, support stewardship, and enhance visitor understanding and experience.

Justification: The Pono Pledge is Hawai'i Island's visitor stewardship framework, inviting visitors to travel pono: responsibly, respectfully, and with care for people, culture, and nature. Rather than prescribing site-specific rules, the pledge establishes shared expectations for behavior through values-based guidance that emphasizes kuleana and personal responsibility while visiting the island.

Across DMAP engagements, stakeholders emphasized that they have seen visitor behavior improve when guidance is visible, consistent, and values-based. Residents shared strong support for the Pono Pledge but noted that they felt it is "not visible enough" and should appear throughout the visitor journey and more consistently across the island. Industry and operator partners echoed these thoughts, noting that visitors often arrive to experiences without sufficient context, and identifying the Pono Pledge as a **credible but underutilized tool** for visitor education. Refreshing and expanding the pledge strengthens consistency across visitor-facing channels, elevates the island's voice through shared values, and reinforces the kuleana that comes with visiting Hawai'i Island.



13. *Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana
Kūmaka ka 'ikena iā Hi'ilawe*

IW-2

Anticipated deliverables:

- Refreshed Pono Pledge identity and messaging framework
- Updated, mobile-optimized Pono Pledge website with clear visitor guidance and pledge access
- Integration of Pono Pledge content into major visitor-facing platforms (e.g., GoHawaii.com and related digital tools)
- Phased distribution of assets to island partners, in major visitor pathways, and at high-use areas
- Baseline analytics dataset tracking engagement and partner participation

Intended outcomes:

- Visitors encounter consistent, values-based stewardship guidance throughout their journey to and across Hawai'i Island
- Stronger alignment among partners around shared expectations for respectful behavior
- Improved visitor understanding, preparation, and experience through early, repeated orientation
- Reduced confusion, safety risks, and cultural/environmental strain stemming from lack of context

IW-3: IMPLEMENT A GEOTARGETED VISITOR MANAGEMENT MESSAGING CAMPAIGN

IW-3

Management Strategy: Strengthen Place-Based Visitor Understanding



Goal: Use geotargeted digital media to deliver timely, culturally grounded visitor guidance aligned with the Pono Pledge, focused on behaviors and decisions associated with strain, safety risks, and local concerns.

Justification: Stakeholders shared that they believe high-impact and improper visitor behaviors often stem from gaps in understanding, not ill intent, and that offering meaningful guidance in the right moment can reduce strain on sensitive sites, reinforce local values, and support a grounded visitor experience. They offered that small, well-timed cues (“little signs like ‘*Mālama* the road’ make me slow down,” said a resident) can influence how people travel, park, interact, or prepare for conditions they may not be familiar with.

Relying solely on physical signage has limits: signs can be overlooked, can accumulate in scenic areas, and sometimes change the visual feel of a place. A digital-first approach places gentle, culturally rooted reminders where visitors already look and listen (e.g., phones, streaming audio, and social media) without altering the landscape. Geotargeted messages can reflect the island’s diversity, uplift Pono Pledge values (IW-2), and incorporate insights surfaced through the DMAP Advisory Group (IW-1), helping visitors understand the significance, sensitivities, and rhythms of the places they enter. In this way, the campaign supports both resident well-being and visitor connection through respectful, timely, place-based education.

Distinct from destination promotion or demand-generation marketing, this effort extends HTA’s ongoing VEPAM initiatives, which focus on providing guidance to visitors after arrival. This action advances that work through a **Hawai'i Island-specific pilot** that tests place-responsive, geotargeted stewardship cues reflecting the island’s

distinct geographies, community priorities, and visitor movement patterns. Implementing this work in a localized context allows for strategic, limited use of targeted resources, evaluation of campaign effectiveness, and refinement of messaging approach before potential adaptation or expansion statewide.

IW-3

Anticipated deliverables:

- Completed strategy and creative framework for the campaign
- Suite of digital-ready assets (audio, micro-videos, visuals)
- Live geotargeted campaign across streaming and social platforms
- Regular performance summaries and refinements
- Final campaign evaluation summary and recommendations

Intended outcomes:

- More respectful, informed visitor movement through timely, place-based cues
- Reduced strain and risk at sensitive or high-use areas
- Strong alignment between Pono Pledge messaging and real-time visitor behavior
- Stronger integration of community and steward insight in visitor guidance
- Enhanced visitor experience through meaningful, culturally grounded orientation

IW-4: EXPAND ACCESS TO PRACTITIONER-LED CULTURAL COMPETENCE TRAINING FOR TOUR & EXPERIENCE OPERATORS AND OTHER VISITOR INDUSTRY PARTNERS

IW-4

Management Strategy: Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities; Strengthen Place-Based Visitor Understanding; Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship



Goal: Strengthen the cultural integrity and depth of visitor experiences and services across Hawai'i Island by expanding access to practitioner-led, place-based training that equips operators and industry partners with accurate information, regional context, and values-based operations.

Justification: Community members and cultural practitioners emphasized that inaccurate or incomplete stories can cause cultural harm and shape visitor behavior in ways that negatively impact natural resources and local people. Participants stressed that those guiding or hosting visitors should understand the history, significance, and sensitivities of the places where they work and share, and that this foundation is most valuable when it comes from 'Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian)-led, practitioner-held 'ike grounded in the specific place of operation, not generic messaging. Several industry partners shared that their highest aspiration is for visitors to leave Hawai'i Island not only with memories and information, but with values and perspectives they can carry into their lives elsewhere.

This action provides access to a cultural grounding program developed and delivered by trusted cultural practitioners with islandwide relationships that offers specific, place-based training to participants rooted in a Hawaiian worldview, values, and relational ethics, enhancing the quality and accuracy of their guidance.

Anticipated deliverables:

- Practitioner-led, place-based cultural grounding trainings delivered, with sessions geographically distributed across Hawai'i Island
- An incentive and access framework established to support participation and reduce barriers for small businesses, regional operators, and frontline staff
- Annual participation summaries and a final program evaluation documenting geographic reach, accessibility, demand, and considerations for future DMAP cycles

Intended outcomes:

- Stronger cultural grounding and accuracy in visitor-facing work across Hawai'i Island
- More meaningful, respectful, and transformative visitor experiences
- Reduced cultural harm stemming from inaccurate or incomplete narratives
- Expanded access to practitioner-led training for small businesses, rural areas, and frontline staff
- Deeper trust and alignment between practitioners, operators, visitor industry partners, and HTA
- A more unified, values-aligned tourism workforce capable of reinforcing stewardship, kuleana, and place-based understanding

IW-5: ESTABLISH A REGULAR RESIDENT COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT CYCLE

Management Strategy: Manage Visitor Flow for Small Communities; Build Pathways for Collaboration and Collective Stewardship



Goal: Create a predictable, easy-to-access communication cycle to deepen trust, strengthen transparency, and provide regular opportunities from HTA and partners for feedback through virtual updates and in-person engagements across Hawai'i Island.

Justification: Across engagements, Hawai'i Island residents emphasized a desire for ongoing interaction and communication with HTA about destination management during DMAP implementation, not only during planning. Regular, direct communication helps HTA maintain awareness of on-the-ground conditions and resident perspectives related to visitor movement, behavior, safety, access, and community impacts that may not be captured through periodic reporting or representative structures alone. This awareness further supports ongoing monitoring of hotspots and sites under strain named in this plan.

A predictable engagement cycle allows HTA to share updates on management actions, clarify decisions and constraints, and receive timely, place-based observations that can inform adjustments as actions and the conditions in which they are operationalized evolve. This two-way exchange supports more responsive, transparent, and adaptive visitor management, strengthening trust and collaboration between communities and the agencies, organizations, and other partners responsible for managing tourism impacts.

Anticipated deliverables:

- Regular sessions over three years, including in-person meetings held across geographically representative locations on the island
- Published session summaries
- Regularly updated public engagement calendar
- Integrated feedback reports shared with the DMAP Advisory Group

Intended outcomes:

- Strengthened, ongoing trust and pilina (connection) between residents and HTA
- Clearer visibility into DMAP implementation, resource allocation, and management decisions
- Effective two-way communication, ensuring resident insights inform visitor management
- Increased participation by diverse communities across the island
- A stable, predictable communication structure that supports long-term collaboration

EIA IHOLA NŌ KA PUANA O IA MELE NEI. E NĀNEA MAI.

Hi'ilawe

A SONG CELEBRATING MOKU O KEAWE BY SAM LI'A KALAINAINA. THIS MELE TELLS OF A LOVE STORY AT HI'ILAWA—THE TALLEST WATERFALL IN HAWAI'I—AND WAIO'ULU, TWO WATERFALLS IN WAIPĪ'O VALLEY ON MOKU O KEAWE

*Kūmaka ka 'ikena iā Hi'ilawe
Ka papa lohi mai a'o Maukele*

*I ka poli nō au o Ha'i wahine
I ka poli aloha o Ha'inakolo*

All eyes are on Hi'ilawe
In the sparkling lowlands of Maukele

*Pakele mai au i ka nui manu
Hau wala'au nei puni Waipi'o*

*Ho'okolo 'ia aku i ka nui manu
I like ke ka 'ina meka uahoa*

I have not been trapped by the gossip
Chattering everywhere in Waipi'o

*'A'ole nō wau e loa'a mai
A he uhiwai au no ke kuahiwi*

*He hoa 'oe no ka lā le'ale'a
Na ka nui manu iho haunaele*

I am not caught
For I am the mist of the mountains

*He hiwahiwa au na ka makua
A he lei 'ā'i na ke kupuna*

*E 'ole ko'u nui piha akamai
Hala a'e nā 'ale o ka moana*

I am the darling of the parents
And a lei for the necks of grandparents

*No Puna ke 'ala i hali 'ia mai
Noho i ka wailele a'o Hi'ilawe*

*Hao mai ka moana kau e ka weli
Mea 'ole na'e ia no ia ho'okele*

The fragrance is wafted from Puna
And lives at Hi'ilawe waterfall

*Ho'okele o 'uleu pili i ka uapo
Honi malihini au me ku'u aloha*

I was at the bosom of Ha'i, the woman
At the beloved bosom of Ha'inakolo

*He aloha ia pua ua lei 'ia
Ku'u pua miulana poina 'ole*

Annoyed at the many birds
They were indifferent to the distress they caused

*Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana
Kūmaka ka 'ikena iā Hi'ilawe*

You are my companion in the day of joy
The many birds there caused a commotion

It is my great skill
The waves of the ocean overwhelm us

The ocean rages fearfully
But my steering is skillfull

Hurry, let us go close to the wharf
I am your new love to be kissed

My flower, my lei, my love for you
Is unforgettable like the muilan flower

Tell the refrain
All eyes are on Hi'ilawe

LYRICS FROM HUAPALA.ORG

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority is grateful to the many individuals and organizations who shared their time, mana'o, and expertise during the development of the Hawai'i Island Destination Management Action Plan. The individuals listed here are recognized in appreciation of their roles in the process.

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GLOSSARY

Average Daily Census:

The average number of visitors present in Hawai‘i on any given day.

Average Length of Stay:

The average number of days visitors spend in Hawai‘i, including both the day of arrival and the day of departure.

Community Benefit:

Positive outcomes for local communities resulting from tourism, which may include economic opportunity, reinvestment in infrastructure and public spaces, cultural preservation, environmental stewardship, and improvements to residents’ quality of life.

Community-Led Stewardship:

An approach to caring for and managing places in which local communities, cultural practitioners, and lineal descendants play a leading role in protecting natural resources, cultural sites, and community well-being.

De Facto Population:

The total number of people present in a place at a given time, including both residents and visitors.

Destination Management:

The coordinated planning and management of tourism in a place to address impacts, protect resources, and improve experiences for residents and visitors through collaboration among government agencies, communities, and industry partners.

Destination Marketing Organization (DMO):

An organization that promotes and supports travel to a specific destination through marketing, visitor information, and industry coordination.

Destination Stewardship:

The shared responsibility of caring for a place so that it can thrive for future generations. While *destination management* focuses on planning and coordination, destination stewardship emphasizes collective care and long-term kuleana for the place itself.

Hotspot:

A location where visitor use and tourism-related pressure are concentrated and where targeted management actions are prioritized.

Lineal Descendant:

A person who can trace direct family ancestry to individuals historically connected to a particular place or *‘āina*. In Hawai‘i, lineal descendants often maintain genealogical, cultural, and familial ties to specific lands, waters, and resources, and their perspectives are important in decisions related to stewardship, cultural practice, and place-based management.

Managed Access:

Strategies used to regulate how people enter or use a site in order to protect resources and improve visitor experience. Examples may include reservation systems, permits, transportation controls, or timed entry.

Mobility Hub:

A location where multiple transportation options connect (e.g., shuttles, buses, bicycles, walking routes) allowing visitors and residents to move between destinations more efficiently.

Multimodal Transportation:

A transportation approach that integrates multiple forms of travel, such as walking, bicycling, buses, shuttles, and private vehicles, to improve mobility and reduce congestion.

Per-Person Per-Day Spending:

The average amount of money spent by a visitor per day during their stay in Hawai'i.

Place-Based Management:

An approach to destination management that tailors strategies and actions to the specific conditions, culture, and needs of a particular community, *‘āina*, or site.

Priority Hotspot:

A hotspot selected for focused management action during the current DMAP implementation cycle.

Regenerative Tourism:

An approach to tourism that seeks to restore, strengthen, and sustain the environmental, cultural, and community systems of a place. Regenerative tourism goes beyond minimizing negative impacts by supporting activities and partnerships that help communities and ecosystems thrive over time.

Resident Sentiment:

Public attitudes and perceptions among residents regarding tourism and its impacts on their community and family system.

Site of Opportunity:

A location where visitor activity may be encouraged or better supported in order to distribute visitation more evenly and reduce pressure on heavily impacted sites.

Site Under Strain:

A location where strain is occurring due to visitor use, infrastructure limitations, environmental sensitivity, or other pressures. This designation may also apply where any level of visitor activity occurs in areas where public access is restricted or inappropriate.

Stakeholder:

An individual, organization, or group with an interest in or connection to tourism and its impacts in a particular place. In the DMAP context, stakeholders include residents, community organizations, cultural practitioners, lineal descendants, businesses, industry representatives, government agencies, and other partners involved in destination management and stewardship.

Strain:

Pressure affecting a place, resource, or community that may arise from visitor use, infrastructure limitations, environmental conditions, or other factors. In the DMAP context, strain may also occur when visitor activities or access take place in areas where said access is restricted or prohibited, including unsafe, culturally sensitive, or environmentally protected locations.

Transient Accommodations Tax (TAT):

A tax applied to short-term visitor accommodations such as hotels and vacation rentals. In Hawai'i, the TAT is collected by both the State and counties, with the State currently levying an 11 percent tax and each county collecting an additional 3 percent.

Visitor:

An out-of-state traveler who stays in Hawai'i for at least one night but less than one year.

Visitor Education and Post-Arrival Marketing (VEPAM):

An HTA program focused on marketing to and educating visitors after they arrive in the islands, including information about appropriate activities, experiences, and responsible behavior that supports cultural, community, and environmental stewardship.

Visitor Orientation:

Information provided to visitors before or during their trip to help them understand local conditions, cultural and environmental context, safety considerations, and guidance for respectful and responsible behavior.

Wayfinding:

Signage, maps, and other navigation tools that help people understand where they are and how to move through a place safely and efficiently.



ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

State Agencies

DAR: Division of Aquatic Resources (DLNR)

DBEDT: Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism

DHHL: Department of Hawaiian Home Lands

DLNR: Department of Land and Natural Resources

DOBOR: Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation (DLNR)

HDOT: Hawai'i Department of Transportation

HTA: Hawai'i Tourism Authority

County of Hawai'i

DPR: Department of Parks and Recreation

DPW: Department of Public Works

R&D: Department of Research and Development

Locations in Action IDs

H: Hilo

IW: Island-Wide (referring to an Island-Wide Action within the DMAP framework)

KBK: Kealahou Bay & Ka'awaloa

KH: Keaukaha

KL: Ka Lae

Other Acronyms & Terms

CAP: Community Action Plan

DMAP: Destination Management Action Plan

DMO: Destination Marketing Organization

FY: Fiscal Year

MLCD: Marine Life Conservation District

STVR: Short-term vacation rental

TAT: Transient Accommodations Tax

VEPAM: Visitor Education and Post-Arrival Marketing

Appendices



APPENDIX A:

DMAP ENGAGEMENT SCHEDULE

The development of this DMAP included multiple rounds of engagement with community members, industry representatives, government agencies, and the island Advisory Group. These engagements helped identify sites under strain, refine emerging themes, and shape the strategies and actions included in the plan.

Advisory Group Meetings

The island Advisory Group provided ongoing guidance throughout the DMAP development process, helping review emerging themes, identify sites under strain, and refine draft actions:

- August 6, 2025
- September 15, 2025
- October 3, 2025
- December 5, 2025
- March 23, 2026

Community Engagement

Community engagement focused on understanding how tourism is experienced in daily life across Hawai'i Island and identifying locations where tourism-related strain is most visible.

Initial Virtual Engagement

- **August 25, 2025**

Initial session conducted to gather insights for both the DMAP and the HTA Strategic Plan.

In-Person Community Input Session

Facilitated sessions held in multiple communities focused on themes that emerged early in the process:

- **October 1, 2025: Kona Community Session**
- **October 2, 2025: Hilo Community Session**
- **November 14, 2025: Waimea Community Session**
- **November 19, 2025: Pāhala Community Session**

At all four sessions, participants discussed recurring concerns including:

- hotspots and access
- stewardship and management
- visitor education
- resident engagement and communication

These discussions helped further identify sites under strain and clarify desired outcomes for destination management.

Draft Review Sessions

- **February 12, 2026: Virtual Draft DMAP Review Session**

Session to present the draft DMAP and gather feedback on proposed strategies and actions.

Industry Engagement

Industry engagement focused on understanding operational realities, sector perspectives, and the role businesses play in destination management.

- **August 6, 2025: Virtual Industry Input Session**

Session conducted to gather *mana'o* (insight) from visitor industry representatives for both the DMAP and the HTA Strategic Plan.

- **September 22, 2025: Industry Engagement Session at the HTA Tourism Conference**

Facilitated discussions across six sector groupings:

- accommodations and lodging
- tours and activities
- transportation and access
- food, retail, and events
- marketing, media, and travel trade
- community and cultural stewardship partners

These discussions helped identify practical opportunities for industry participation in destination management.

Public Comment Period: February 2026

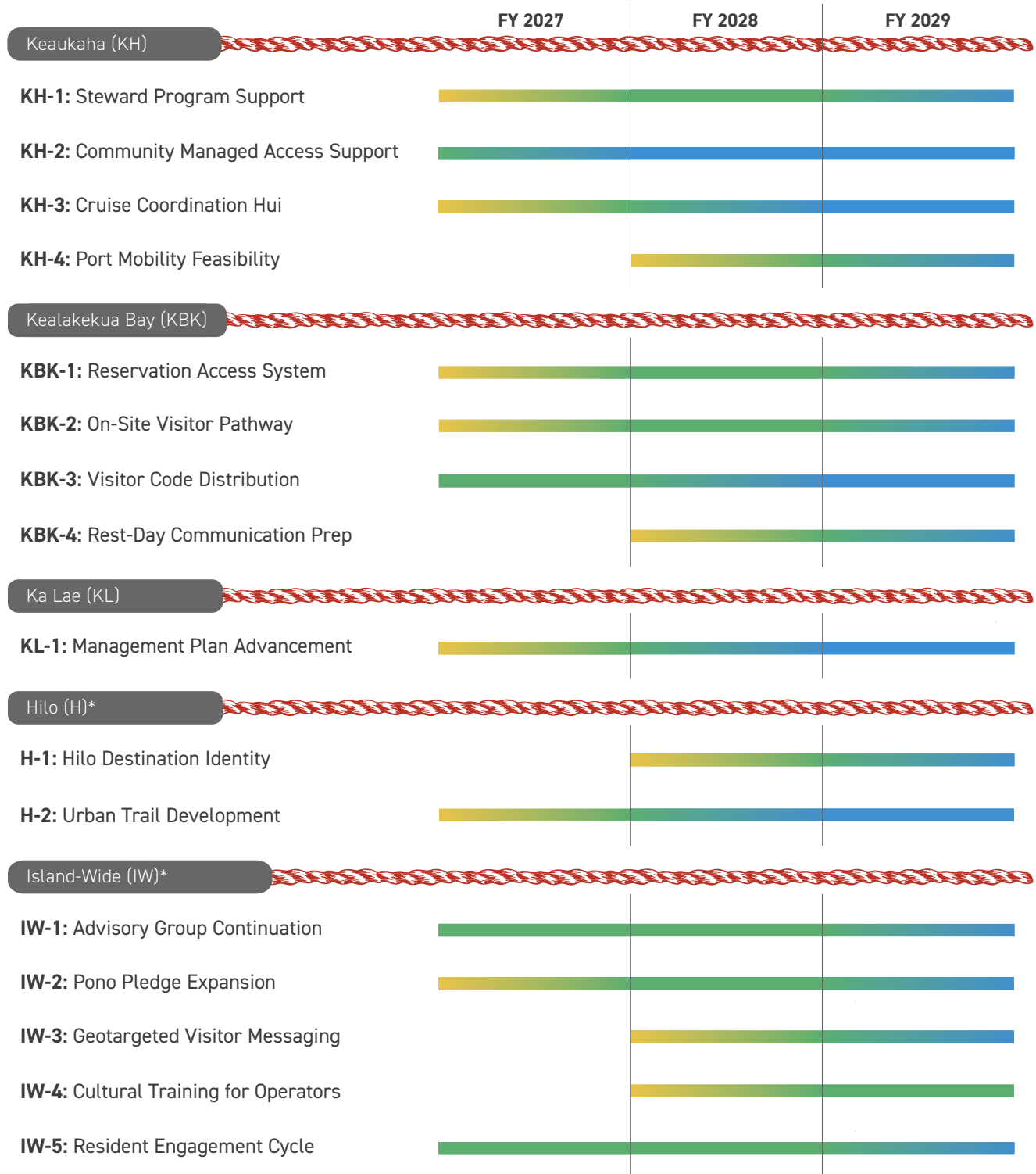
An online commentary portal was made available on the HTA website to gather additional feedback from community members, industry participants, and other stakeholders on the draft DMAP.

Agency and Partner Coordination

Throughout the planning process, HTA Destination Managers and other HTA staff engaged regularly with State and County agencies, 'āina-based stewardship organizations, and other partners. These conversations helped clarify agency roles, operational realities, and potential pathways for collaboration in implementing proposed actions.

APPENDIX B: THREE-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

■ Procurement / Planning ■ Implementation / Execution ■ Refinement / Review



*Timeline for Hilo (H) and Island-Wide Actions (IW) has not been determined. Estimates provided.

APPENDIX C:

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED THROUGH STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The DMAP identifies a set of priority actions that HTA and its partners will work to advance during the 2026–2028 DMAP implementation cycle. During engagement, however, stakeholders raised a wide range of additional issues, opportunities, and site-specific concerns related to destination management on Hawai‘i Island.

Given the breadth of topics raised and the practical limits of available resources, it is not possible for every idea or site identified to be translated into a formal DMAP action for the 2026–2028 implementation cycle. Many items relate to kuleana held entirely by other State and County agencies, while others may benefit from additional coordination, research, or feasibility assessment before specific actions can be defined.

Documenting these perspectives nonetheless helps ensure that stakeholder input gathered through the DMAP process remains visible and available to inform ongoing dialogue, coordination, and management efforts across all partners involved in caring for Hawai‘i Island as a home and visitor destination.

Opportunities identified through engagement fall into three categories:

1. Agency Opportunities

Areas of progress identified through stakeholder input that fall fully within the responsibilities of other State and County agencies. These are recommended for further consideration.

Examples include:

- **DLNR – Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation (DOBOR):** Review commercial vessel activity and in-water congestion at Kealahou Bay in response to concerns about crowding, safety, and resource degradation
- **County of Hawai‘i, Department of Public Works (DPW):** Evaluate impacts of parking management approaches along Ali‘i Drive on local businesses, employee access, and visitor circulation in the Kailua-Kona area
- **County of Hawai‘i, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR):** Improve parking, traffic flow, and facility management at Isaac Hale Beach Park (Pohoiki) in response to increased use following the 2018 lava flow

2. Ongoing HTA Exploration

Topics raised during stakeholder engagement that HTA will continue exploring as partnerships, research, and planning efforts help shape potential future initiatives. These are recommended for continued exploration as opportunities evolve.

Examples include:

- **Advancing community-informed monitoring tools** that integrate steward observations and site-level data to support more responsive destination management
- **Strengthening community-based stewardship and visitor participation models** that support *mālama ʻāina* efforts and place-based management through visitor engagement, education, and interaction in areas with limited infrastructure
- **Expanding agritourism as part of the island’s visitor experience** to better connect tourism with local agriculture, food systems, and community-based economic benefit

3. Policy Considerations

Broader policy issues and community concerns that influence tourism, destination management, and community conditions but fall outside the scope of DMAP implementation as they typically require legislative action, statewide policy changes, or decisions by other agencies. These are recommended for further policy dialogue and consideration.

Examples include:

- **Establishing more durable funding mechanisms for site-based stewardship**, particularly where revenue generated at sites is not consistently reinvested locally
- **Developing policy and government engagement procedures that honor multi-actor governance and shared community leadership models** in places where leadership kuleana is not held by a single entity
- **Reducing barriers to agritourism development while maintaining safety standards**, helping align tourism with food security goals and enabling broader participation by small producers

A broader listing of opportunities identified through DMAP stakeholder engagement across all six islands is available on the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority website at [HTTPS://HTA.HAWAII.GOV/DMAPS/](https://HTA.HAWAII.GOV/DMAPS/).

APPENDIX D:

OTHER RESOURCES

Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism: **2024 Annual Visitor Research Report**

<HTTPS://FILES.HAWAII.GOV/DBEDT/VISITOR/VISITOR-RESEARCH/2024-ANNUAL-VISITOR.PDF>

Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism: **2025 Visitor Plant Inventory**

<HTTPS://FILES.HAWAII.GOV/DBEDT/VISITOR/VISITOR-PLANT/2025VPI.PDF>

Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism: **Resident Sentiment Surveys**

<HTTPS://DBEDT.HAWAII.GOV/VISITOR/RESIDENT-SENTIMENT-SURVEY-REPORT/>

Hawai'i Tourism Authority: **Visitor Satisfaction & Activity Reports**

<HTTPS://HTA.HAWAII.GOV/VISITOR-SATISFACTION-AND-ACTIVITY/>

Hawai'i Tourism Authority: **Hawai'i Island Destination Management Action Plan (2021–2023)**

HTTPS://HTA.HAWAII.GOV/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2026/06/HTA_HAWAIIISLAND_DMAP_2021-2023.PDF

County of Hawai'i: **Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (FY 2024)**

<HTTPS://RECORDS.HAWAIICOUNTY.GOV/WEBLINK/1/EDOC/150340/2024-COH%20-%20ANNUAL%20COMPREHENSIVE%20FINANCIAL%20REPORT.PDF>

County of Hawai'i: **Downtown Hilo Multimodal Master Plan (2018)**

<HTTPS://WWW.HAWAIICOUNTY.GOV/HOME/SHOWDOCUMENT?ID=305839&T=638113577881183844>

County of Hawai'i: **Hawai'i Island Tourism Strategic Plan 2020-2025**

<HTTPS://RECORDS.HAWAIICOUNTY.GOV/WEBLINK/1/EDOC/110614/HAWAII%20COUNTY%20TOURISM%20STRATEGIC%20PLAN%20FINAL%202021.PDF>

Department of Hawaiian Home Lands: **Ka Lae (South Point) Resources Management Plan (2016)**

HTTPS://DHHL.HAWAII.GOV/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2017/06/DHHL-SOUTH-POINT-FINAL-PLAN_101916_TO-DHHL_LOW-RES.PDF

Department of Land and Natural Resources: **Kealakekua Bay State Historical Park Master Plan (2023)**

https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/files/2023/10/Kealakekua-Bay-SHP-Final-Master-Plan-2023_.pdf

Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife: **Pololū Trailhead Management Plan (2024)**

https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/recreation/files/2024/10/Pololu-Trailhead_Final-Plan_Sept-2024_Townscape-to-DLNR-DO-FAWrev.pdf

Hawai'i Department of Transportation **Hilo Bayfront Trails Master Plan (2014)**

<https://hidot.hawaii.gov/harbors/files/2014/04/Hilo-Bayfront-Trails-Project-Master-Plan.pdf>

Ho'āla Kealakekua Nui: **Kealakekua Bay Community Action Plan**

<https://kealakekua.org/community-action-plan/>

Moromizato, N. (2025). *Analyzing travel flow to Hanauma Bay before and after the reservation system using big data.*

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, School of Travel Industry Management.

The logo for the Hawai'i Tourism Authority is centered on the page. It features the words "HAWAII TOURISM" in a white, serif, all-caps font. A thin horizontal line, colored with a gradient from red to blue, runs beneath the text. Below this line, the word "AUTHORITY" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif, all-caps font.

HAWAII TOURISMTM

AUTHORITY