



Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park Kahuku Site Management Plan

NPS Photo / A.LaValle

Overview

The National Park Service (NPS) at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is preparing a comprehensive Site Management Plan for the NPS managed area of Kahuku referred to as the **Kahuku Unit**.

This document provides an overview of the purpose of the Site Management Plan, background on the relationship of NPS and Kahuku, some initial thoughts on how this place could be experienced and protected, and information on the planning process and how you can participate.

We will be accepting public comments from **November 6, 2024 to December 6, 2024**. See the Share Your Feedback section of this document for more details on attending public meetings and submitting comments. Additional information about the project and the comment form are available on the project's Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website. Use the link below to visit the project's PEPC site.

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/KahukuPlan>

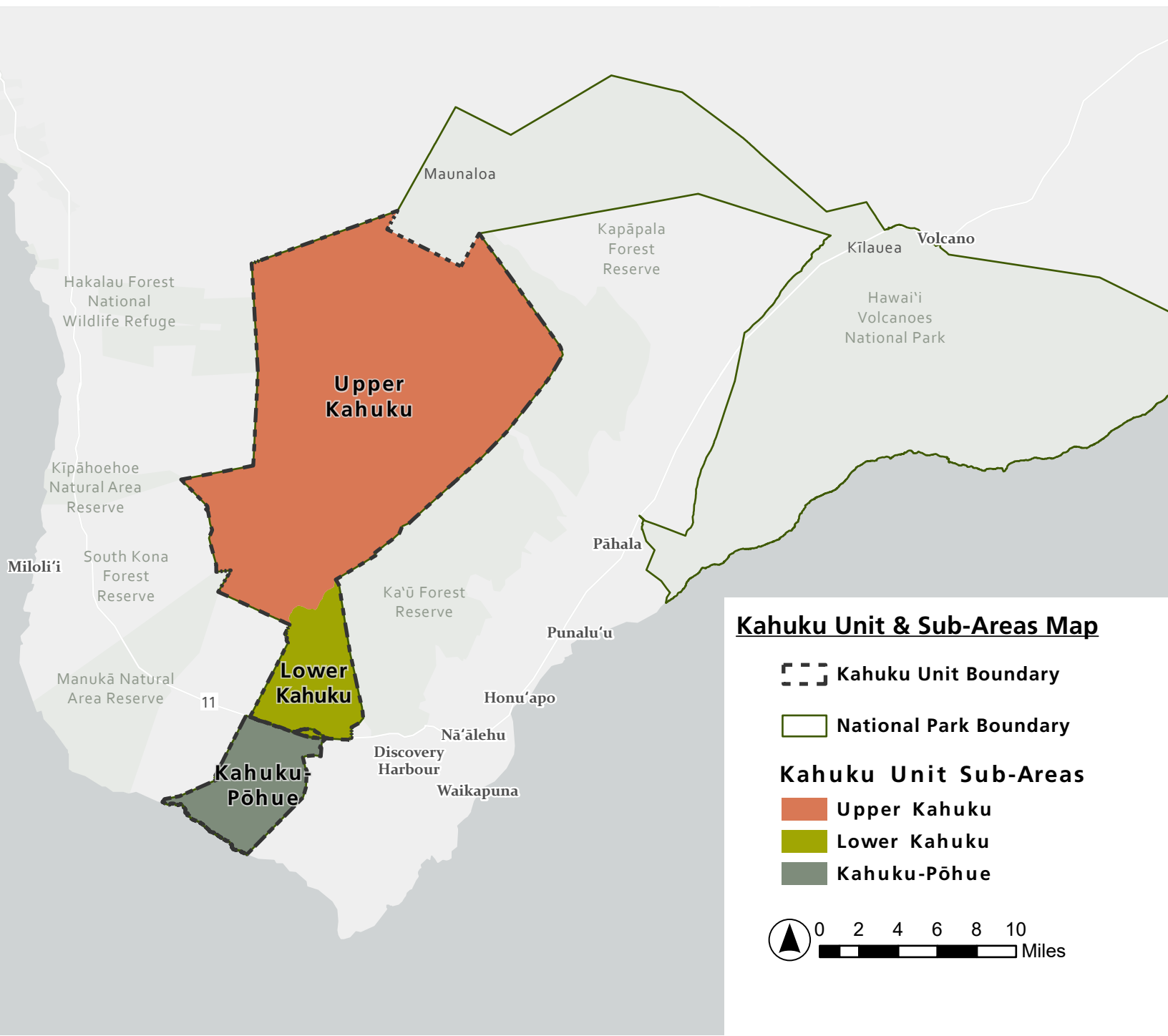
Project Area

The Kahuku Unit is composed of three sub-areas:

- Upper Kahuku
- Lower Kahuku, and
- Kahuku-Pōhue.

Together these areas straddle the Southwest Rift Zone of Maunaloa and extend across lava fields, coastal areas, pastures, forests, shrublands and mesic, subalpine, and desert environments in the Kaʻū District of Hawaiʻi County.

The unit includes habitat for several species of federally listed endangered plants and animals and contains numerous cultural resources, including archeological sites, historic structures, ethnographic resources, and sacred sites.



NPS & Kahuku

The Kahuku Unit was acquired as several parcels between 2003 and 2022. Together they extend from sea level to over 12,000 feet in elevation.

2003

The park acquired the areas ma uka or above Highway 11 which was the beginning of the Kahuku Unit of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park.

2012

The park conducted a Wilderness Assessment for the Kahuku Unit and found that most of Upper Kahuku is eligible for wilderness designation.

2016

The park completed a General Management Plan (GMP) which included the area that made up the Kahuku Unit at the time.

2018

The park acquired approximately 223 acres between the Old Mamalahoa Highway and Highway 11 on the southern side of the 2003 acquisition.

2022

The park acquired an additional parcel located ma kai of Highway 11, which extends to the coastline and which is commonly referred to as Kahuku-Pōhue.

Prior to park acquisition, the Pōhue parcel was privately managed with very limited access to the public. It was accessed by way of a private road for hiking, fishing and beach-side camping as well as traditional cultural practices such as fishing. In addition to historic and non-historic trails there are several 4-wheel drive (4WD) roads, one of which



NPS Photo / A.LaValle: The Palm Trail in the Kahuku Unit traversing the 1868 lava flow.

winds in and out of private property.

Public access has been limited while the park gathers information on the sensitive cultural and natural resources and develops a long-term management plan for the area. The park held public meetings in 2022 with local neighbors, stakeholders, and Native Hawaiian Organizations and individuals. Attendees highlighted multiple issues emphasizing the need for careful stewardship.



NPS Photo / J.Ferracane: Pōhue Bay contains one of the few white sand beaches found on the southern part of the island of Hawai'i.

2024

Currently there is only limited development for visitor access, recreation and administrative uses in Upper and Lower Kahuku. There is a small Visitor Contact Station, a gravel public parking area with a vault toilet, and a handful of former ranch buildings that have been repurposed for administrative use.

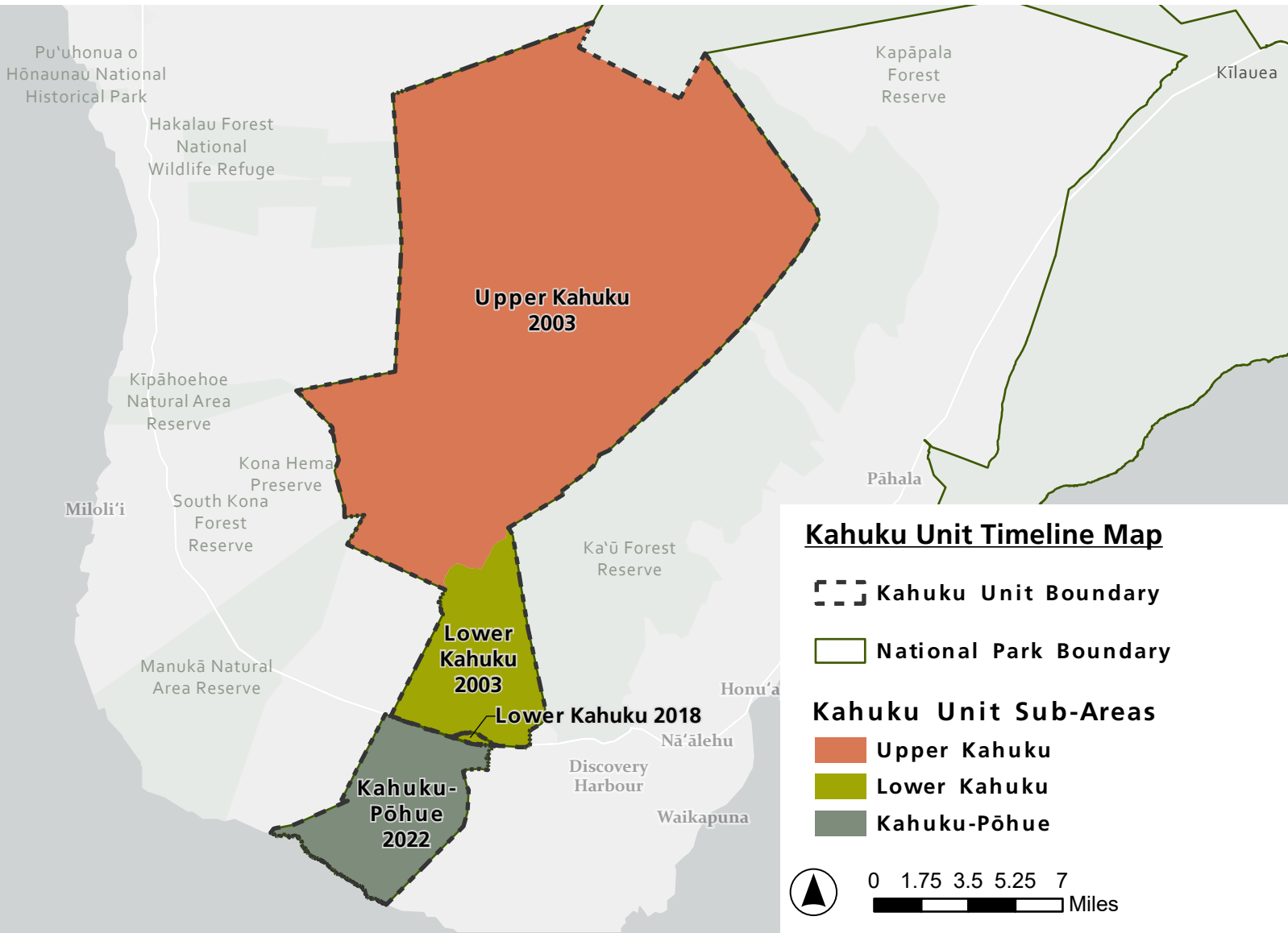
There is a single main road used by vehicles, and several secondary ranch roads that are used for hiking and cycling and maintained as fuel breaks. There are a few portable toilets and picnic benches established along the main road.

The park will pilot opening up a limited area along the shoreline of Kahuku-Pōhue to pedestrian day-use under a managed backcountry permit system. Information gained from the pilot will assist in the development of this long-term site management plan for the area.

A Wilderness Assessment for Kahuku-Pōhue will be completed concurrent with this planning project.



NPS Photo / M.Watanabe: Trailhead at Lower Kona Trail.



Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the park is to protect, study, and provide access to Kīlauea and Maunaloa, two of the world's most active volcanoes and to perpetuate endemic Hawaiian ecosystems and the traditional Hawaiian culture connected to these landscapes.

The Site Management Plan (SMP) and the process of civic engagement are essential to define the types of visitor uses and functions for the Kahuku Unit. Called for in the 2016 General Management Plan, the SMP will refine the vision for the unit by assessing the facilities and access needs. The plan will also provide recommendations on additional facilities and improving access. Two initial steps of the process are to identify the overall objectives of the plan and any issues or concerns that need to be addressed or considered.

Project Objectives

- Provide a roadmap to guide decisions.
 - Preservation and restoration.
 - Visitor-use management, which will define indicators and thresholds for monitoring and visitor capacities which are the maximum amounts and types of visitor use an area can accommodate while achieving and maintaining the desired conditions.
 - Types and levels of facilities in the Kahuku Unit, including Kahuku-Pōhue.
- Provide baseline assessment of Kahuku Unit, facilities, and visitor use.
 - Confirm issues.
 - Guide development of site-specific desired conditions, visitor experiences, and facilities and infrastructure.
- Guidance for visitor access.
- Development of site concepts for potential actions.
 - Rehabilitating structures.
 - Removal of unusable structures.
 - Accessibility improvements.
 - Interpretive and educational activities, picnic areas, trails, and small-scale campsites.
- Future management strategies and environmental and cultural compliance.
 - Guide response to changing conditions associated with visitor use.



NPS Photo / B.Hayes: Kahuku Visitor Contact Station (middle structure) and Kahuku Ranch Barn (left) are seen from the top of Pu'uolokuana cinder cone.



NPS Photo: Rapid Ōhi'a Death (ROD) Quarantine Gate at Glover Trailhead in Lower Kahuku.

Issues & Concerns

- Visitation
 - Visitation to the Kahuku Unit tripled from 50 per day in 2016 to 150 per day in 2022.
 - Limited infrastructure for visitors.
 - No facilities currently compliant with Architectural Barriers Act (ABA).
 - Kahuku-Pōhue: Finding the appropriate balance between use and resource protection.
- Non-native species
 - Removal of invasive non-native species.
 - Visitor access risk of introducing non-native species.
 - Replacement with native plant species.
- Increased risk for spread of Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death (ROD).
 - Increased visitor use would require continued/increased efforts to maintain compliance with vehicle and boot sanitation to prevent spread of ROD.
- Increased risk of highly invasive pests.
- Preservation of Cultural Resources, History and Relationships.
 - Continued protection of cultural landscapes places, objects, and materials that are important to people's sense of purpose or way of life.
 - Survey and protection of archeological sites, historic trails, and culturally sensitive sites.
 - Historic structures (e.g. Kahuku Ranch, World War II-era structures) need corrective action for preservation.



NPS Photo / M.Watanabe: Visitors decontaminating their boots to prevent Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death.



NPS Photo: Lower Kona/Glover parking.

Management Zones

Desired conditions and Management zones describe what the park strives to achieve in each area of the park.

Desired Conditions are aspirational statements that describe environmental or ecological conditions, visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services that a park strives to achieve and maintain in a particular area.

Visitor Services Zone
Visitor Use and Experience

While frequent encounters with other visitors are to be expected in this zone, visitors will still find opportunities to have an enjoyable and fulfilling park experience.

Taken together, management zones and desired conditions allow park managers to offer a spectrum of opportunities to meet the needs of a broad array of diverse public interests.

Below are two examples of zone-specific desired conditions statements related to Visitor Use and Experience. A full list of the desired conditions is available on the project's PEPC site.



NPS Photo / J.Ferracane: Visitors on Pu'uolokuana cinder cone look down at the Cultural Festival grounds in Lower Kahuku.



NPS Photo: Hapaimamo in Upper Kahuku on the southwest rift zone of Maunaloa.

Wild/Primitive Zone
Visitor Use and Experience

Visitors feel immersed in the natural environment, where the likelihood of encountering others is low, particularly as visitors travel deeper into the interior of this zone. Opportunities to experience solitude, risk, adventure, and wildness abound.

Management zones stem from the reality that not all areas in a park have the same ecological and cultural sensitivity thus, some areas require different protection than others. Management zones allow for a diversity of uses across the landscape while providing protection based on site-specific landscape conditions and needs.

Most of the Kahuku Unit is Wild/Primitive Zone. About 10% of the area is Transitional/Semi-Primitive Zone and less than 1% is Visitor Services Zone.

Wild/Primitive Zone

This zone includes all areas designated wilderness, eligible wilderness, or backcountry. The wild/primitive zone includes Upper Kahuku and the southwest corner of Lower Kahuku (including the 1887 flows west to the western boundary of Kahuku). It is proposed that Kahuku-Pōhue minus the road corridors could be included in this zone.

Transitional/Semi-Primitive Zone

This zone includes areas that are dominated by natural conditions where visitor experiences focus on providing a sense of solitude, relaxation, and exploration in a relatively natural environment with limited interpretation. The transitional/semi-primitive zone includes most of Lower Kahuku and could include existing and proposed road corridors in Kahuku-Pōhue.

Visitor Services Zone

This zone is the first point of contact visitors have with the park. It contains visitor facilities and generally receives higher visitation levels than other zones. There is one Visitor Services Zone in Kahuku. It encompasses all of the existing ranch buildings in Lower Kahuku and the Pu'uolokuana Trail, extending north to the far side of Pu'uolokuana and west to the eastern edge of the Old Mamalahoa Highway.



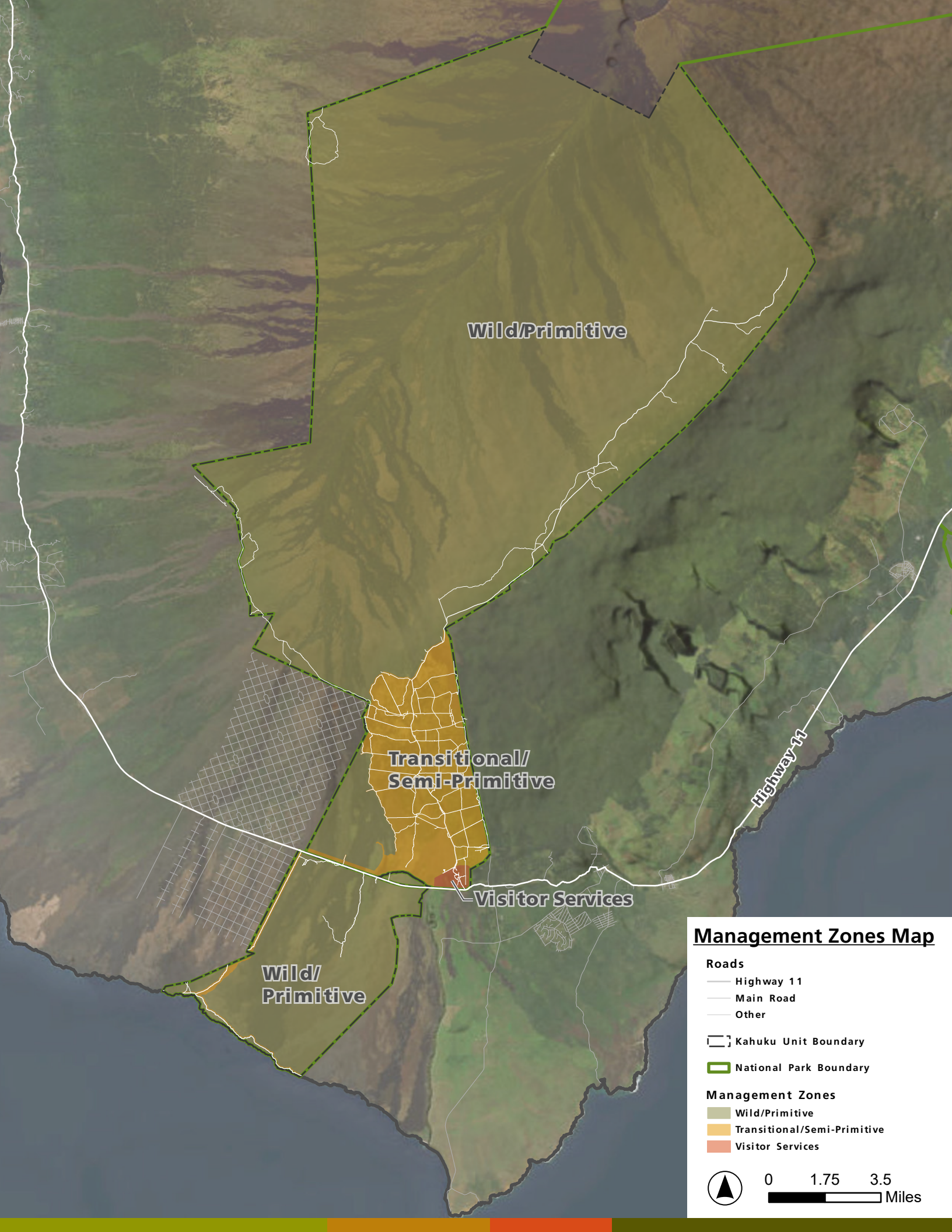
NPS Photo: Pōhue is critical habitat for many endangered species like the hōnū'ea.



NPS Photo: Orange 'ōhi'a in Lower Kahuku.



NPS Photo: Visitor Contact Station, parking area, and open-air shelter in Visitor Services Zone.



Wild/Primitive

Transitional/
Semi-Primitive

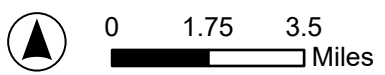
Visitor Services

Wild/
Primitive

Highway 11

Management Zones Map

- Roads**
 - Highway 11
 - Main Road
 - Other
- Kahuku Unit Boundary
- National Park Boundary
- Management Zones**
 - Wild/Primitive
 - Transitional/Semi-Primitive
 - Visitor Services



Preliminary Concepts

The following preliminary concepts are early ideas for potential projects at Kahuku. Not everything presented here would be implemented. Projects that are implemented would be installed or developed over time depending on funding availability. Through civic engagement, we want to learn more about community priorities and use public input to help prioritize projects and locations.

Kahuku-Pōhue

Area-Wide Concepts

Trails: Could assess the feasibility of reestablishing some existing historic trails. Potential trailhead improvements could include informational sign, or composting toilet.

Education/Interpretation: Could include digital or online options to provide orientation and education, digital or in-person guided walks, etc. while protecting sensitive areas from physical facility development.

Fencing: Could install fences in strategic areas to protect fragile resources.



NPS Photo: Kahakahakea.

Small Camping Areas

The park is considering formalizing up to 4 small camping areas in locations used for camping by previous landowners. Potential improvements within a camping area could include adding tables, composting toilet, rainshelter, and signage where needed. Not all improvements would be appropriate at all locations.

Potential locations for camping areas include:

- Kanonone
- Hosaka Flats
- JR's
- Kahakahakea
- Small White-Sand Beach

Minimal Facilities

The park is considering a minimal amount of facilities that could support management and protection of the area. Potential facilities include:

- **Kahuku Beach:** Could be a day-use only area. Could add informational sign, picnic tables, composting toilet, and/or shelter for turtle program staff use.
- **Road Signage:** Could add road guide signage on park road near the highway to keep vehicles on designated road.
- **Potential Road Connection:** A 4WD access road could be developed fully within NPS property to replace the existing access that requires permission to drive through private property. Design concepts would avoid impacts to sensitive areas.
- **Western Boundary Road & Trail to Pōhue Bay:** Could add an informational sign and composting toilet at the trailhead and evaluate needed parking capacity.



NPS Photo: Section of a Historic Trail. Kahuku-Pōhue holds a network of culturally and historically significant trails.



Kahuku-Pöhue Concepts

Preliminary Concepts

- Small Camping Areas
- Minimal Facilities

Roads

- Highway 11
- Main Road
- Other

Kahuku Unit Boundary

National Park Boundary



0 0.5 1 Miles



Lower Kahuku

Area-Wide Concepts

Education/Interpretation: Some ideas include increasing guided activities and completing an Interpretive Media Plan for trails and trailheads to identify wayfinding and interpretive signage needs, designs, and themes.

Kahuku Main Road: Could improve the Kahuku Main Road to Upper Kona to provide access for pump truck to vault toilets at trailheads and/or campsites along the main road.

Paddock Roads: Could reestablish some old paddock roads that are overgrown to provide fuel breaks and access for administrative use.



NPS Photo: Kahuku Main Road.

Small Camping Areas

The park is considering small camping areas in the Lower Kahuku area, 1 in the Visitor Services Zone and up to 2 in the Transitional/Semi-Primitive Zone. Potential improvements within camping areas could include pavilions to provide shade and composting or vault toilets depending on location.

Potential locations for camping areas include:

- **Near Entrance:** group, drive up, ABA-compliant
- **Airstrip:** group, drive up, ABA-compliant
- **Old Tree Farm:** group, hike in, trailhead and trail starting at Lower Palm Trail
- **Along Upper and Lower Palm Trail:** standard, hike in
- **Old Quarry off Palm Trail:** standard, hike in
- **Junction off Upper Kona Trail:** group or standard, drive up

Trails

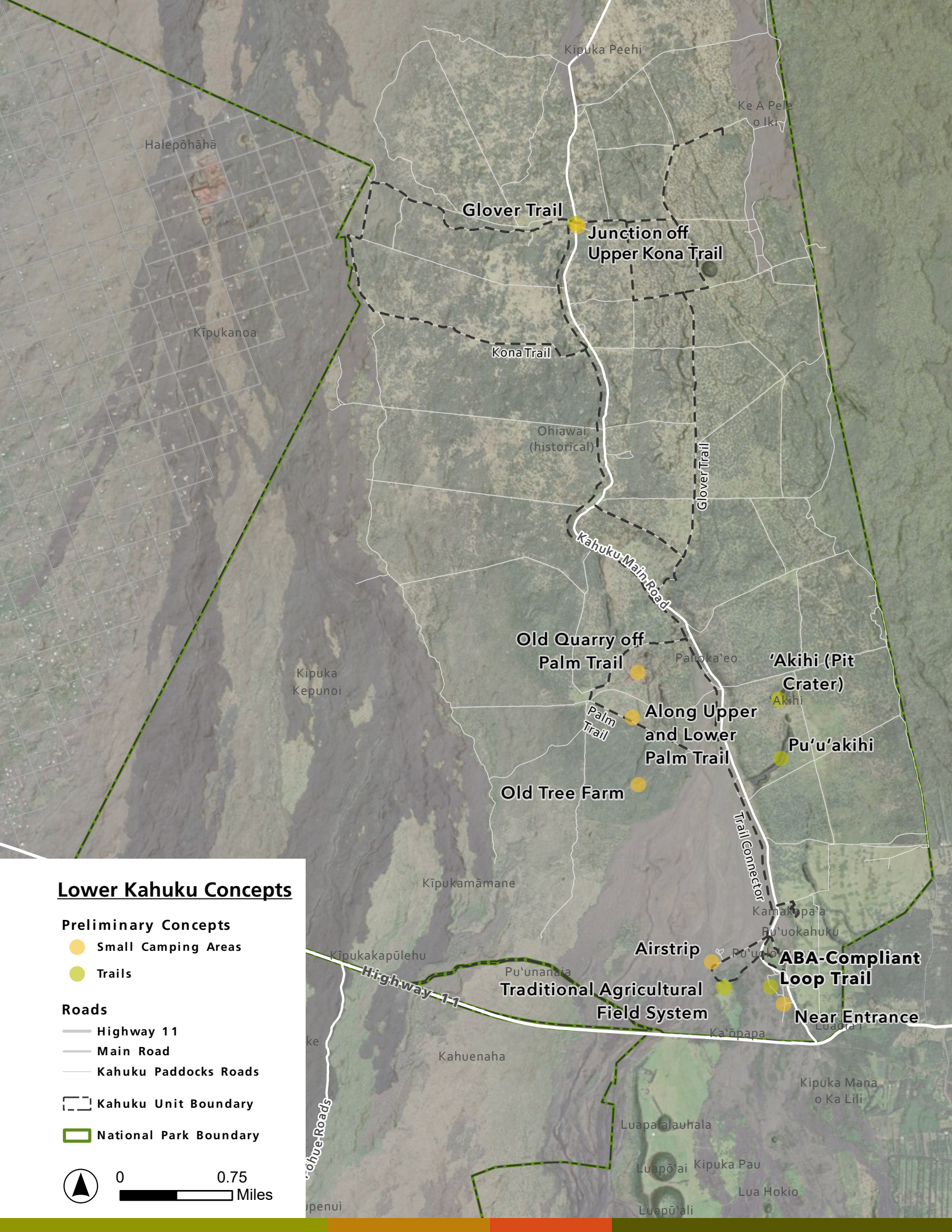
The park is considering improvements to existing trails and minimal addition of new trails. Old ranch roads would be used as trails where possible to reduce new impacts. New trails would be located to provide a variety of experiences in different habitats of the area.

Some potential concepts include:

- **‘Akihi (Pit Crater):** Could add a trail and picnic area near the ‘Akihi pit crater rim.
- **Pu‘u ‘Akihi:** Could assess the feasibility of constructing a trail through part of the ravine.
- **Glover Trailhead:** Could add a composting or vault toilet.
- **Ka‘ū Agricultural Field System:** Could add a spur trail through a portion of the archeological remnants of the extensive ancient dryland agricultural field system.
- **ABA-Compliant Loop Trail:** Could add an accessible loop trail near the parking lot and Visitor Contact Station.



NPS Photo: Old Quarry off Palm Trail.



Lower Kahuku Concepts

Preliminary Concepts

- Small Camping Areas
- Trails

Roads

- Highway 11
- Main Road
- Kahuku Paddocks Roads

Kahuku Unit Boundary

National Park Boundary



Glover Trail

Junction off Upper Kona Trail

Kona Trail

Ohiawai (historical)

Kahuku Main Road

Old Quarry off Palm Trail

Palm Trail

Along Upper and Lower Palm Trail

Old Tree Farm

'Akihi (Pit Crater)

Pu'u'akihi

Trail Connector

Airstrip

Traditional Agricultural Field System

ABA-Compliant Loop Trail

Near Entrance

Highway 11

Side Roads

Halepohaha

Kipukanoa

Kipuka Peehi

Ke A Pele o Iki

Kipuka Kepunoi

Kipukamamane

Kipukakapulehu

Pu'unanai

Kahuenaha

Luapalauhala

Luapoi Kipuka Pau

Luapali

Lua Hokio

Kipuka Mana o Ka Lili

Ka'opapa

Kamakapa'a

Bu'uokahuku

Pu'uolo

Lua'ala

Openui

Education/Interpretation

Potential concepts for visitor uses in the Visitor Services Zone include:

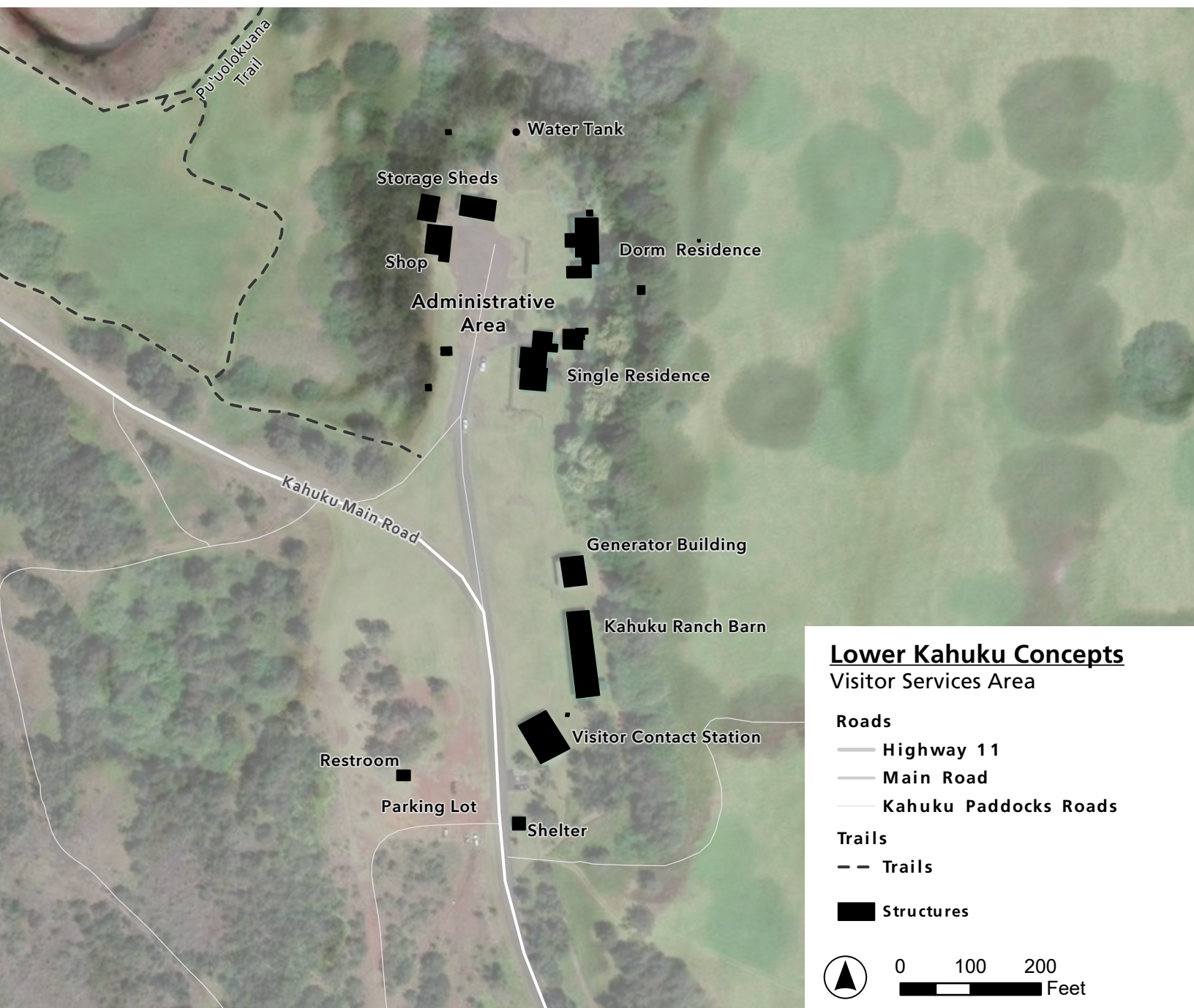
- **Visitor Contact Station:** Could update and complete previously designed exhibits for the Visitor Contact Station.
- **Events:** Could continue to host cultural festivals, special events, guest speakers, and other programs with partner support.
- **Demonstration Spaces:** Could add demonstration spaces/garden related to native plants or agriculture within close walking distance of the Visitor Contact Station.

Minimal Facilities

The park is considering a minimal amount of facilities that could support visitor use and park operations in the Visitor Services Zone. Potential facilities include:

Visitor Services Area Improvements: Could include paving and/or expanding the parking lot, adding picnic shelters, improving the restrooms, expanding lanai of Visitor Contact Station, and converting existing generator building into an education pavilion.

Administrative Area Improvements: Could include rehabilitating old structures or building new structures for employee housing, staging, storage, fire facilities, and general HPPA storage. Could increase capacity of water tank.



Upper Kahuku

Area-Wide Concepts

Education/Interpretation: Could assess the feasibility of guided programs.

Small Camping Areas

The park is considering up to 3 small camping areas in Upper Kahuku. Improvements at camping areas could include camp shelter that also provide rainwater catchment, tent platforms, pavilion, and composting toilet. Not all improvements would be appropriate at all locations.

Potential locations for camping areas include:

Nēnē Cabin: Standard, hike in; to provide campsites along hike to Maunaloa, potentially combined visitor and administrative use.

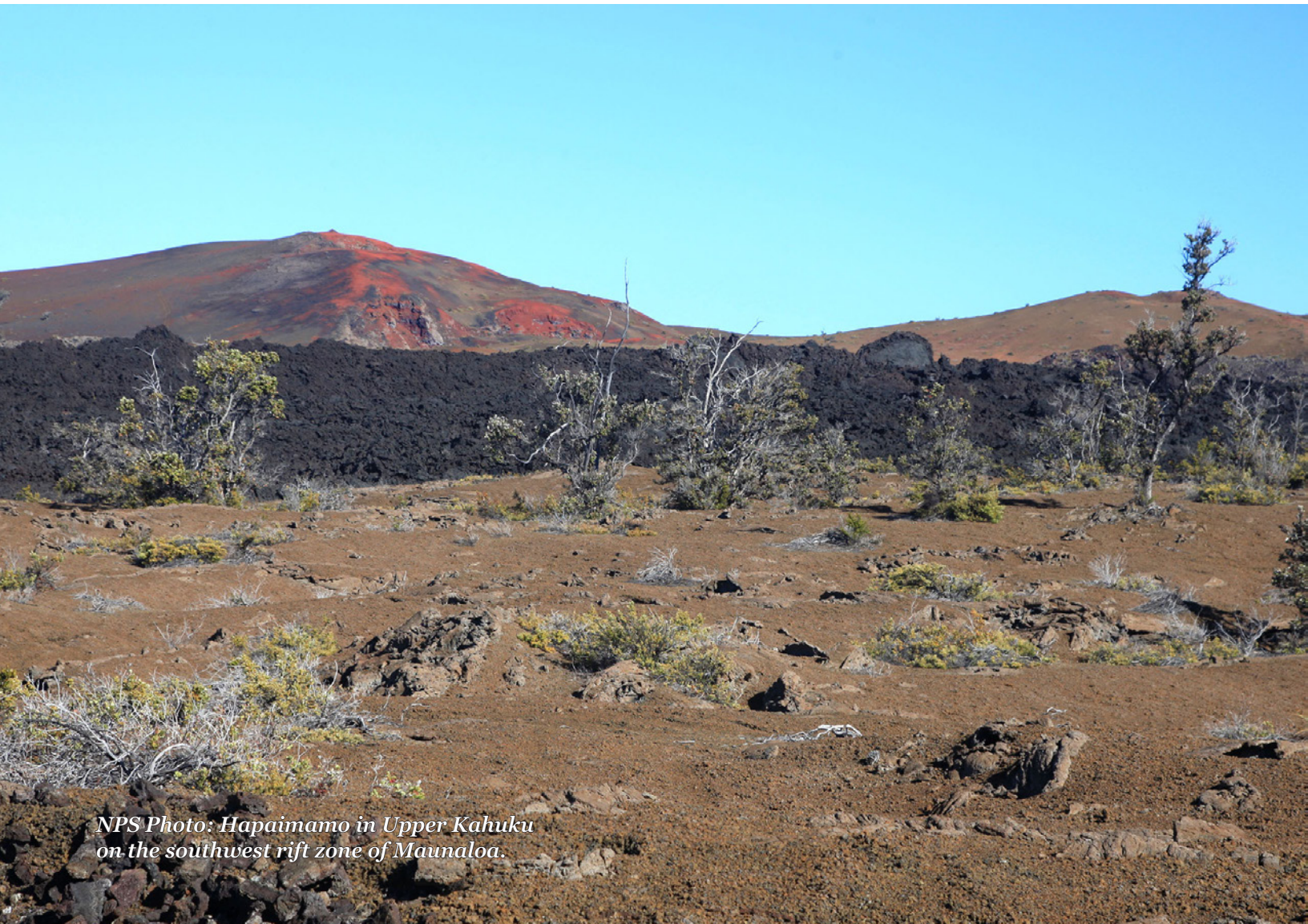
Northeastern Boundary: Standard, hike in; to provide campsites near connection to the 'Āinapō Trail.

- **Kīpuka'ākala:** Group, drive up (4WD); could provide visitor and administrative base camp for wilderness area. Permits would be required for vehicle access to go beyond Upper Kona Trail.

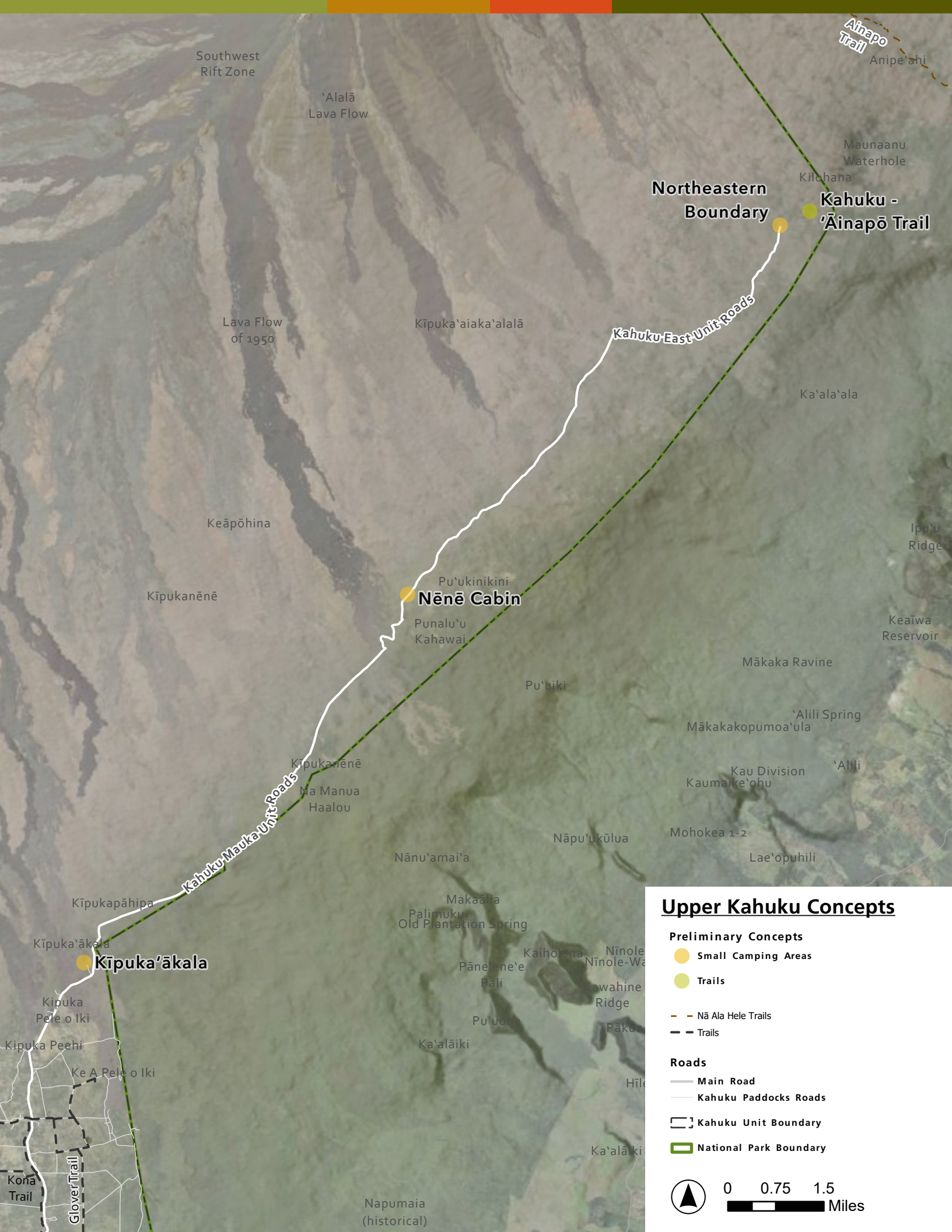
Trails

The park is considering reestablishing historic trails and minimal addition of new trails to provide a variety of experiences in different habitats of the area. Potential trail concepts for Upper Kahuku include:

Kahuku - 'Āinapō Trail: Could reestablish the trail connecting the Kahuku-'Āinapō Trail to the 'Āinapō Trail in the Kapāpala Forest Reserve. Some sections would need to be improved, and some sections would need to be re-constructed.



NPS Photo: Hapaimamo in Upper Kahuku on the southwest rift zone of Maunaloa.



Southwest Rift Zone

'Alalā Lava Flow

Lava Flow of 1950

Kīpuka 'aiaka 'alalā

Keāpōhina

Kīpukanēnē

Pu'ukinikini
Nēnē Cabin
Punalu'u
Kahawai

Kīpukanēnē
Na Manua
Haalou

Kīpukapāhipa

Kīpuka 'ākala
Kīpuka 'ākala

Kīpuka Pele o Iki
Kīpuka Peehi
Ke A Pele o Iki

Nānu'amai'a

Makaala
Palimuku
Old Plantation Spring

Pāne'one'e
Pali

Ka'alāiki

Napumaia
(historical)

Northeastern Boundary

Kahuku East Unit Roads

Kahuku - 'Āinapō Trail

Āinapo Trail

Maunaanu Waterhole

Kilohana

Ka'ala'ala

Ipo'u Ridge

Keāiwa Reservoir

Mākaka Ravine

'Alili Spring
Mākakakopumoa'ula

Kau Division
Kaumake'ohu

Pu'biki

Nāpu'ukūlua

Mohoeka 1-2

Lae'opuhili

Upper Kahuku Concepts

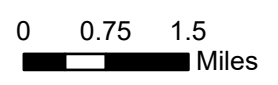
Preliminary Concepts

- Small Camping Areas
- Trails

- - Nā Ala Hele Trails
- - Trails

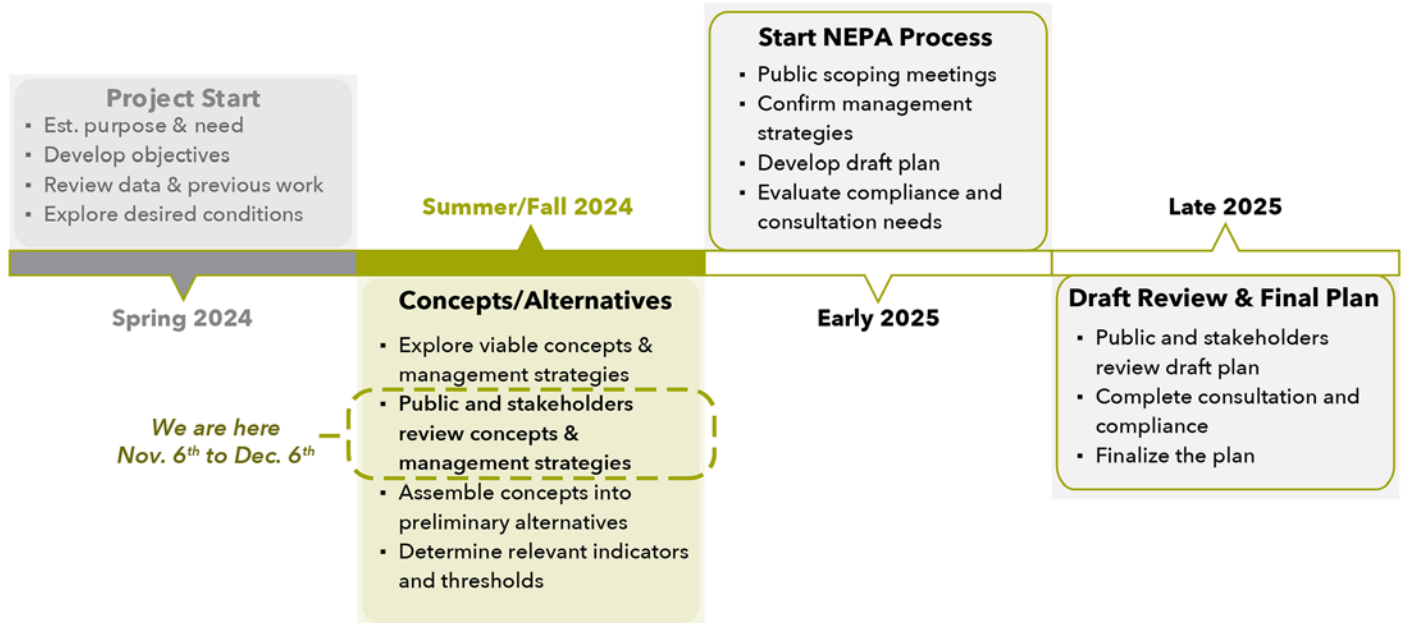
Roads

- Main Road
- Kahuku Paddocks Roads
- Kahuku Unit Boundary
- National Park Boundary



Project Schedule & Next Steps

The Kahuku Site Management Plan is in the second phase of a four-phase process. The comment period for this phase is **November 6th to December 6th**. There will also be opportunities to provide feedback during the next two phases as detailed in the Project Timeline below. See the next section, Share Your Feedback, for information on how to comment during this phase of the project.



NPS Photo: 'Apapane, the most abundant species of the Hawaiian honeycreeper, on māmane tree.



Share your Feedback!

It is important that we hear from you! We will accept comments from **November 6, 2024 to December 6, 2024**. See below for the different ways to participate and provide your feedback.

Comment Online

Submit your comments via our Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website using the link below. You will also find additional information about the project on the website.

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/KahukuPlan>

Please note: Comments will not be accepted by fax, e-mail, or any other way than those specified above. Bulk comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Attend a Meeting in Person

We will be hosting two in-person meetings November 14 and November 16. The in-person meetings will provide an opportunity for the public to learn more about the project, ask questions, and have discussions with park staff.

In-Person Meetings:

Thursday, November 14, 2024

Time: 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Location: Nā'ālehu Community Center, 95-5635
Hawai'i Belt Rd, Nā'ālehu, HI 96772

Saturday, November 16, 2024

Time: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Location: Kahuku Visitor Contact Station,
Māmalahoa Highway (Hwy 11) mm 70.5,
Nā'ālehu, HI 96772

Attend a Virtual Meeting

We will be hosting one virtual public meeting December 3rd. The virtual meeting will also provide an opportunity for the public to learn about the project and ask questions. There will be a presentation at the start of the meeting (6 p.m.). Use the link below to join the meeting online or join by phone using the toll-free number and meeting ID.

Virtual Meeting:

December 3, 2024 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

<https://swca.zoom.us/j/91799290126>

Join Virtual Meeting by phone: (888) 475-4499

Meeting ID: 917 9929 0126

Mahalo!

