



File Code: 1560
Date: January 4, 2016

Aloha:

I am writing to welcome and invite your participation in development of a research and education field facility by the Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry (the Institute). The Institute plans to construct environmentally low-impact facilities that will support the fundamental land management needs within the Pu'u Wa'awa'a Unit of the Hawai'i Experimental Tropical Forest (HETF) (See Figure 1). For more information about the HETF, including annual reports containing research discoveries and youth engagement, please visit the following Internet URL: <http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/ef/hawaii/>. Included with this notice is a description of the *Purpose and Need for Action* and *Proposed Action* for review. Your comments, suggestions, and/or concerns about this proposal are welcome, necessary, and appreciated so as to develop this project in full partnership with you and all people in the community.

Hawai'i Experimental Forest - Unit Locations

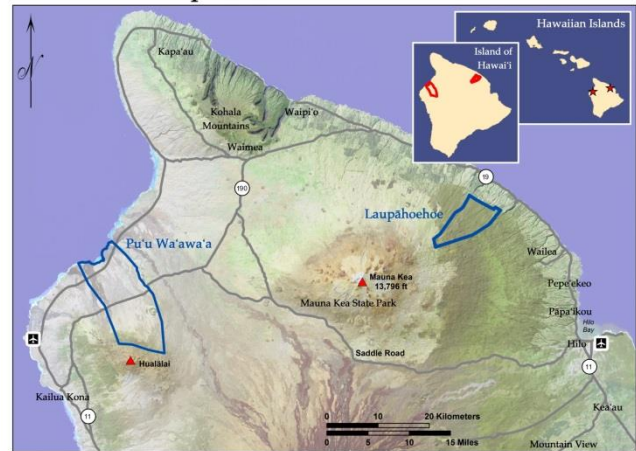


Figure 1.

Purpose and Need for Action

The HETF was established in 2007 through a cooperative agreement with the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources. Construction of new research and education field station facilities is a natural step toward achieving the primary purpose of the site: to provide facilities for ecological research, facilitate youth/community engagement, and support conservation. Facilities that meet these purposes are not currently available at Pu'u Wa'awa'a.

Location of the Project

The proposed facilities would be located in Hawai'i County, off of Highway 190 approximately 10 miles south-southwest of the community of Waikoloa Village and approximately 20 miles south-southwest of the Town of Waimea. Maps of the Pu'u Wa'awa'a Unit and proposed project area can be found in Figures 1 and 2.

Proposed Action

As part of the **Pu'u Wa'awa'a Construction Project**, the Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry is proposing to conduct the following activities:

- Construction of a bunkhouse building of approximately 1,100 square feet. This building would include double occupancy bunkhouse space for up to 10 visiting scientists, restrooms, kitchen facilities, and common use areas.
- Construction of an education and demonstration pavilion of approximately 400 square feet suitable for conference, meeting, and classroom use.
- Construction of an equipment storage building of approximately 400 square feet.
- Designation of an occasional-use tent area for up to 15 individuals subject to Forest Service directives and policies.



- Improvement of approximately 2,500 feet of access drive and construction of parking areas for 10 vehicles (overflow parking for occasional large events would include off-site parking with shuttle service and use of the margins of the old runway on site).
- Provision of electrical and water utility connections and a waste water disposal system to serve the above facilities. An overhead electric line runs near the site, and connection to a private potable water system may be available. We will also analyze alternative sources such as solar power with generator backup, rainwater catchment, and hauling potable water.

The proposed site was selected due to its suitable topography, the presence of potential building sites free of native plants, available access with modest road improvements, low scenic impact, and central location within the Pu‘u Wa‘awa‘a Unit of the HETF.

Comments

In order to achieve the best possible outcome for people and the environment as a result of this project, please send your comments, suggestions, and/or concerns to me at the following local mailing address:

Ric Lopez, Director
Institute for Pacific Islands Forestry
Pacific Southwest Research Station
USDA Forest Service
60 Nowelo Street
Hilo, Hawaii 96720,

or by email at: hawaii_experimental_tropical_forest@fs.fed.us; if using email, please put “**Pu‘u Wa‘awa‘a Construction Project Comment**” in the subject line. Questions about this Proposal should be directed to me at the above address or by phone at (808) 854-2601.

Comments that are site specific or are based on your knowledge of the area will better help us develop and evaluate alternatives to the Proposed Action. Although comments are welcome throughout the planning process, **providing your comments by February 8, 2016 will allow time to consider your input during alternative development and analysis.** Please note comments are a matter of public record and as such may be provided to interested parties upon request.

Sincerely,



Ric Lopez
Director, Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry

Cc: Jane L. Hayes, Christine Hansen, John Slown

Hawai'i Experimental Tropical Forest Pu'u Wa'awa'a Proposed Project Site

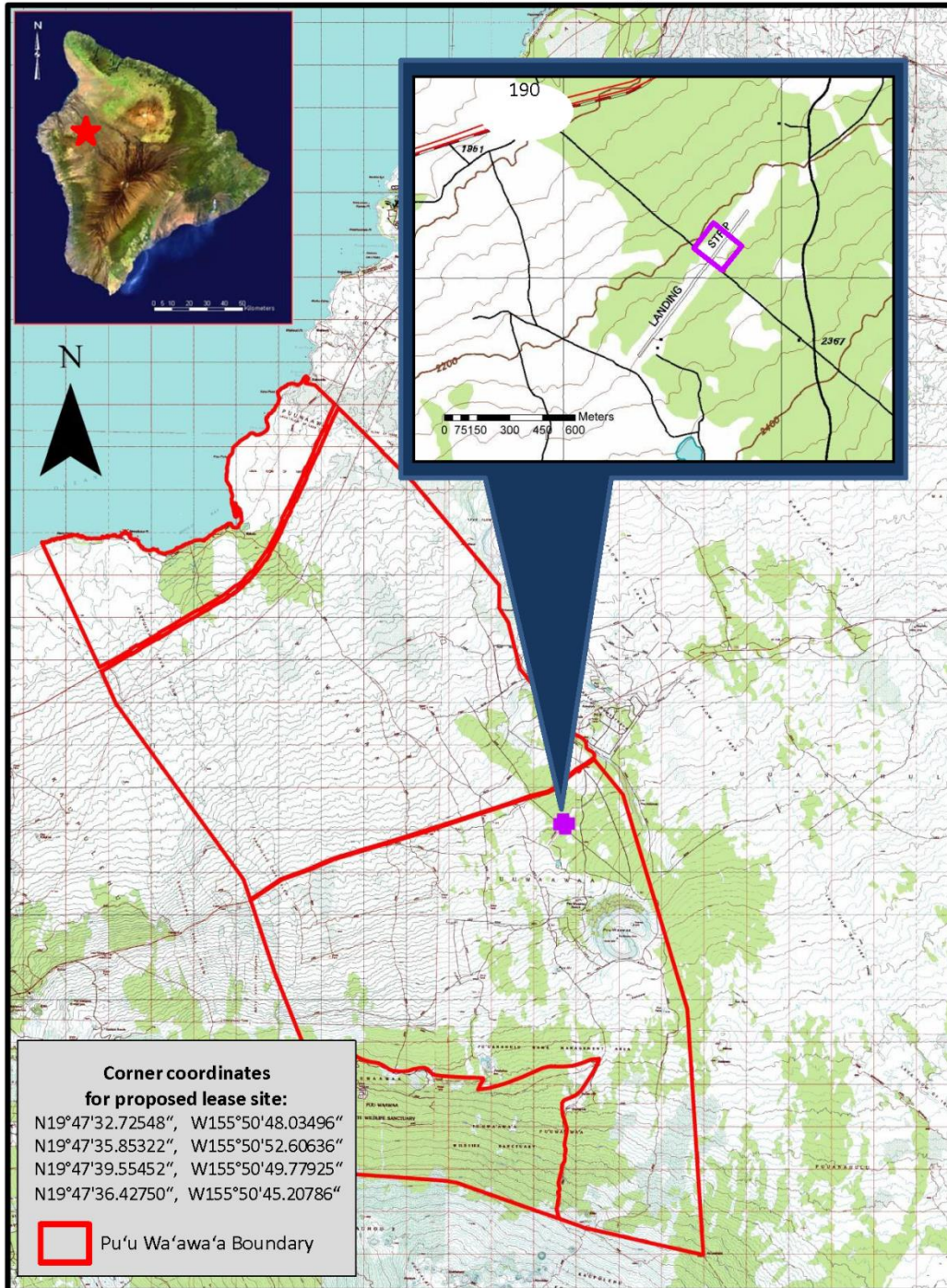


Figure 2

The Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry is a field unit located in Hilo, Hawaii and is a part of the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station. Additional information available at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/programs/ipif/>.