

STATEMENT OF FRANK HAYS, PACIFIC AREA DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE, DRUG POLICY AND HUMAN RESOURCES OF THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE, AT AN OVERSIGHT HEARING ON NATIONAL PARKS OF HAWAI'I

December 1, 2005

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today at this oversight hearing on key issues facing the National Park Service in Hawai'i, with particular focus on visitor services and invasive species. We are pleased to welcome you to Hawai'i.

The National Park Service (NPS) administers seven park units, and a National Historic Trail, in Hawai'i. Along with units in Guam, Samoa, and Saipan, the units in Hawai'i are organized as the Pacific West Region's Pacific Islands Network. Here on Oahu, we have one unit, the USS Arizona Memorial, dedicated to those who lost their lives in the attack on Pearl Harbor. The other units, on other Hawaiian islands, protect and interpret a range of natural and cultural resources—volcanoes, fragile ecosystems, rare and endangered species, and archeological remnants from native Hawaiian settlements and sacred sites. One unit, Kalaupapa National Historical Park, tells the story of the establishment of a colony for patients of Hansen's disease, or leprosy. Although open to visitors on a limited basis, Kalaupapa still serves foremost as a patient community.

The preservation and interpretation of cultural resources associated with native Hawaiians is a central focus of the NPS in Hawai'i. Three park units built around archeological sites on the island of Hawai'i are specifically devoted to native Hawaiian culture. Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park was the site of important Hawaiian settlements before the arrival of European explorers. Pu'ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site contains the ruins of the "Temple on the Hill of the Whale" built by King Kamehameha the Great during his rise to power. Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park was the site of a sacred place where vanquished Hawaiian warriors and others could live in safety. The other park units emphasize native Hawaiian culture in their interpretive programs.

In addition to preserving and interpreting sites that mainly draw visitors to Hawai'i, the NPS also works with Hawaiian residents in diverse ways, including building partnerships to enhance resource protection. The NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, for example, has been assisting local recreation groups in areas outside of the national parks to develop well-managed off-road vehicle areas, enabling all-terrain vehicle enthusiasts to enjoy that activity while helping to protect Hawai'i's amazing array of resources.

National park units in Hawai'i received about \$19 million in operations and maintenance funding in FY 2005, an increase of about 6 percent from FY 2004. As is the case throughout the National Park System, parks in Hawai'i are funded from several different sources in addition to their operating budgets to help carry out their mission. Many receive cyclic maintenance funds, which are distributed by the regional office, and some have construction and land acquisition funds, which are designated for individual parks in appropriations. Parks also collect

concessions fees, transportation fees, and recreation fees. For FY 2005, Hawai'i parks received about \$5.5 million from the 80 percent portion of recreation fees that individual parks retain, which will be used mostly for structural projects that benefit visitors. In addition, Hawai'i parks have been given a great deal of financial and in-kind support from cooperating associations, friends' groups, and other partnership entities. Many Hawai'i parks benefit tremendously from the work done by volunteers, which increased nationwide by 14 percent in 2004.

Visitor Services

The NPS continually strives to provide the public with very positive experiences at national park units. In Hawai'i, the NPS is engaged in a strategic effort to improve visitor services. We have opened some new facilities recently and anticipate the opening of several new facilities over the next few years.

The USS Arizona Memorial is a U.S. Navy memorial and visitor facility that is managed by the National Park Service under a use agreement. It attracts about 1.5 million visitors annually who come to pay their respects to the more than 2,300 members of the Armed Services who made the ultimate sacrifice to the Nation, about half of whom died on the USS Arizona. Visitors may view a film about the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor at the center before taking a short boat ride to the memorial.

Replacing the visitor center is a high priority. The current facility is deteriorating, and furthermore, it was designed to accommodate only about half the number of visitors it receives. With the help of the Arizona Memorial Museum Association, which is heading up a \$34 million fundraising effort, we are planning the construction of a larger visitor center that will offer more exhibits and amenities. We are also working toward improving the visitor experience at this site by coordinating ticketing, parking, security, and concessions with two historic naval attractions in the vicinity that are operated by non-profit associations--the USS Bowfin, a submarine museum, and the USS Missouri, where the World War II surrender papers were signed.

Haleakalā National Park, on Maui, which protects the fragile Hawaiian native ecosystems from the summit of the volcano to the ocean, also attracts about 1.5 million visitors annually. We are faced with increasingly large number of visitors arriving by tour buses, vans supporting bicycle tours, and private vehicles to experience the sunrise at the Haleakalā summit. Within the last month, the NPS has initiated development of a Commercial Services Plan for the park that will evaluate how the NPS can better accommodate the increased use, while providing for visitor safety and enjoyment and protection of the valuable resources at the summit. Better management of the traffic will promote not only more enjoyment of the beauty of the sunrise but also better understanding of why the site is imbued with so much spiritual significance for native Hawaiians.

Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park, which was authorized in 1978 and is being developed gradually, draws about 90,000 visitors annually. We anticipate that visitation will grow now that we have opened a visitor-contact station and parking lot adjacent to park trails, which has made this gem of a park more accessible. The visitor-contact station, which is smaller than a standard visitor center, has educational exhibits, restrooms, and a small sales outlet, and is much less expensive to operate than a full-scale visitor center. We anticipate opening a similar

facility within the next year at Pu'ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site. Currently, visitors may learn about this historic site, even when it is closed, by reading the interpretive exhibits around the site's outer walls. A visitor-contact station, however, will make the site more welcoming.

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, on the island of Hawai'i, has improved the visitor experience in several ways recently. The visitor center has been renovated in the last year and now offers very appealing exhibits, including original artwork and state-of-the-art maps that are useful for trip planning. The U.S. Geological Survey is a partner in providing interpretation with its Jagger Museum, located in the park, where visitors learn about the science of volcanoes. In the last ten years, the park has provided an intensive interpretation program at the lava's end by the ocean, which is a real highlight for visitors.

Invasive Species

In Hawai'i, battling invasive species proliferation is the most serious resource protection problem the parks face. Recognizing that invasive species cross geographic and jurisdictional boundaries, collaborative efforts among Federal, State, and local entities and willing private landowners can be highly effective in managing a shared problem. A critical barrier the NPS faces with such efforts is the lack of authority to expend Federal funds for work outside the lands it manages. The Department believes that the NPS should have that authority where there is a clear and direct benefit to park natural resources and has submitted an Administration legislative proposal, "the Natural Resource Protection Cooperative Agreement Act," to Congress for that purpose. Passage of this legislation would give the NPS the same authority that the three other major Federal land management agencies already have to use its funds to fight invasives outside their boundaries.

With the continual arrival of new invaders to Hawai'i, the problem of non-native species occupying park areas only increases. For example, the Coqui frogs (*Eleutherodactylus coqui*) are beginning to appear in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. With densities of 10,000 to 40,000 per acre, the Coqui will consume native forest arthropod fauna resulting in significant alterations of food source for native birds and loss of pollinator species critical to maintaining Hawaiian forests, while also degrading the natural quiet of the park and impacting the tourist industry. On Oahu and Maui, a recently arrived rust (tentatively identified as *Puccinia psidii*), initially found on ohia trees (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) in plant nurseries, has now been observed in wildland ohia forests. Its potential to seriously harm this most abundant native tree species and other key species in the native ecosystems is not yet known. The veiled chameleon, which is part of the illegal pet trade, has escaped and is considered by island biologists to have the potential to decimate native bird populations similar to what the brown tree snake has done in Guam. The veiled chameleon feeds on birds and can capture them in mid-flight.

Invasive marine algae are rapidly invading the Hawaiian Islands. These invaders can overgrow and kill corals, devastate coral habitat, alter ecosystem processes, and significantly impact the health and biodiversity of coral reef communities. With Hawai'i's tourism industry so dependent on marine resources, these impacts can result in major financial losses. The NPS is embarking on a two-year project to rapidly assess the threat from invasive marine plants within and adjacent to national parks in Hawai'i, as well as Guam, Saipan, and American Samoa. One area that has been invaded is the Kaloko fishpond, in Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park. Red algae

has entered this spring-fed embayment and currently covers about a third of the bottom. In addition to restoring this important native historic resource, our concern is that the invasive algae will spread to the reef adjacent to the fishpond and throughout the Kona coastline. In cooperation with the University of Hawai‘i, the NPS is conducting a removal project to evaluate methods to diminish and control this invasion and prevent its spread. These methods include biological control using herbivorous fish, manual removal, shading, and re-cropping.

At Haleakalā National Park, over 20 years of active ecosystem management, which includes fencing and feral animal control followed by invasive plant control and rare plant stabilization, has resulted in a spectacular recovery of native vegetation and associated fauna. Thirteen endangered plants and five endangered birds are harbored on parklands along with dozens of rare plants and a diverse array of native arthropods. However, many non-native species threaten to invade native habitats at the park, potentially reversing this recovery. For example, miconia, an invasive tree, feared as the “green cancer”, would transform arguably the best remaining Hawaiian rainforest, and the only remaining home of two critically endangered forest birds, the Maui Parrotbill and Akohekohe, into the green and purple monoculture that has become the fate of the forests in Tahiti. Its prolific growth pattern and large leaves shade out native species; its shallow roots do not hold soil and can result in increased erosion or land slides. Pampas grass and silk oak also threaten to convert native grasslands and forests into single invasive species stands. So far these three species have been eradicated from parklands through a joint partnership effort, but reinvasion from adjacent lands remains a threat.

As part of the NPS’s Natural Resource Challenge, a new management strategy was created for addressing invasive species in parks. Modeled after the approach used in wildland fire fighting, field-based Exotic Plant Management Teams (EPMTs) provide highly trained, mobile strike forces of plant management specialists who assist parks in the identification, treatment, control, restoration, and monitoring of areas infested with invasive plants. The NPS has 16 teams covering 209 parks nationwide, including one that is dedicated to the Pacific Islands Network. This successful model has now been adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Student Conservation Association as well. The success of the EPMTs derives from its ability to adapt to local conditions and needs while still serving multiple parks within a broad geographic area.

The Department’s Cooperative Conservation Initiative (CCI) is an innovative and collaborative program through which land management agencies partner with landowners and communities to battle invasive species and restore natural areas. During 2003 – 2004, the NPS received about \$6 million for invasive species work. Since 2000, the EPMTs have entered into over 40 different cooperative efforts throughout the United States with more than \$4 million dollars in matching support from public and private sources. In 2004 alone, volunteers contributed over 4,000 hours to our weed management efforts. In addition, we anticipate that the Noxious Weed Control and Eradication Act passed by Congress last year will help provide financial and technical support to our State partners in controlling weeds. Finally, through a new Student Conservation Association partnership, student teams are being fielded to build our capacity and to train new invasive species management professionals to work beyond our boundaries.

Because collaborative efforts are so critical in managing the problem of invasive species, the NPS has been an active member on many partnership committees. At the national level, the NPS participates in a number of interagency partnerships and cooperative efforts of the National Invasive Species Council, an inter-agency council charged with coordinating Federal invasive species programs that is co-chaired by Secretary Norton. The NPS also participates in three Federal coordinating organizations for specific types of invasive species, which enables the NPS to draw on broad expertise, identify shared priorities, pool resources, and work collaboratively on invasive species issues of national significance.

The NPS also works with partners at the regional and local levels. We are a member of the Maui Invasive Species Committee, an informal partnership of private, county, State and Federal entities that has for the last three years worked to control invasive species through \$1.6 million dollars in county and State grants. A similar effort led by the Big Island Invasive Species Committee is working to coordinate invasive management actions on that island.

One example of a successful public-private partnership is occurring at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. The 'Ōla'a Kilauea Partnership is a cooperative land management effort involving State and Federal entities and willing private landowners. The partners include the Pu'u Maka'ala Natural Area Reserve, the Kamehameha Schools, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey Biological Resources Division, the USDA Forest Service, and the Nature Conservancy. Through the partnership, Kulani Correctional Facility inmates are provided with education and work training in fencing, native plant horticulture, and other conservation projects.

The goals of the partnership are to enhance the long-term survival of native ecosystems and manage 420,000 acres across multiple ownership boundaries. The partnership is focused on management and research to remove or reduce impacts from feral animals such as pigs, invasive plants, and non-native predators and restoring native habitat and endangered species. The impacts from feral pigs include spreading the seeds of exotic plants, feeding on rare native plants such as orchids and lilies, and by their rooting behavior creating habitat for exotic plants.

The partnership has jointly fenced 14,100 acres on State and private lands and eliminated the feral pig population from 9,800 acres, while controlling feral pigs in an additional 4,300 acres. The partnership also offers valuable educational and cultural benefits by providing staff and field sites for hands-on environmental educational activities for teacher workshops and student programs. The private landowner involved in the partnership plans to restore the ranch adjacent to the park and use the entire area for conservation, cultural enrichment and education.

The most cost-effective and successful strategy for battling invasive species is preventing them from ever entering our national parks. New and innovative programs are being established in a handful of parks to institutionalize prevention programs. In cases where this is not possible, the sooner new introductions are detected and addressed the greater the likelihood of eradication. The NPS' Inventory and Monitoring Program networks are helping parks develop monitoring programs for the detection of new invasions so a quick response can ultimately remove the threat *before* it becomes unmanageable. The information is also used by EPMTs for identifying treatment areas and coordinating control projects with parks.

Mr. Chairman, we appreciate the interest and support of this subcommittee in our endeavors here in Hawaii. That concludes my statement, and I will be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.