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3.5 PARKLANDS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES/BEACH ACCESS

This section presents an assessment of the potential impacts of the Honoapiʻilani Highway Improvements Project (the Project) on parklands, recreational facilities, and beach access.

3.5.1 Regulatory Context

Parks and recreational facilities are community characteristics evaluated in a National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Impact Statement, following long-established guidance found in Federal Highway Administration Technical Advisory T 6640.8A (1987)¹ and the Hawaiʻi Revised Statutes Chapter 343. In addition, because publicly owned public parks, recreation areas, and wildlife or waterfowl refuges are protected under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, a summary of potential 4(f) effects are also provided in Chapter 4, Section 4(f) Evaluation.

3.5.2 Methodology

The County of Maui Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for developing, operating, and maintaining park facilities in Maui County. The State Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) oversees State beach parks, forest reserves, trails, and other unencumbered State lands.

To identify parks and recreational facilities in the project area, the Hawaiʻi Department of Transportation (HDOT) compiled information through observation, internet research, and reviewing plans and policies for the West Maui region and geographic information systems databases for Maui County. In addition, the coastline is generally publicly accessible; some beaches are identified as parkland even though they are not formally managed or operated as a park by the County of Maui Department of Parks and Recreation.

3.5.3 Affected Environment

TABLE 3.5-1 lists the existing parkland and recreational facilities in the project area, and FIGURE 3.5-1 identifies their locations.

3.5.3.1 Common to Project Area

Common and primarily mauka to the entire project area is the West Maui Forest Reserve, which preserves open spaces in West Maui and provides limited recreational access for activities such as hiking. In March 2023, as part of a broad statewide initiative, the Board of Land and Natural Resources conditionally approved additions to the forest reserve in West Maui extending from the mountains toward the coastline exclusive of private lands or public lands with existing active uses, which include areas within Olowalu and Ukumehame (FIGURE 3.5-2).² The designation would be finalized by a Governor of Hawaiʻi Executive Order.

¹ https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/legislation/nepa/guidance_preparing_env_documents.aspx#land. Accessed December 2023.

² <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/C-3.pdf>. Accessed December 2023.

TABLE 3.5-1. **Parkland and Recreational Facilities in the Project Area**

RESOURCE NAME	LOCATION	JURISDICTION	SIZE	AMENITIES
COMMON TO PROJECT AREA				
West Maui Forest Reserve Expansion (conditionally approved)	Mauka of Honoapiʻilani Highway at locations in Olowalu and Ukumehame; with new areas pending extending to existing highway	State	1,223.30 acres	—
OLOWALU				
Awalua Beach	Makai of Honoapiʻilani Highway, between Lāhainā Bypass and Olowalu Recycling and Refuse Convenience Center	State	Approximately 4,000 linear feet	—
Olowalu Beach	Makai of Honoapiʻilani Highway, with public access from Camp Olowalu access road to the public parking area at the Olowalu Landing	State	Approximately 2,000 linear feet	Parking at Olowalu Landing
Kaʻiliʻili Beach	Makai of Honoapiʻilani Highway at roughly milepost 14	State	Approximately 4,000 linear feet	—
UKUMEHAME				
Ukumehame Beach Park¹	Makai of Honoapiʻilani Highway at roughly milepost 13	County of Maui Department of Parks and Recreation	3.5 acres	Picnic tables, barbeque grills, portable restrooms, parking
Ukumehame Firing Range²	Mauka of Honoapiʻilani Highway at roughly milepost 13	County of Maui Department of Parks and Recreation	84.1 acres	Four firing ranges, classrooms, parking
Pāpalaua Wayside Park³	Makai of Honoapiʻilani Highway between mileposts 11 and 12	County of Maui Department of Parks and Recreation	6.7 acres	Picnic tables, portable restrooms, campgrounds

1 <https://www.mauicounty.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Ukumehame-Beach-Park-119>. Accessed April 2023.

2 <https://www.mauicounty.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Ukumehame-Firing-Range-411>. Accessed April 2023.

3 <https://www.mauicounty.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Papalaua-Wayside-Park-146>. Accessed April 2023.

FIGURE 3.5-1. Parkland and Recreational Facilities

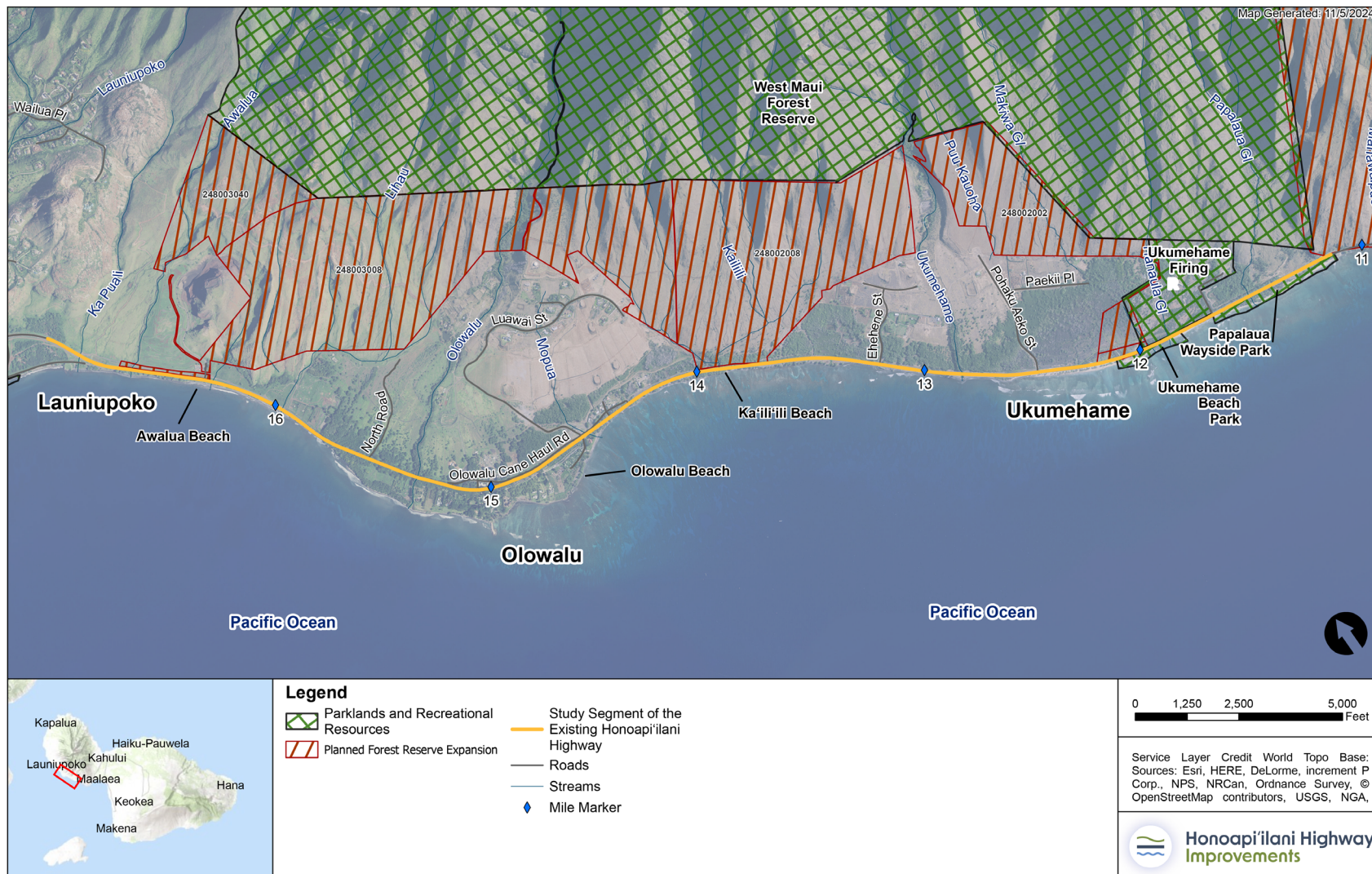


FIGURE 3.5-2. Ukumehame Firing Range Active Use Areas



3.5.3.2 Olowalu

In Olowalu, there are three accessible beaches on public land that are not designated as public parks but are frequently used with parking and access from the existing Honoapiʻilani Highway. Because they are not mapped park parcels, there is no overall acreage size. But an approximate linear length of shoreline has been identified. The pending expansion of the State DLNR Forest Reserve includes areas to the north of the Olowalu Subdivision (excluding the former landfill) as well as the land between Olowalu and Ukumehame.

In addition to these public facilities, there is a private greenway easement across multiple tax parcels of about 60 acres. The easement was created as part of the Olowalu Subdivision and is maintained by the homeowners association.

3.5.3.3 Ukumehame

In Ukumehame, there are two public beach parks as well as Ukumehame Firing Range, a County-owned facility. The pending expansion of the DLNR Forest Reserve includes areas to the north of the Ukumehame Subdivision (the land area between Olowalu and Ukumehame) and between the subdivision and firing range properties. Just south of the project area, there is also a small parking facility on the mauka side of the highway that serves as the trailhead for the Lāhainā Pali Trail. This trail climbs steeply away from the highway and heads south toward the Pali with some limited views back toward the project area.

3.5.3.4 Planned Parklands and Recreational Facilities

The County of Maui *Pali to Puamana Parkway Master Plan* (2005) identifies the opportunity to create open space and recreational facilities in conjunction with realigning Honoapiʻilani Highway. Specifically, the plan calls for areas to be designated as open space in the 2022 *West Maui Community Plan*, setting the foundation for future open space and recreational facility development. The plan identifies opportunities to create a beachside green belt park from Puamana Park—which is just south of the Lāhainā center and currently closed after the wildfire—to Pāpalaua Wayside Park. Portions of this proposed park would be located within the project area. However, the plan identifies several independent actions that would be required to facilitate the development of this proposed park, including obtaining Special Management Area permits, an environmental assessment, and a modification to the existing zoning. This coastal open space concept was further identified as policy goals in both the 2022 Maui Municipal Planning Organization’s *West Maui Greenway Plan* and the *West Maui Community Plan*.

Separately, in 2017, the County of Maui Department of Parks and Recreation initiated the preparation of a System Plan that would define the future recreation, facility, and park needs, create an overall strategy for park planning, and identify specific countywide capital improvement or land acquisition needs.³ The Project would be located within the West Maui park district associated with the System Plan.

³ <https://westmaui.wearemaui.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Recreation-Network.pdf>.

3.5.4 Environmental Consequences

3.5.4.1 *No Build Alternative*

The No Build Alternative would not realign the existing highway, so it would continue to provide a direct connection to the immediately adjacent beaches and firing range. While there are long-range plans for the County parks system (described above), there are no known specific implementation actions. By the 2045 analysis year, parklands and recreational uses within the project area are expected to be unchanged from existing conditions.

As detailed in Chapter 1, Introduction, Purpose and Need, and Section 3.13, Climate Change and Sea Level Rise, Honoapiʻilani Highway is subject to coastal erosion and sea level rise, and potential future road closures and disruptions could compromise access to parklands, which themselves are largely within the projected Sea Level Rise Exposure Area boundary.

3.5.4.2 *Build Alternatives*

Common to Project Area

The Build Alternatives would extend through a small portion of the DLNR parcels that are intended to be designated as forest reserve lands. This designation has been conditionally approved with an understanding that an accommodation would be made to account for the Project. The Board of Land and Natural Resources affirmed that formal designation by Executive Order would proceed after HDOT defines and acquires the land it needs for the proposed new highway alignment and that this road right-of-way would be excluded from the newly designated reserve area ([Board of Land and Natural Resources Public Hearing and Motion March 24, 2023](#)). Accordingly, the Project is not expected to result in adverse effects to the forest reserve extension.

Olowalu

Common to All Build Alternatives

In Olowalu, access to the publicly accessible beaches would be maintained along the existing highway (the highway is proposed to be transferred to Maui County). There would be no noticeable change for Olowalu Beach or Kaʻiliʻili Beach. However, access to Awalua Beach would be more limited under Build Alternative 1 because this alignment would result in the loss of through travel on the existing highway, resulting in beach access from the north or south but not along the entire existing highway.

Ukumehame

Common to All Build Alternatives

All Build Alternatives would realign Honoapiʻilani Highway mauka of the existing roadway. Access to beach parks and the firing range would be preserved but with new patterns summarized below. Section 3.14, Transportation, includes more details on the layout of intersections.

For Pāpalaua Wayside Beach and Ukumehame Beach, access would be maintained along the existing highway, which would likely be converted to a local County road. Travelers to and from the south (Central Maui) would access the existing highway via Pōhaku ʻAeko Street or Ehehene Street, which would have connecting intersections with the new alignment and existing roadway. Travelers to and from the north (Olowalu and Lāhainā) could continue on the former highway or use Pōhaku ʻAeko

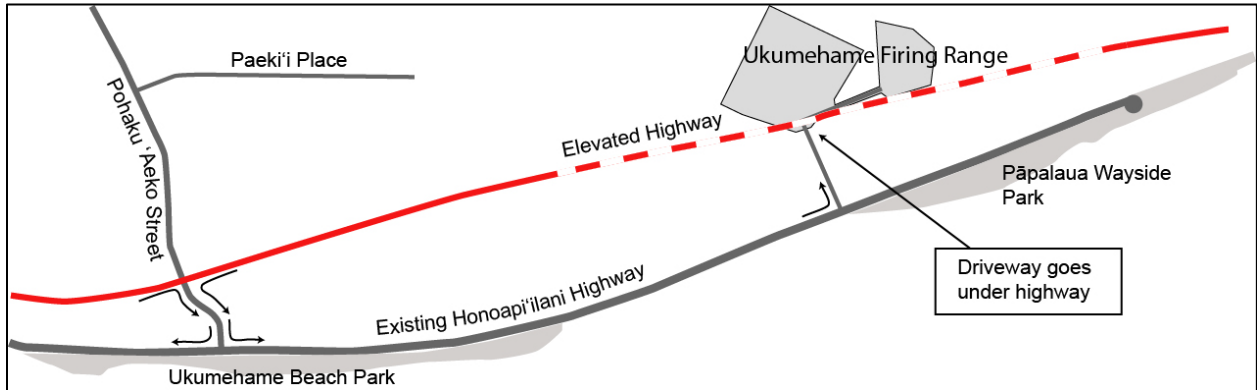
Street or Ehehene Street to access Honoapi'ilani Highway (FIGURE 3.5-3). However, continuous access along the former highway may not be feasible based on coastal erosion and sea level rise. If that occurs, beach access would be maintained or provided through the connector roads from the Build Alternatives.

For the County parks in Ukumehame, the existing roadway would continue to serve as an access driveway to the beaches that would be accessed via Pōhaku 'Aeko Street or from Olowalu along the existing roadway. As such, and consistent with long-range plans, the County of Maui may use the roadway and its right-of-way to implement enhancements to the beaches, such as improved parking, bicycle lanes, and beach access points.

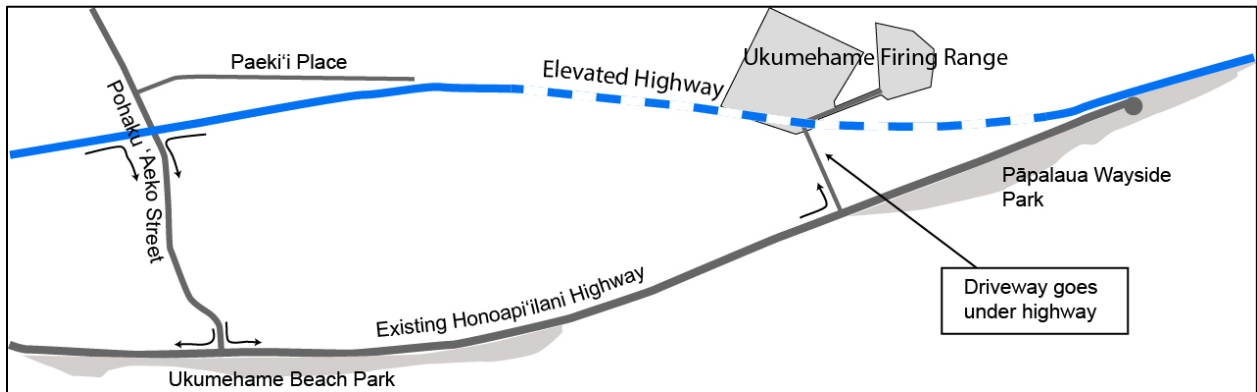
At Ukumehame Firing Range, Build Alternatives 2 and 3 (which follow the same alignment in Ukumehame) would provide a driveway at or near the existing driveway connecting to the higher-elevation at-grade alignment. For Build Alternatives 1 and 4, the new alignment would be elevated and grade separated from the firing range and access would be the same as for the beach parks via Pōhaku 'Aeko Street or Ehehene Street. Active use areas of Ukumehame Firing Range would remain intact for all Build Alternatives.

FIGURE 3.5-3. Ukumehame Firing Range and Beach Park Access

Build Alternative 1



Build Alternative 4



3.5.5 Construction Effects

Access to the parklands, recreational facilities, and publicly accessible shoreline would be maintained throughout construction of the Project. As described in Section 3.15, Air Quality and Energy, and Section 3.16, Noise, the Project's construction activities are not likely to adversely affect sensitive receptors, including parklands, recreational facilities, and publicly accessible shorelines within the project area.

3.5.6 Indirect Effects

The Project would not result in an increase in demand for parklands, recreational facilities, or beach access that would overburden existing resources. As described above, upon completion of the Project, HDOT would likely transfer ownership of the existing Honoapi'ilani Highway to the County of Maui. The declassified highway would continue to provide access to the beach parks and publicly accessible shoreline within the project area.

3.5.7 Mitigation

There are no anticipated adverse effects on parklands and recreational resources; therefore, no mitigation would be required. Because access to recreational resources would be provided throughout construction, no mitigation would be required to ensure access is maintained during construction.

3.5.8 Build Alternatives Comparative Assessment

With the exception of Build Alternative 1 in Olowalu, there would be no meaningful variation in terms of the potential effects of the highway realignment on parklands and recreational resources. In Olowalu, access to Awalua Beach could be limited under Build Alternative 1 because the existing Honoapi'ilani Highway would not be a local through road along the coastline.

In Ukumehame, access to the Ukumehame and Pāpalaua Wayside Park beaches and Ukumehame Firing Range would be maintained. For Build Alternatives 1 and 4, access to all these facilities would be through new intersections with Pōhaku 'Aeko or Ehehene Streets and along the existing highway. For Build Alternatives 2 and 3, access to the beaches would be the same as for Alternatives 1 and 4; but for the firing range, a new driveway would be connected to the new highway alignment in a location near the existing driveway.