



KAHO'OLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION

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News Release

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KIRC names Nāho'opi'i

The Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) has named Michael K. Nāho'opi'i as its new executive director.

In reflecting on the commission's selection process and decision making, Chair Noa Emmett Aluli, M.D. noted: "Selecting an executive director, a leader, who will be the keeper and implementer of the vision and promise of Kaho'olawe has been a very serious and vital task that all of the members of the commission took on with focus and commitment.

"And, after very careful and thoughtful consideration we were very pleased that Mike Nāho'opi'i accepted our offer to be the executive director of the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission.

"A very strong project manager, Mike has an outstanding background in fund development and grants, he is well connected and well respected in the Hawaiian community and by the local legislature and our congressional delegation. Mike also understands how to develop and implement strategy and how to track and measure results. He is very familiar with us, our programs and work that we do, and he knows Kaho'olawe."

Nāho'opi'i officially assumed his duties as executive director of the KIRC on March 10, 2008.

Michael K. Nāho'opi'i – a Biographical Sketch



Mike Nāho'opi'i has been involved with Kaho'olawe from virtually every perspective in its recent history. A long-time Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO) member and former US Navy Officer-in-Charge of Kaho'olawe during the conveyance of the island to the State of Hawai'i, he was a senior manager during the early Model Cleanup and the later Navy Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) clearance project.

In a 1981 trip to Kaho'olawe, Mike was among a group of Kamehameha Schools' students – organized by KIRC Commissioner Charles PMK Burrows, Ed.D. and the PKO – who were the first children the Navy allowed on the island. During that initial trip, Mike met and came to know Uncle Harry Mitchell, Uncle Les Kuloloio, and current KIRC Chair Aluli.

In 1993, Nāho'opi'i returned to Kaho'olawe as Officer-in-Charge of the Navy's Kaho'olawe Project – the first Native Hawaiian naval officer ever assigned to the island. There he commanded the Naval Construction Battalion (SeaBee) Unit responsible for the operation and maintenance of the "Smuggler's Cove" Base Camp and the Navy's compliance with the Navy-PKO consent decree of 1980. Nāho'opi'i's unit performed monthly UXO sweeps, eradicated the remaining goats, conducted restoration plantings, and assisted in scientific studies of the island as part of the federally mandated responsibilities of the Kaho'olawe Island Conveyance Commission. Also assigned as the Navy's representative to the PKO, Mike spent a significant amount of time on Kaho'olawe and in Hakioawa Valley with the PKO.

After leaving the Navy, Nāho'opi'i served as senior project engineer for both the Model UXO Clearance Project in 1995 and the Kaho'olawe UXO Clearance Project from 1997 to 2004, responsible for project management oversight of technical, project and quality management programs.

Prior to joining the KIRC as its executive director, Nāho'opi'i served as a project manager for a Native Hawaiian company – The Hāna Group – responsible for developing and managing quality and safety programs for defense contract work in the fields of physical and industrial security, range and missile safety, and base operations. Additionally, he was a program director for the non-profit Pacific American Foundation, directing federally funded programs in Native Hawaiian demographics, policies, and education.

Born in Honolulu, Nāho'opi'i graduated from the Kamehameha Schools in 1982. He received his BS in Electrical Engineering from the US Naval Academy at Annapolis and was commissioned an ensign in 1986, serving as a nuclear-trained submarine officer until his assignment to Kaho'olawe. In 1992, he received an MBA in accounting from Chaminade University. Nāho'opi'i is certified as a Quality Manager and Quality Engineer by the American Society for Quality, and holds the designation of Project Management Professional from the Project Management Institute. He and his family reside in Kapahulu, O'ahu.