

December 23, 2025
Agenda Item II.A

To: KIRC Commissioners
From: Michael K. Nāho‘opi‘i, Executive Director
Subject: A Proclamation relating to the 50th anniversary of Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Authorize the Executive Director to sign on behalf of the members of the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission a proclamation relating to the 50th Anniversary of the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana.

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY:

January 4, 2026, will mark the 50th anniversary of the first protest landing on Kaho‘olawe that eventually lead to the birth of the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana (‘Ohana), stopping the bombing on Kaho‘olawe, the return of the waters and the island of Kaho‘olawe and the creation of the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve and Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC).

The Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana is planning a year-long celebration in 2026 of their 50th anniversary and the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission and staff intend to join their ‘Ohana counterparts as allowed by statute. The attached proclamation is being offered by the KIRC to document the ‘Ohana’s history and achievements relating to Kaho‘olawe.

METHODS & DISCUSSION:

The attached proclamation includes input from all KIRC Commissioners and their constituents. Staff is requesting that the Executive Director be authorized to sign this proclamation on behalf of the Commission as the most efficient way to convey this document timely prior to January 4, 2026.

LEGAL AUTHORITY:

Pursuant HRS §6K-6(1), the KIRC shall establish criteria, policies, and controls for permissible uses within the island reserve.

Pursuant HRS §6K-6(10), the KIRC may delegate to the executive director or employee of the commission, by formal commission action, such power and authority vested in the commission by this chapter as the commission deems reasonable and proper for effective administration of this chapter.



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PROCLAMATION

Relating to the 50th anniversary of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana

WHEREAS, on January 4, 1976, the first protest landing on Kaho'olawe, organized by Charles Maxwell, President of the Aboriginal Lands of Hawaiian Ancestry (ALOHA) Association, an organization seeking support for a federal Native Hawaiian reparations bill, was made by nine individuals who ventured across the 'Alalākeiki Channel to Kaho'olawe to bring attention to the need for the United States to make reparations to Native Hawaiians because of the role played by U. S. Naval forces in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, later to be determined illegal in Public Law 103-150, and to protest military control of and training on Hawaiian lands; and

WHEREAS, the experiences of the "Kaho'olawe Nine," George Helm, Emmett Aluli, Kimo Aluli, Walter Ritte, Kawaiipuna Prejean, Ian Lind, Ellen Miles, Steve Morse and Karla Villalba brought public awareness to the damage and destruction caused by the on-going military use of Kaho'olawe; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of George Helm and with the support of Aunty Emma Defries, Kahuna Sam Lono, Edith Kanaka'ole, Moloka'i kūpuna and many others, access to the island was negotiated with the U.S. Navy to hold a ceremony in Hakioawa on February 13, 1976, to request the island's blessing and permission to work to protect and heal it and thus began an island wide, grassroot Aloha 'Āina movement under the leadership of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana ('Ohana); and

WHEREAS, in March 1977, George Helm, James Kimo Mitchell and William Mitchell journeyed to Kaho'olawe in search of two Native Hawaiians who had been on the island for more than a few weeks. George Helm and Kimo Mitchell were last seen in waters off Kaho'olawe and have never been found; and

WHEREAS, in 1976, Dr. Noa Emmett Aluli, M.D. and the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, filed a civil suit, *Aluli v. Rumsfeld*, in U.S. District Court in the District of Hawai'i. The suit sought compliance by the U.S. Navy with environmental, historic preservation and religious freedom laws; and

WHEREAS, in 1980, the court settled *Aluli v. Brown*, formerly *Rumsfeld*, by issuing a Consent Decree mandating the Navy to survey and protect historic and cultural sites on the island, clear surface unexploded ordnance, begin soil conservation and revegetation programs and eradicate goats. The Decree provided further recognition the PKO as stewards of the island and authorized the PKO access to the island for religious, cultural, educational and scientific activities; and

WHEREAS, on October 22, 1990, President George H. Bush issued a Memorandum to the Secretary of Defense to halt all bombing and munition training on Kaho'olawe. Following this action, the U.S. Congress established the Kaho'olawe Island Conveyance Commission to study Kaho'olawe and make recommendations for the terms and conditions of the island's return to the State of Hawai'i; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, Senator Daniel K. Inouye introduced Title X to the 1994 Department of Defense Appropriation Act, to recognize and fulfill the commitments made on behalf of the United States to the people of Hawai‘i to return Kaho‘olawe and authorized funding to remove unexploded ordnance from the island; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, Governor John D. Waihe‘e III, in his January 27, 1993, State of the State Address remarked in part: “both the federal and state government have a rare second chance to do what is right for Kaho‘olawe... I propose we set aside Kaho‘olawe as a cultural reserve, to be healed and used only for those purposes that are consistent with the island’s history and wellbeing. In this endeavor, I call upon the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana to continue their role as stewards...” and later in the year signed Act 340, establishing the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve and the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC); and

WHEREAS, on APRIL 7, 2009, the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission and the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana through its non-profit corporation and fiscal sponsor, Kohemalamalama O Kanaloa/Protect Kaho‘olawe Fund entered into a stewardship agreement where the ‘Ohana agreed to fulfill its spiritual and cultural responsibilities as an ‘ohana for Kanaloa, to care for cultural and natural resources of the island, to help accomplish the mission of the KIRC, to realize the mandate of the KIRC under Hawai‘i Revised Statutes Chapter 6-K (HRS 6K) and to abide by the KIRC’s operating procedures and to allow the ‘Ohana to access the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve to provide mutual support for KIRC sponsored and approved activities; and

NOW THEREFORE, on this day, the twenty-third day of December in the year 2025, on the island of O‘ahu,

BE IT PROCLAIMED that the KIRC congratulates and acknowledges the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana for its fifty-years of commitment to stopping the bombing, the return of Kaho‘olawe, and its continuing work to heal and restore the island; and

BE IT FURTHER PROCLAIMED that the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana has revitalized Native Hawaiian cultural practices on Kaho‘olawe with the revival of the Makahiki ceremony, the building of the traditional hale, *Nāmakapili*, the pā hula, *Ka ‘Ie ‘ie*, the establishment of the *Ala Loa*, circle island trail, and the mua ha‘i kūpuna *Kahualele* in Hakioawa and a new mua in Honokanai‘a; and

BE IT FURTHER PROCLAIMED that the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana has since 1980 brought over 50,000 volunteers and trained multiple generations of kua, through cultural, educational and spiritual huaka‘i or trips to Kaho‘olawe with a focus on safety, stewardship and promoting aloha ‘āina throughout the State of Hawai‘i; and

BE IT FURTHER PROCLAIMED that the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission will join the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana in recognizing 2026 as a year-long celebration and activation to recommit to the responsibility of Aloha ‘Āina on Kaho‘olawe.

Approved this day, December 23, 2025, by the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission and signed on behalf of its Commission members,

Michael K. Nāho‘opi‘i
Executive Director