

LEGISLATIVE BIENNIUM GENERAL FUND BUDGET REQUEST FOR 2027
KAHO`OLAWA ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
January 2027

CIP FUNDING REQUEST

1. Request CIP Funding for Phase II of the Kaho`olawe Restoration and Resilience Center at Kihei in DLNR's Fiscal Year 2027 Administration's budget request

Summary: The KIRC has the unique opportunity to build the Kaho`olawe Restoration and Resilience Center at its current base yard property located adjacent to the Kihei Small Boat Harbor. This project will not only consolidate and provide a single KIRC office on Maui but will also tell the story of Kaho`olawe's cultural significance, its ecological devastation and restoration efforts and demonstrate our communities' resiliency to heal the damages of the past. Additionally, this facility will also create an additional revenue generating venue in the South Kihei corridor to assist in Maui's economic recovery, generate additional tax revenues and funding to assist in the continuing restoration efforts on Kaho`olawe.

Background: Act 119, SLH 2015, Item D-14 as amended by Act 124, SLH 2016 and corrected by Act 49, SLH 2017 authorized \$500,000 in general obligation bonds for the planning and design of an education center, exhibit area/visitor center and administration building for the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) in Kihei, Maui.

This new facility will be located on an 8.261-acre property controlled by the KIRC, situated on South Kihei Road. The new office/information center facility will replace currently leased office space to house the KIRC's full-time Maui-based employees. Another portion of the new facility will be devoted to the KIRC's historic and interactive exhibits about Kaho`olawe, with a community center, archive, kitchen, café, retail spaces, visitor center and workshops/classrooms.

In 2018, the KIRC finalized the conceptual drawings for this new facility and completed all the entitlement work needed to advance this project to the next phase. The work completed included: reaffirming the existing Environmental Assessment, completing new shoreline assessment and traffic studies, and making an application for a Special Management Area permit from the Maui Planning Commission.

The next phase of the project is to develop the detailed drawings and plans necessary to build this project. This includes final construction drawings and specifications, planning and development of exhibits and archive storage, final planning design for the office layout, and final design of the building infrastructure (HVAC, network).

Additionally, this request includes construction efforts to expand the current boathouse to include a larger concrete pad and two additional covered wings for additional boat storage as well as creating a small educational pavilion and restroom facilities adjacent to the current boathouse.

Request: Request \$4,250,000 in general obligation bond funds to complete final designs and planning for Kaho`olawe Restoration and Resilience Center at Kihei

Justification: The KIRC is looking beyond the pandemic, Maui wildfires as well as the Kona lows and Hurricane Lāilā. The present conditions provide an appropriate opportunity to begin the final design and eventual construction of the Center as it would be ready to welcome the return of visitors to Maui and to expand a new visitor destination in the South Kihei corridor. The influx of funding to start

construction would help revitalize jobs on Maui and the raising of the new Center will become a beacon of hope to the community.

The supplemental appropriation of \$4,250,000 is necessary to continue this project that will create a new facility in South Maui and will help create a new revenue generating destination in South Maui while at the same time creating a central base for all the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission's restoration efforts. It will create a unique center to document, allow research and educate the community on the environmental resiliency of Kaho'olawe and other areas across the state impacted by the effects of environmental damage, habitat degradation and climate change. The next phase of the project is to complete construction design and planning, develop a community-based thematic vision for the center and to expand the current boathouse facility to house and maintain multiple ocean vessels.

When completed, the KIRC's Kaho'olawe Restoration and Resilience Center will become the central location for all operations and support for the long-term management and restoration of Kaho'olawe. The Kīhei Operation/Education Center is necessary to consolidate all the KIRC's operations to a single State-owned facility that will eliminate the need for leased office space in Wailuku, provide the KIRC with revenue generating opportunities unavailable on Kaho'olawe and provide a community outreach site to increase the public awareness on the efforts to restore Kaho'olawe. If the project is deferred, the KIRC operations will continue to be scattered across Maui, the KIRC will have to continue leasing office space in Wailuku and it will not be able to develop revenue generating opportunities that could lead to financial self-sustainability.

CIP Request	Amount	Description of Work
Planning	\$350,000	Update community planning documents and SMA permits
Design	\$3,000,000	Complete design process and construction drawings. Develop museum exhibition designs.
Construction	\$900,000	Expand current boathouse to include additional workspace and boat storage capabilities. Build a small educational pavilion with a restroom adjacent to the boathouse.
Total	\$4,250,000	

Methodology: The KIRC will be seeking a request for additional CIP funding in the Governor's FY28 budget request and if not approved by Budget & Finance and the Governor's office, we will be seeking legislative support to introduce new legislation for the funding.

2. Request CIP Funding for road repairs damage from the Kona Low storms

Background: The March 2026 Kona low storms caused severe rutting on the upper portion of the K-1 Road between the K-1/K-2 intersection and LZ-1. The damage made this section of the road impassable resulting in the KIRC staff establishing a bypass road around the damaged portion.

In May 2026, the KIRC staff applied for FEMA funding for the planning, design and construction to make repairs to the K-1 Road. FEMA funding is reimbursable so the KIRC will have to initially expend the funds before seeking possible FEMA reimbursement.

To avoid spending KIRC trust funds for this effort, the KIRC will be seeking funding other than the KIRC trust fund to initiate this effort and seek reimbursements from these other funding sources. The KIRC was able to secure \$200,000 of State Park's FY26 vacancy savings to encumber a professional engineering services contract to develop a plan and construction estimate for the road repair. This CIP funding request is seeking funds for the construction effort with the understanding that this project would qualify for FEMA reimbursements.

<u>Request:</u> Request \$1,000,000 in CIP funding for K-1 Road repairs caused by the March 2026 Kona low storms

Justification: The March 2026 Kona low storms caused significant damage to the upper portions of the K-1 Road on Kaho'olawe that made approximately one mile of road impassable. A temporary bypass road was established to allow vehicles to access the windward planting area and the important cultural sites of Pu'u 'O Moa'ula Iki and Luamakika. These funds are necessary to purchase equipment, supplies, transportation and services to repair this and other sections of Kaho'olawe's K-1 Road system to allow the KIRC staff, volunteers and other volunteers to continue restoration activities and cultural practices on island.

OPERATING FUNDING REQUEST

1. Request additional project management staff to manage State (Green Grants), Maui County (Environmental Program Grants) and other grant programs.

Background: Up until FY2026, KIRC was previously authorized \$613,000 in general funds for annual operating expenses. This was never sufficient funding to meet the purpose of these funds under Act140 SLH2019 "for the support Kahoʻolawe island reserve commission to effectively meet the unique challenges of restoring, preserving, and determining the appropriate uses of the Kahoʻolawe island reserve for the people of Hawaii. Without the funding the KIRC will not be able to continue its innovative management regime. The Kahoʻolawe island reserve commission's management and control of the Kahoʻolawe is not only restoring the ecological damage on Kahoʻolawe and protecting its endangered and rare flora and fauna but is also ensuring that the people of Hawaii can safely visit the Kahoʻolawe island reserve. Without this funding the Kahoʻolawe island reserve will not be able to support year-round field operations and thereby a consequential reduction in safety and the public access to Kahoʻolawe, and a significant setback to the restoration efforts on Kahoʻolawe." These funds were subsequently reduced for FY2027 in Act 175 SLH2026 by \$45,000.

Currently, the KIRC's allotment of general funds is barely sufficient to support and maintain the on-island infrastructure that is the foundation that allows the KIRC to conduct on-island restoration projects and safely support volunteer accesses to the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve. The KIRC relies extensively on federal, state, county and other funding sources to conduct on-island restoration projects and to support logistical efforts to transport people, supplies and equipment to Kahoʻolawe and safely house and move an on-island workforce to the various restoration project sites on Kahoʻolawe.

Request: Add half-year general funds to support new KIRC staffing in LNR908/KIRC for one (1) Project Specialist IV/V (\$35,000, FY28 and \$70,000, FY29)

Over the past few years, the KIRC has successfully been able to fund multiple on-island restoration efforts through a combination of federal, state, county and non-profit grants. Each grant funder requires extensive documentation, reporting, and reimbursement requirements that have exceeded the capabilities of the KIRC's current staffing.

Currently, the KIRC relies upon its Public Information Specialist in conjunction with the respective field program managers to develop the grant proposal and when awarded to ensure compliance with each specific grant objective, report and reimbursement documentation requirements. With the increase in the number of additional funding sources, there is an increase in the administrative requirements needed to successfully implement these grant projects and more importantly to be reimbursed for funds expended.

A dedicated Project Specialist is needed to assist the KIRC executive management in executing the administrative and financial grant requirements while coordinating with the KIRC field staff in each project's execution. Overall implementation of the project will be assigned to the respective Program Manager (Restoration, Ocean, Culture Resources, Reserve Operations or

Administration Program) while the Project Specialist will provide project coordination, project management assistance and procurement support to help each program manager successfully execute their projects. Additionally, the Project Specialist will support each grant project's documentation, report and reimbursement requirements to ensure compliance with the funder's directives, contracts and agreements.

Project Specialist IV/V

Position Description: Performs the full range of planning and development activities in support of the KIRC's projects. The work in this class ranges from assignments of moderate complexity, such as routine review of project operations to ensure that project objectives are being met, to highly complex assignments of the next higher level. However, the primary work of position in this class regularly involves complex assignments such as developing new grants, funding opportunities or projects that support the KIRC's mission; coordination with the other KIRC programs to ensure the satisfactory completion of project requirements; administrative support and staff support activities such as budget formulation, grants or contract management. Work is performed independently, under general supervision of a higher-level specialist or the KIRC Executive Director.

Minimum qualifications: Education requirement: graduate from an accredited four (4) year college or university with a bachelor's degree. General experience: one and one-half (1-1/2) years of progressive work experience which required a high degree of analytical skill. Such experience must have involved gathering, evaluating and analyzing facts and other pertinent information required to resolve problems and/or to determine and recommend appropriate courses of action. Specialized Experience: one year of progressive professional experience in project management including project planning, budgeting, scheduling, controlling cost, allocating resources and project reporting.

2. Request additional field staff to implement and support Kahoʻolawe restoration efforts.

Background: In 2017 legislative request, the KIRC initially submitted a request for general funding for 19 temporary positions. Act 49 SLH 2017 authorized 15 temporary KIRC positions, which were the currently filled positions. Vacant positions were not funded.

The Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve Specialists support all KIRC field programs by operating and maintaining KIRC field assets, equipment, vehicles, and machinery as well as acts or assists as Field Team Leaders for KIRC volunteer work groups on Kahoʻolawe. The positions also serve as KIRC boat crew and field escorts as needed. The positions are based at the KIRC Office on Maui and involve extensive fieldwork on Kahoʻolawe requiring extended overnight stays.

In addition to protecting, restoring, and managing the resources of Kahoʻolawe Island, the KIRC is also responsible for protecting the aquatic resources of the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve which includes the surrounding two miles of ocean. The Ocean Resource Specialists support this effort through the objective measurement, documentation, and restoration of Kahoʻolawe aquatic resources. With current climate changes and effects of more severe weather conditions, a

renewed effort is now being undertaken by the Ocean Program on coastal reclamation, rehabilitation, and protection.

Request: Add half-year general funds for FY28 and full funding for FY29 to support new KIRC field personnel in LNR 908/KIRC for two (2) Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Specialist (KIR III and KIR II) and one (1) Ocean Resource Specialist II (\$82,000, FY28 and \$164,000, FY29).

Justification: Due to the vacancy of the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve (KIR) Specialist II and III positions in 2016, the KIRC could not include these positions with those authorized in Act 49 SLH 2017. These positions are necessary to support necessary safety and logistic functions as well as on-island restoration efforts and sustainability field projects while on Kaho`olawe and act as boat crew while on KIRC vessels.

The KIRC has observed a long-term increase in the unpredictability and severity of weather and ocean conditions in the waters surrounding Maui and Kaho`olawe most likely due to climate changes and global warming. Increased weather severity has resulted in an intensified need for additional manpower to operate the KIRC ocean vessel safely and effectively. The Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Specialists assist with handling cargo, operating lines, and equipment and serve as safety lookouts since staff have been encountering rougher weather conditions and increased boat traffic between Kaho`olawe and Maui. The KIRC requests funding to establish two (2) positions, Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Specialist III (KIR III) and Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Specialist II (KIR II) to support boating operations, logistical and field support as necessary.

The increasing impact of coastal erosion and severe weather along the shorelines of Kaho`olawe has increased the staff's focus on coastline stabilization and coastal wetland restoration efforts. These additional efforts need additional field support including additional staffing. The KIRC is requesting funding to establish one (1) Ocean Resource Specialist II to support on-island coastal management, restoration, and protection.

This request is for half-year funding in FY28 and full year funding in FY29 as follows:

Position	FY28	FY29
Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Specialist III	\$30,000	\$60,000
Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Specialist II	\$26,000	\$52,000
Ocean Resource Specialist II	\$26,000	\$52,000
Total	\$82,000	\$164,000