



# PACIFIC MISSILE RANGE FACILITY LAND-BASED TRAINING AND TESTING DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

SEPTEMBER 2024



*E Pane Mai Ka  
Nonoi O Nohili  
Answering the  
Requests of Nohili*

The United States (U.S.) Navy, in cooperation with the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of conducting land-based, multi-domain (air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace) training and testing activities at launch areas and other locations under the management of Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF). MDA is a cooperating agency because of its launch activities at PMRF. The U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, and U.S. Marine Corps are participating in the development of the EA as additional range users. The Navy welcomes public review and comment on the Draft EA through **Sept. 30, 2024**.

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## About the Pacific Missile Range Facility

Strategically situated in the Hawaiian Islands, PMRF provides a realistic environment for training and testing in the use of surface, subsurface, land, air, and space weapons systems. PMRF's unique location includes relatively isolated ocean areas to the north, south, and west that safely and effectively support military readiness activities. Training and testing activities have been conducted at PMRF for decades.

PMRF provides integrated range services to the military and MDA to ensure activities are conducted safely and properly evaluated. The PMRF mission is to oversee and coordinate training events from unit-level to multi-national exercises, while at the same time conducting or supporting the research, development, test, and evaluation missions of the Navy, Department of Defense, and other federal agencies.

PMRF is a major economic driver on Kauai. The Navy is the third largest employer overall on the island, and PMRF is the largest high-tech employer, bringing skilled, high-paying jobs to Kauai. Most of PMRF's civilian and contract workforce are long-time Kauai residents.

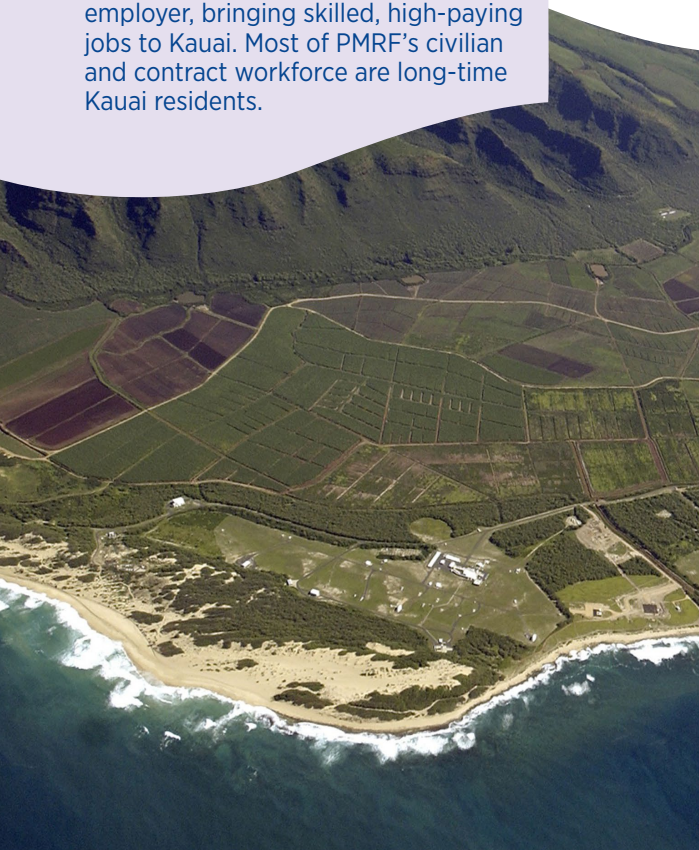
## PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is to conduct an increased number of land-based, multi-domain training and testing activities within the Study Area (Figure 1). These activities would be conducted by the Navy, Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, and MDA and may also include the participation of foreign militaries under U.S. sponsorship and oversight. The Proposed Action also includes standard operating procedures to avoid or minimize potential impacts on environmental and cultural resources.

No new types of training or testing activities are proposed at PMRF or Kaula Island; the activities proposed are currently being or have previously been conducted at these locations and are similar to those analyzed in previous environmental documents. Training and testing activities conducted at sea and the in-water effects of land-based activities (e.g., land-based missile launch) were previously analyzed in the 2018 Hawaii-Southern California Training and Testing Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement.

## STUDY AREA

The Study Area for the EA consists of lands within PMRF Barking Sands (Main Base), a roughly 0.5 mile wide and 7.5 miles long area, beginning at the high tide line and extending inland to the boundary of the PMRF installation. The Study Area also includes Kaula Island, an offshore islet where gunnery and inert bombing occur. The Study Area does not include the Kauai Test Facility portion of the installation or activities conducted on leased lands, such as Makaha Ridge. The Study Area also does not include other non-federal lands, such as Port Allen, Kokee, or Niihau because no changes to current training and testing activities are proposed to occur there. Activities conducted at these locations were analyzed in previous environmental documents.

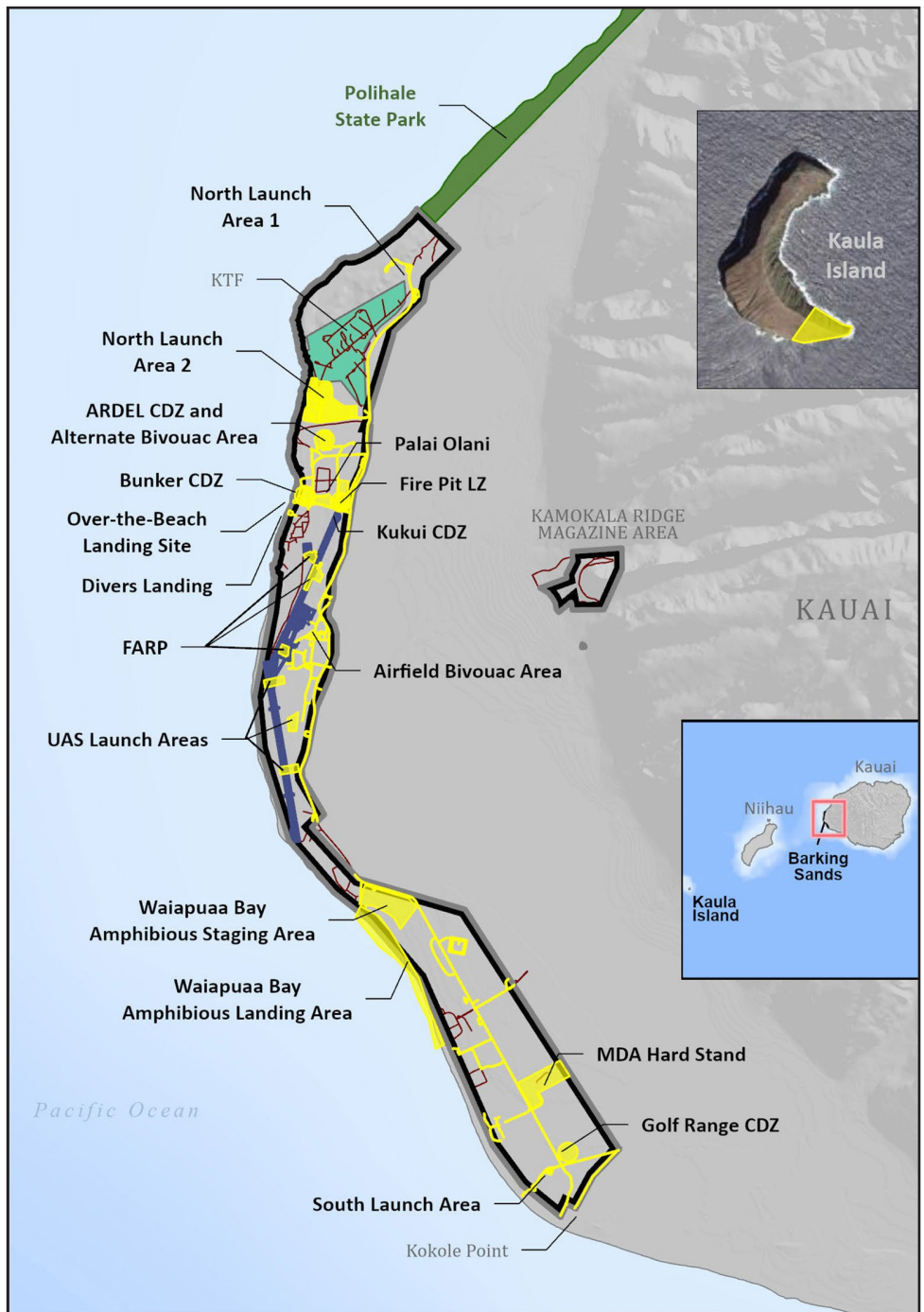




# PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

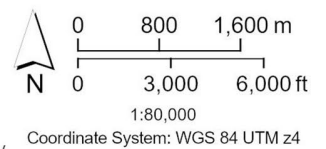
The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide the U.S. military services and MDA with land-based training and testing activities at a level that supports military readiness into the reasonably foreseeable future. The Proposed Action is needed to ensure U.S. military services are able to organize, train, and equip service members and personnel to meet their respective national defense missions.

Pacific Missile Range Facility is a premier testing and training area where new technologies are tested and military service members are trained to defend the United States and its territories, interests, and allies.



### Legend

- Road
- Training and Testing Area
- Installation
- Kauai Test Facility (KTF)
- Airfield
- State Park
- ARDEL = Advanced Radar Detection Laboratory
- CDZ = Circular Drop Zone
- FARP = Forward Arming and Refueling Point
- LZ = Landing Zone
- MDA = Missile Defense Agency
- UAS = Unmanned Aircraft System



PMRFEA12137v11

**Figure 1: Training and Testing in the Study Area.** The Study Area encompasses the typical training and testing sites used at PMRF and Kaula Island.

## ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED

Using screening criteria, the Navy considered several locations for training and testing that would be feasible and reasonable (e.g., technically and economically practical); meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action; and be in accordance with regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Navy also considered simulated training and testing.

Alternatives were eliminated from further consideration because no other reasonable locations could achieve the level of readiness the military services need to fulfill their Congressionally mandated responsibilities. PMRF is the most practical and the most technically and economically feasible location to conduct proposed training and testing activities. Simulated training and testing was determined to be significantly limited in its effectiveness for readiness preparation when compared to realistic training and testing.

Realistic training is crucial for combat effectiveness in support of the National Defense Strategy.

### Protecting the Kauai Environment

The Proposed Action includes standard operating procedures to avoid or minimize potential impacts on environmental and cultural resources. The Navy would also implement mitigation measures to further minimize impacts from the Proposed Action. Some procedures and measures include:

- Wetting vegetation prior to launches and live-fire events to reduce the risk of fire.
- Using existing cleared or previously disturbed areas, trails, and roads.
- Using mats to protect cultural resources against ground disturbance.
- Cleaning equipment and vehicles between locations to stop the spread of invasive species.

- Using technology to detect the presence of bats before using radar.
- Surveying beaches one hour prior to landings, launches, and live-fire training exercises to detect the presence of sea turtles or Hawaiian monk seals; if present, delaying activities until the animal voluntarily leaves the area.
- Avoiding trimming or removing trees higher than 15 feet during Hawaiian hoary bat pupping season (June 1–Sept. 15).
- Strengthening the existing Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard program to reduce the risk of migratory bird and wildlife strikes by aircraft.

- Continuing long-time successful Dark Skies Program during seabird breeding and fallout season (when fledglings rely on moonlight to guide them on inaugural flights from their burrows out to sea but become disoriented by artificial lights and “fallout” or drop from exhaustion).
- Flagging and avoiding sea turtle nests.
- Monitoring archaeological sites.
- Avoiding known historic properties and sensitive areas.
- Educating personnel working in culturally sensitive areas.

The potential environmental impacts from the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative were evaluated in the Draft EA.

- **Preferred Alternative (Proposed Action):** The Proposed Action is to continue land-based, multi-domain training and testing activities and increase the number of activities conducted in the Study Area. The Proposed Action includes standard operating procedures to avoid or minimize potential impacts on environmental and cultural resources. The Navy would also implement mitigation measures to further minimize impacts from the Proposed Action (see below).
- **No Action Alternative:** The No Action Alternative means there would be no change from current levels of Navy-led training and testing (status quo). This alternative does not include additional proposed training or testing activities by the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, or MDA. The No Action Alternative does not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action but is analyzed to establish a baseline from which to measure potential environmental impacts.



Nohili Dunes



Hawaiian monk seal



Sea turtle nest





## SUMMARY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Navy evaluated the potential impacts of the Proposed Action on the following resource areas:

- Air quality
- Climate change and greenhouse gases
- Noise
- Public health and safety
- Terrestrial biological
- Cultural

The Navy also analyzed cumulative impacts, which are the impacts on the environment resulting from the incremental impact of the Proposed Action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

The scope of the analysis focuses on the potential environmental impacts on land associated with land-based training and testing activities and only those airfield operations associated with aircraft refueling using expeditionary aircraft refueling systems. Potential impacts are summarized below; for more detailed information, please refer to the Draft EA.

### Air Quality

Due to relatively low and infrequent emissions of pollutants and considering the distance to downwind receptors (and no receptors on the uninhabited Kaula Island), emissions are not expected to interfere with the attainment of ambient air quality standards or contribute to human health risks. Therefore, impacts on air quality would be less than significant.

### Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases

Expected greenhouse gas emissions would be relatively minor and make up a negligible percentage of global greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, climate change and greenhouse impacts would be less than significant.

### Noise

Proposed increases in training and testing activities would not result in an appreciable increase in noise levels near the public or sensitive noise receptors (e.g., individuals in hospitals, schools, daycare facilities, elderly housing convalescent facilities). There are no sensitive human receptors on Kaula Island. Based on the analysis, impacts due to noise would be less than significant.

### Public Health and Safety

Training and testing activities, including proposed increases in activities, would not increase risks to military personnel or the public. PMRF would continue to take every reasonable precaution during the planning and execution of training and testing activities to prevent injury to human life or property. Standard operating procedures would continue to be implemented; therefore, public health and safety impacts would be less than significant.

**Land-based training and testing activities, including increases in activities, are not expected to result in significant impacts on any of the resource areas analyzed in the Draft EA.**





The Navy will consult with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure the Proposed Action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of Endangered Species Act-listed threatened and endangered species or result in the destruction or modification of designated critical habitat.



Rare native grass *Panicum niihauense*



Laysan albatross

Continued from page 5

## Terrestrial Biological

**Vegetation:** Damage to vegetation is unlikely since the movement of personnel, vehicles, and equipment would be limited to existing routes and maneuvering personnel would stay within previously disturbed areas. Ground disturbance during missile launch activities would be minimal, localized, and would not significantly impact vegetation. Vegetation on Kaula Island is very sparse and brush fires from training and testing activities are unlikely to occur. Therefore, because vegetation on the island is minimal, impacts on vegetation would be less than significant.

**Wildlife:** Proposed activities would be short in duration and occur within regularly used training and testing sites. Any displacement of wildlife would be temporary and brief, and wildlife would likely return to the area once activities are complete. Implementation of the Proposed Action is not anticipated to result in significant adverse effects on migratory bird populations and would comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Navy would continue and strengthen its Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard program to reduce the risk of bird and wildlife strikes by aircraft. Special-status species at PMRF may be impacted; however, impacts would be short-term. Increases in training and testing activities would not result in a greater disturbance to hauled-out Hawaiian monk seals. Therefore, impacts on wildlife and special-status species would be less than significant.

## Cultural

Training and testing activities would occur on previously disturbed land and personnel would not deviate from designated pathways. Standard operating procedures would continue to be implemented, and the Navy would avoid any known historical properties. Any ground-disturbing activities would require approval and implementation of appropriate mitigation measures. Therefore, impacts on cultural resources would be less than significant.

In the unlikely event cultural materials are discovered during training or testing, all activities in the immediate vicinity would halt. The PMRF Cultural Resources Manager and Range Point of Contact would be contacted to implement appropriate documentation procedures.

## Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impacts analysis shows there could be short-term impacts on wildlife in the Study Area; however, impacts on the overall distribution or abundance of populations and habitats, and ecosystem functions and values, would be minimized through the implementation of standard operating procedures. Training activities could add short-term, intermittent noise, but noise levels are not expected to exceed applicable standards. The Proposed Action would not result in significant cumulative impacts on all other resources.



## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



PMRF is committed to working with community leaders, residents, and the wider community in mutually beneficial ways. The staff at PMRF are members of the Kauai community and actively participate in community events and volunteer programs.

PMRF's team of environmental, biological, and cultural resource professionals are dedicated to protecting natural and cultural resources while accomplishing the military's training and testing missions. The successful environmental and cultural resource stewardship programs implemented at PMRF continue to protect natural and cultural resources for future generations.



The Navy respects the cultural practices, traditions, and heritage of Native Hawaiians.



PMRF's successful environmental and cultural resource stewardship programs continue to protect natural and cultural resources for future generations.

## NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT AND NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT PROCESSES

### National Environmental Policy Act

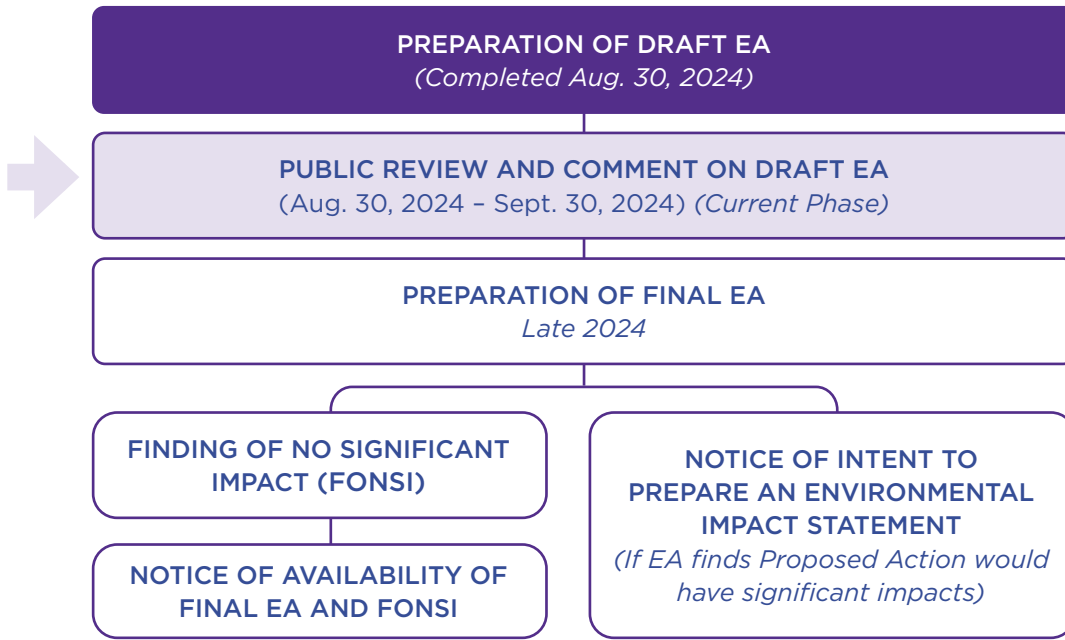
NEPA is a U.S. law that requires federal agencies to identify and analyze the potential environmental impacts of a proposed action on the human environment before deciding whether to proceed with that action. The law encourages and facilitates public involvement to inform decision makers on actions that may affect the community or the environment.

The Draft EA is available for public review and comment through 11:59 p.m. HST on **Sept. 30, 2024**. The Navy requests comments on the accuracy and adequacy of the environmental impact analysis presented in the Draft EA. Comments will be considered during the development of the Final EA.



Public involvement is a fundamental aspect of the NEPA and NHPA Section 106 processes. The Navy welcomes and appreciates the public's participation.

## National Environmental Policy Act Process



➔ Indicates opportunities for public involvement.

### Substantive Comments

To be considered substantive, public comments should address:

- Any important issues or concerns that should be considered by the decision makers and are not already included in the Draft EA.
- Any errors in the evaluation of potential environmental impacts that could change the conclusions made in the Draft EA.
- Any additional facts or data the Navy should consider while preparing the Final EA.

### National Historic Preservation Act

The participation of the public and Native Hawaiian Organizations is an important part of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 process. Under Section 106, an “undertaking” is defined as a project, activity, or program under the direct or indirect jurisdiction of a federal agency that may affect historic properties. For this project, the undertaking is the Proposed Action. “Historic properties” may include archaeological sites, sacred and religious sites, traditional cultural properties, or historic buildings, structures, or objects.

The Navy intends to meet NHPA Section 106 obligations in accordance with the 2012 Programmatic Agreement between the Navy and the Hawaii State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). A qualified Navy archaeologist will review all training and testing activities to confirm effectiveness of measures to avoid adverse effects on historic properties. If historic properties may be affected, the Navy will initiate consultations with SHPO and Native Hawaiian Organizations.

To date, the Navy has found that the proposed undertaking (land-based training and testing activities) would not affect historic properties. However, the Navy encourages the public and Native Hawaiian Organizations to share

information on the project’s potential to affect historic properties by providing a written comment. If you are interested in becoming a consulting party, please provide your name, organization, and email address in your comment and request information about the Section 106 consultation process.

### How to Submit Comments

The Draft EA is available for download at <https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/About-Us/National-Environmental-Policy-Act-NEPA-Information/> or visit the Waimea and Lihue public libraries to view a printed copy.

The public can submit comments at the public meeting, via email to [PMRF-LBT-EA-Comments@us.navy.mil](mailto:PMRF-LBT-EA-Comments@us.navy.mil), or via U.S. postal mail to:

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command  
Pacific/EV22  
Attention: PMRF LBT EA Project Manager  
258 Makalapa Drive, Suite 100  
Pearl Harbor, HI 96860

Comments on the Draft EA and NHPA Section 106 consultation must be postmarked or received electronically by 11:59 p.m. HST **Sept. 30, 2024**, for consideration in the development of the Final EA.