



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park
Post Office Box 52
Hawaii National Park, Hawai'i 96718



IN REPLY REFER TO:
HAVO 1.A.2 (L7617)

February 5, 2014

Dear Interested Party:

Hawai'i Volcanoes has prepared the *Mission Critical Administrative Aviation Plan and Environmental Assessment* (plan/EA) to provide a decision-making framework for managing the administrative use of aviation over the park. The purpose of the plan/EA is to provide for operational use of aviation by the park staff and cooperating agencies in a safe, timely, and efficient manner while avoiding or minimizing impacts to the park's natural and cultural resources, soundscapes, wilderness, and visitor experience.

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park (Hawai'i Volcanoes) is a 333,000 acre park which includes two of the most active volcanoes in the world, unique native species and ecosystems, and the evidence of 700 years of human occupation. The park includes rift zones and the summits of Kīlauea and Mauna Loa volcanoes, a native flowering plant flora, insect and bird fauna, ninety percent of which are found native nowhere else in the world, and archeological remains of Hawaiian settlement and numerous historic structures. National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and other cooperating agencies use helicopters approximately 250 hours per year over the park to respond to eruptive activity, monitor and study Kīlauea and Mauna Loa volcanoes, control invasive species, recover rare species, restore degraded ecosystems, protect cultural resources, and conduct wildland fire, search and rescue, and law enforcement operations.

The scope of the EA is the administrative use of aviation by NPS staff and cooperating agencies. The scope does not include management of commercial air tours, general aviation, or military overflights. Commercial air tours over the park are being addressed through a separate planning process to develop an *Air Tour Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (ATMP/EIS). The lead agency for the ATMP/EIS is the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Park Service is a cooperator.

The *Mission Critical Administrative Aviation Plan and Environmental Assessment* outlines project alternatives, including a no action alternative and a preferred alternative. Under the no action alternative, park staff and cooperating agencies would continue to use aviation as needed. Informal practices developed to minimize impacts on park resources, visitors, and adjacent communities are implemented by some flight managers or pilots but have not been formalized and are not universally followed. Under the preferred alternative, aviation would be used for the

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health and safety of visitors, employees, and island residents and for park resource protection and restoration activities. Under this plan, formal best management practices (BMPs), area closures, and flight restrictions would be instituted to minimize impacts to park resources, soundscapes, wilderness, visitors, and adjoining landowners.

Resource types evaluated in detail in the plan/EA include park soundscapes, visitor use and experience, park operations, wildlife, and special status species. Minor to moderate impacts are anticipated in the no action alternative. Impacts are expected to be reduced by implementation of the preferred alternative because of prescribed implementation of BMPs, area closures, and other flight restrictions.

The public is invited to comment on the draft Mission Critical Administrative Aviation Plan/Environmental Assessment (plan/EA) for Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. If you would like to provide comments you may submit them on-line. The plan/EA can be found on-line at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/havo>. Select the Mission Critical Administrative Aviation Plan link. Then click on the link to the left 'Open for Comment' and then click on the document name. You can then download the document. You can also comment from the same screen using the link near the top 'Comment on Document'. The comment link is only valid during the comment period. You may also mail your comments to the park at Superintendent, Re: Admin Aviation Mgmt Plan/EA, PO Box 52, Hawaii National Park, HI 96718-0052. Please send us comments by March 7, 2014.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information with your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. Although you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

If you would like to be removed from our mailing list or if your contact information has changed, please let us know. You can mail us the updated information or submit it at the following website: <http://www.nps.gov/havo/parkmgmt/plan.htm> Click on the link near the top for address update/removal.

Sincerely,



Cynthia L. Orlando
Superintendent