

<http://www.cosmos.ne.jp/~miyagawa/hawaii/kahoolawe1e.html>

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Kahoolawe cleanup may never be finished

The issue: The Navy says it may not meet its goals in the removal of ordnance from Kahoolawe.

Our view: Use of the island as a Hawaiian preserve may still be possible if reasonable precautions are observed.

AFTER years of protests and unauthorized landings on the island, Congress in 1993 approved the return of Kahoolawe to the state and authorized \$400 million to clean up the ordnance dropped during decades of practice bombing. The cleanup is supposed to be completed by 2003.

The Navy initially estimated that it would be able to clear 100 percent of the ordnance on the surface of the 28,000-acre island and 30 percent from the subsurface as deep as 4 feet. Now the Navy has told the Kahoolawe Island Reserve Commission that, based on information obtained through more than a year of work, it may be able to achieve only 62 percent of that goal. To date about 2,400 acres have been cleared of surface and subsurface ordnance.

Lt. Cmdr. Paul Borkowski said the Navy doesn't know where the ordnance is and is supervising the cleanup with a number of unknown variables. He described the project as "like a moon shot."

Keoni Fairbanks, the commission's executive director, said it was clear that much of the island would not be completely cleared by 2003. The commission, he said, had to decide what should be done to permit safe use even with some ordnance remaining.

The Navy asked the commission to prepare a list of priorities to be applied in view of the new projections. The commission has come up with a nine-phase plan that it hopes will enable Hawaiians to make meaningful use of the island.

The plan includes marking trails to keep visitors away from hazardous areas, construction of a road across the island and clearance of shoreline areas, which are expected to get more use than the interior.

It's unfortunate that the funds and time provided for the cleanup evidently will be insufficient. Congress is unlikely to allocate more money for this purpose, so the Hawaiians wishing to use Kahoolawe as a cultural preserve presumably will have to settle for less than full removal of ordnance.

If reasonable precautions are taken, it should be possible for visitors to learn something valuable about Hawaiian culture without taking undue risks.

<http://starbulletin.com/2000/08/28/editorial/editorials.html#jump>

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Funds Low for Hawaii Island Cleanup

By BEN DiPIETRO, Associated Press Writer

HONOLULU (AP) - Kahoolawe is a sacred island to native Hawaiians, home to their gods and the ancient place where their navigators learned to travel the seas by starlight. Today it is a scarred island, a place where decades of bombing and target practice have left tons of military debris cratering its surface and buried within its soil.

The future of the island, where Hawaiian elders were trained to pass on their ancient Polynesian culture, is not much brighter.

With a December 2003 deadline to clear the island of as much unexploded ordnance as possible, the U.S. Navy now says it doesn't have enough time or money to meet its original bomb removal goals.

The head of the commission acting as caretaker of the island says he will consider legal action if the cleanup isn't as extensive as first promised.

Kahoolawe, the smallest of the eight major Hawaiian islands, is 11 miles long and 7 miles wide, and roughly 28,800 acres. It lies six miles southwest of Maui.

The island was inhabited by several hundred Hawaiians for more than 1,000 years before the population gradually left. The Navy took control during World War II and began using it as a target site.

Following protests in the mid-1970s that spawned the current Hawaiian sovereignty movement, a presidential order was issued in 1990 halting the bombing and ordering the island restored and returned to Hawaii.

Congress agreed in 1993 to spend up to \$400 million to clear ordnance from the 45-square-mile, mostly barren island that is home to the last two remaining kanaloa plants on the planet.

The original cleanup plan called for removal of 100 percent of surface ordnance and up to 30 percent of ordnance buried within four feet of the surface. Work began in 1997.

The Navy in its most recent assessment this summer admitted it won't reach the original target goals and asked the Kahoolawe Island Reserve Commission to revise its cleanup priorities.

``With 3 1/2 years to go before the deadline we are taking a look and, based on production, we may not get there," said Lt. Cmdr. Paul Borkowski, head of the Navy's cleanup operation.

``It's important to realize that a cleanup of this magnitude, to my knowledge, has not been attempted anywhere," Borkowski said. ``It's an uninhabited island with no infrastructure, no fresh water, with 50 years of unexploded ordnance."

The Navy comments are upsetting to Keoni Fairbanks, chairman of the commission that is responsible for setting policy and making long-term plans to turn the island into a native Hawaiian cultural reserve.

``They told us they're not going to finish. I feel very cheated and also very frustrated," Fairbanks said. ``The question is whether they have a legal obligation to finish. We are exploring our options."

The Navy said in July that \$179 million has been released for use by Congress and that it has spent \$109 million. It expects an additional \$150 million to be authorized before the 2003 deadline.

But Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, said it wasn't reasonable to expect Congress to provide more time or money for the cleanup.

“The amount of money authorized is a huge amount. I think most people would say it's an admirable amount,” Inouye said. “The plan never did indicate a total 100 percent cleanup of that island.”

Now workers are concentrating on a 200-meter-wide band around the island's perimeter, since shoreline areas are expected to be most used when Hawaiian cultural activities are allowed.

News that the project is running out of cash comes just months after a claims tribunal said the federal government should pay \$341 million to compensate the survivors and descendants of more than 100 people relocated from their homes on Enewetak Atoll, a Marshall Island atoll pummeled by 43 nuclear blasts.

And last week, the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures called on the U.S. and Japanese governments to remove unexploded ordnance that have been on their islands since World War II.