

Note - below is the official statement from Hawaii DLNR regarding re-opening of Polihale on 4-25-09.
Received Friday, April 24, 2009 via email.

Dear Friends of Polihale State Park: we are pleased to announce that Polihale State Park will reopen tomorrow, Saturday April 25, 2009, at 8 a.m. There will be a brief opening ceremony. Camping permit issuance will resume on Monday April 27.

The Department of Land and Natural Resources deeply appreciates the strong community support for reopening the park and the dedicated efforts of those volunteers to gave of their time, their physical labor, equipment and materials to restore the road and make it possible for most of the park to reopen. Back sections of the park that were more seriously damaged will await further funding necessary to make those repairs.

Sincerely
Department of Land and Natural Resources

For immediate release: April 24, 2009

DLNR TO REOPEN POLIHALE STATE PARK ON SATURDAY
Volunteer energy helps State get the job done

LIHU'E -- The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) will reopen the access road to Polihale State Park, on Kaua'i's west side, tomorrow Saturday, April 25 at 8 a.m. A brief reopening ceremony is planned.

State Parks personnel and community volunteers anxiously monitoring weather conditions during last night's flash flood watch were in agreement that the park's reopening could happen if the west side was spared. Fortunately the weather cooperated and the park road is ready to be opened.

Reopening of this popular beach park has been long awaited by island residents and visitors, and was made possible thanks to the energetic efforts of Kaua'i community volunteers who pitched in to help the State make needed repairs to extensive damage caused by flooding in December.

In March, a small army of volunteer workers stepped up to provide skilled labor, equipment and materials to fix damage to the road and portions of the park's water system after it was closed in its entirety due to severe storm damage almost four months ago.

"We want to thank the people of Kaua'i, the large number of volunteer crew members, and others who provided monetary or food donations for the workers, for their phenomenal and good-spirited efforts for the good of the community. Due to their love for this beach park, community members devoted themselves to accomplish those repair tasks necessary to allow us to safely re-open as much of the park as possible," said Laura H. Thielen, DLNR chairperson.

Parks staff have not yet estimated the actual value of the volunteers' efforts but it could be worth near \$200,000. The last time the road to Polihale State Park was graded it cost the state \$90,000.

Work on repairs to storm damage began in earnest on March 23, 2009. Volunteers had to wait out rainy weather and a missile launch from neighboring Barking Sands base before they could get started.

“The volunteers had to bring in water for making concrete. They brought in generators to power the welders. They brought in excavators, cranes, bobcats, cement mixers, dump trucks, graders, and other equipment,” said Thielen. “They even turned out to remove bulky trash and overgrown vegetation.”

“Most important, they brought in an extremely strong sense of purpose and aloha, which even gained national media attention. The community members personally, collectively, and unselfishly worked together towards the common purpose of re-opening the park. Local restaurants, markets, and individuals even donated lunches to the workers,” she said.

One of the biggest challenges was the condition of the first bridge, which, however was found to have sound footings after all the debris was removed and the area cleared. After repairs and improvements the bridge was inspected and declared safe for vehicles to cross.

Work tasks completed by volunteer crews included:

Bridge repair and improvements: welding surface pieces in place, pouring concrete access segments, installation of vehicle barrier rails, clearing accumulated debris below to re-establish ability for natural flow under the bridge, and adding structural supports.

Repair of four roadway washouts: tasks include grading four miles of roadway, and portions covered in silt run-off or scoured out, repair of the road accessing the park water well and pump, repair of the broken water line to four comfort stations, and blocking off vehicle access to the fifth comfort station that was severely damaged by the December 11, 2008 rain storm. The fifth comfort station is located at the far Napali end of the park and is not slated to be made operational at this time.

Other tasks completed by Parks staff before reopening included: clearing of drainage culverts, cleaning comfort stations, adding safety and information signage, installation of rock barriers to prevent vehicles from driving into culverts at the approaches to the two bridges, and installation of road edge markers at two drainage spots where washouts were repaired.

Polihale State Park sustained considerable damage due to the Dec. 11 rain storm. The five-mile long unimproved road was unsafe to drive due to very large washouts, mud and rocks on the road, culverts filled with silt and debris. The park was flooded and the water line to the park comfort stations was broken, the road to the park's water well and pump was damaged, another comfort station was left structurally unsound and its individual waste water system was destroyed.

DLNR Division of State Parks did not have the funds available immediately after the storm to make emergency repairs to the park road and facilities, which were estimated in the several millions of dollars. Due to the state's projected \$2 billion revenue shortfall and decreases to the DLNR budget, it was not known when funds would be available to make repairs to reopen the road and park. The infusion of community volunteer energy made it possible for the park to be reopened sooner.

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