

KONA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, August 18, 2026

MEETING HELD: 81-948 Waena'Oihana Loop, Kealahou, HI 96750
DIRECTORS PRESENT: Jeff Knowles, Greg Hendrickson, and Mark Petersen
DIRECTORS ABSENT: Louis Putzel
KSWCD STAFF: Mary Robblee, Kelsea Heider, Dan Lais
NRCS: Laura Nelson
GUESTS: Stephanie Dunbar, Reid Loo, Natalie Kurashima, Ed Rapoza

I. **WELCOME:** The KSWCD Board Meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm by Chairman Knowles.

- **Quorum present.** There were no changes to the agenda. There was no written testimony submitted. Guests Stephanie Dunbar, Reid Loo, and Natalie Kurashima attended via Teams meeting link. Ed Rapoza was in-person. The Chair ratified the elections of Board Directors Mark Petersen and Louis Putzel from a prior special election meeting, including DLNR certification. *Motion to appoint Director Summer- Lee Kauionalani Yadao Moved. Seconded. Approved unanimously.*

II. **MINUTES:** June 16, 2026, KSWCD Board Meeting Minutes reviewed.

Motion to approve June 16, 2026, minutes. Moved. Seconded. Approved unanimously.

III. **REPORTS:**

A. TREASURER (KSWCD):

Treasurer report was skipped in the interest of time; report included in Board packets.

B. REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP):

- RCPP update included a recent meeting with Hiki Ola staff to review grant implementation and discuss reporting details. Dan Lais is seeking RCPP portal training to enter report information.

C. PARTNERSHIPS:

HIKI OLA

- HIKI OLA update report skipped.

D. CONSERVATION GRANT- REPI/DOD (KSWCD):

Grant details:

- Waiting on NACD contract finalization sent to the District for signing. Preliminary meeting held with Johnson-Su compost systems consultant Bob Schaefer to discuss project planning details. District staff are preliminarily identifying interested landowners to follow up with once the grant application process is initiated.

E. DISTRICT PLANNER Mary Robblee (KSWCD):

Consolidations & Subdivisions:

- Reviewed current publications. No action required.

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F. NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS):

Laura:

- FY26 EQIP contracting near completion; ~54% of applications funded, 70% obligated.
- National NRCS reorganization is ongoing; employee placement letters are delayed until Aug 28.
- Hiring initiatives underway agencywide.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS (OLD & NEW):

Conservation Plan Reviews – Kamehameha Schools Projects

- Kealia Project:
Install fencing (approx. 19,639 feet).
Construct an access road (approx. 5,661 feet).
Sensitive habitat area with old-growth koa trees; presence of a watercourse makai of the project footprint.
Discussion Highlights:
Maps reviewed; elevation ranges 5,500–8,000 ft.
Need for NRCS environmental evaluation including cultural, biological, and water-related assessments.
Discussion about whether entire 5,000+ acre TMK should be assessed vs. only work areas.
Agreement to segment the plan:
Fence can proceed under NRCS standards.
Road may proceed under non-NRCS review, requiring a third-party engineering “no negative impact” letter.
Board Motion Passed:
Approve Kealia fence installation pending staff site verification, cultural assessment, and T&E review.
Road approval contingent upon:
Staff site visit and photos.
Cultural and T&E evaluations.
Engineering “no effect” letter provided by applicant.
- Hualalai Project:
Proposal:
Install fence protecting ~84 acres of native loma forest.
Discussion Highlights:
Project modeled after successful neighboring conservation work (Kipuka Oweo).
No heavy grading anticipated; fence follows old pasture and lava flows.
Archaeological reconnaissance already completed by KS; no sites found. KS to provide copy.
NRCS to conduct additional environmental review (cultural, T&E).
Board Motion Passed:
Approval of Hualalai fence, pending ground-truth site visit and completion of required assessments.

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Technical Clarifications Requested

Kamehameha Schools to provide:

Average slope along fence alignments.

Target species being excluded (pigs, sheep/goats, cattle).

Fence specifications (height, top wire, apron/skirting).

Shapefiles for both current and proposed road alignments.

NRCS/SWCD will:

Conduct field evaluations.

Prepare environmental worksheets and installation requirement documents.

Coordinate site visit dates with KS.

- Ed Rapoza Project:

Ed Raposa presented a 14-acre farm development plan including:

Existing fencing installation.

Grubbing already completed under county permit.

Proposed internal fence line (~720 feet).

Planned grading and land shaping for orchard and sod farm development.

Tree species planned: 'ulu, coconut (dwarf), mango, avocado.

Discussion:

Clarification needed on extent of grading and whether engineering review is required.

SWCD will conduct a site visit to determine whether work falls under "site prep" or triggers "land shaping" engineering standards.

Mulching requirements and coconut rhinoceros beetle risk discussed.

Next Steps:

SWCD to send practice standards and installation requirement templates to landowner.

Site visit to be scheduled.

Board to consider conditional approval based on SWCD/NRCS recommendations.

Board action to affirm Debi Kokinos services for District Accountant

Motion to approve, seconded, Motion passed with all in favor.

County Contingency Fund: update skipped.

SWCD Staff Vacation/Sick Leave Handbook Policy Review

Discussion regarding vacation accrual, sick leave increments, and exempt vs non-exempt classification. Board will issue clarification letter to ProService clarifying lump sum of vacation and sick leave is available upon hire consistent with annual vacation and sick leave amounts per year.

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DLNR Financial Report Update- Semi annual report submitted

Conservation Awareness Contest Update

Contest is scheduled for September 18, 2026. Location has been identified.
Outreach to schools completed; awaiting confirmations.
Big Island Districts asked to contribute \$175 each to defray KSWCD costs.
Proposed student prize: ~\$50 team voucher (L&L BQ or similar).

Hawaii Agrifood Island-wide Summit Update- event canceled due to hurricane

V. **ADJOURN:** KSWCD Board Meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM by Chairman Knowles.

VI. **NEXT MONTHLY BOARD MEETING: Tuesday, September 15, 2026 @ 3:00pm.**

BOARD MEETING ACTION ITEMS:

TASK	PERSON OR COMMITTEE MEMBERS	DUE DATE
Kamehameha Schools Projects follow up to schedule site inspections	Dan & Kelsea	Week of August 24, 2026
Ed Rapoza Conservation Plan follow up to schedule site inspection	Mary	Week of August 24, 2026
Draft letter to ProService about District leave policy	Dan	Week of August 31, 2026