# 04/13/20-ALL OFFSHORE ISLETS AND AHU O LAKA SANDBAR NOW CLOSED DUE TO COVID-19

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## DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
## News Release

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| **DAVID Y. IGE**<br>**GOVERNOR** | **SUZANNE D. CASE**<br>**CHAIRPERSON** |

For Immediate News Release: April 13, 2020

**ALL OFFSHORE ISLETS AND AHU O LAKA SANDBAR NOW CLOSED DUE TO COVID-19**

(Honolulu) – "Blatant disrespect," by some people over the Easter Weekend three-day holiday has led to the immediate closing of all Hawai'i Offshore Islets, which are all State Wildlife Sanctuaries. This includes the popular Mokulua Islets off of Kailua and Lanikai beaches. In addition, the Ahu o Laka (Kaneohe sandbar), is also closing immediately.

DLNR Division of Conservation and Resources Officers (DOCARE) report blatant disregard for stay-at-home mandates and physical distancing measures over the weekend. Officers issued 20 warnings to boaters at the He'eia Kea Small Boat Harbor on Easter Sunday for violations of the stay-at-home order. The DLNR Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation (DOBOR) is closing the He'eia Kea Small Boat Harbor ramp on Tuesday, April 14, 2020.

DOCARE Chief Jason Redulla said, "Our officers observed dozens of people congregating in close-proximity at Ahu o Laka. These dismissive behaviors are unfortunate and unhealthy and is what led to closing the sandbar under Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) relating to the closure of State Wildlife Sanctuaries." The closed area is detailed in the HAR below.

Similar activity was observed on Mokulua North or Moku Nui Islet, a popular destination for kayakers. All of the offshore islets fall under the jurisdiction of the DLNR Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW). DOFAW Administrator David Smith commented, “We’re all are facing unprecedented times and inconvenience to our daily lives and while we encourage people to get outside and into the fresh air, if some folks can’t self-regulate and practice physical distancing, we have no option but to close all offshore islets and potentially other popular outdoor destinations, like trails.”

DLNR Chair Suzanne Case added, “During this COVID-19 crisis we want people to be able to exercise outdoors individually, but not to party and socialize outdoors which they can do at home by phone or online. We realize these extraordinary steps might overtax other public outdoor resources, but we want everyone to realize that we all have to be very serious about stay-at-home and physical distancing orders. The sooner everyone pays attention to the rules, the quicker life can return to normal, including reopening those places that are normally enjoyed by so many people.”

Entering a closed wildlife sanctuary is a petty misdemeanor and if convicted is punishable by both fines and imprisonment. Violations of the Governor’s Emergency Rules are a misdemeanor and punishable by both fines up to $5000 and imprisonment.

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**Hawai‘i Administrative Rules**:

§13-256-73.13 Ahu o Laka safety zone. (a) The Ahu o Laka safety zone is the area encompassed within the boundaries designated as Zone H-2 shown on Exhibit “X-2,” “Ahu o Laka safety zone, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii” dated June 8, 2011, and located at the end of this subchapter. The boundaries of Zone H-2 are as follows: Beginning at a point in the water at 21°28.462’N 157°49.203’W, then by straight lines drawn to a point at 21°27.9647’N 157°49.140’W, then to 21°27.514’N 157°48.115’W, then to 21°28.030’N 157°47.940’W, then back to the starting point.

§13-126-6 Closing of areas. The board (Board of Land and Natural Resources) or its authorized representative may close or restrict the public use of all or any portion of a wildlife sanctuary for up to two years, when deemed necessary by the board for the protection of the biological, geological, or cultural resources of the area or the safety and welfare of persons or property, by the posting of appropriate signs indicating the duration, extent, and scope of closure. Closures may be renewed with the approval of the board or its authorized representative.

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