12/15/20-DIAMOND HEAD STATE MONUMENT SLATED TO REOPEN ON THURSDAY

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DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
News Release

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For Immediate News Release: December 15, 2020

DIAMOND HEAD STATE MONUMENT SLATED TO REOPEN ON THURSDAY

New Rules for Iconic Park Closed Since March 17

To view video please click on photo or view at this link: https://vimeo.com/477851634

(HONOLULU) – Diamond Head State Monument's (DHSM) unprecedented closure, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, comes to an end on Thursday, Dec. 17, exactly nine months since the gates were closed.

DLNR Division of State Parks Administrator Curt Cottrell said, "We will have limitations on access. Closing the park was easy. Reopening Diamond Head is complicated due to a variety of factors including the shared use of the crater by the Hawai'i Dept. of Defense and Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency." (See FAQs further below for more details).

During the closure, deferred maintenance projects were completed. This included painting of the fire control station and the stairs along the trail to the summit. Clean-up projects were completed with volunteer support from the Hawai'i National Guard, Hawai'i Youth Conservation Corps and Kupu 'Āina.

Cottrell added, "Visitors will experience significant changes, such as a new traffic control system at the Kahala Tunnel with single lane traffic regulated by traffic lights, providing more space to accommodate pedestrian access. There are also slight changes to the hiking experience to the top of Diamond Head due to COVID protocols. With only one staff member assigned to DHSM to manage visitors, and one for maintenance inside the crater, we are relying greatly on the partnership we have with our parking contractor to help limit crowding on the summit trail. Drivers will be informed at the park's entrance when the parking lot is full and walk-in visitors may be

asked to wait before starting their hikes if our staff determines the trail is at specific capacity and social distancing becomes an issue."

Also of importance is the reduction in open days. The park will be closed, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday each week due to limited staffing, to assess health & safety protocols, and to conduct additional maintenance and upkeep. Diamond Head will also be closed on the Christmas and New Years Day holidays.

Prior to the beginning of the pandemic, DHSM hosted an average of 3,000 people each day; many of whom take the 0.8-mile hike to the summit for sweeping views of O'ahu's southern coastline. In December 2019, one day saw the highest recorded daily count of 6,000 visitors.

The most challenging section along the trail, in which to practice coronavirus safety precautions, is the narrow 200-foot-long tunnel near the top. Visitors must also wear masks in the park and attempt to stay six feet apart from other hikers. State Parks has installed new signs to remind visitors of all public health safety requirements and occupancy limits at the viewpoints along the trail (look for painted boot prints on the concrete). Staff is also asking visitors to be considerate all along the trail and at the summit and to not linger long for photos to avoid clogging the trail and viewpoints.

The Division of State Parks lost nearly $1 million dollars of revenue from the extended closure of DHSM. An increase in fees for non-residents is expected to support economic recovery, but until Hawai'i's visitor industry improves significantly, there's no way to predict when the funding shortfall can be made up. Cottrell concluded, "We'll be monitoring visitor behavior carefully to determine how to optimize their experiences, to balance safety with the economic necessity of adequate patronage to offset the cost of our partner's staffing at the entry station, and most importantly to keep everyone safe and healthy as they enjoy O'ahu's 300,000-year-old National Natural Landmark."

In accordance with recent rule changes, Hawai'i residents can now park and enter DHSM for free. New higher fees are in effect for non-residents and commercial vehicles.

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DLNR DIVISION OF STATE PARKS

REOPENING OF DIAMOND HEAD STATE MONUMENT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DECEMBER 2020

When does Diamond Head State Monument Reopen?

On Thursday, Dec. 17, 2020

What are park hours?

Open Thursday-Sunday (except Christmas and New Year's days)

6:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

How much is the entrance fee?

$10 per non-commercial vehicles

$5 for walk-ins

Free for Hawai'i residents with a State identification

Can I drive or walk in?

Either. Vehicles mush abide by the traffic lights at the Kahala Tunnel when entering or exiting the crater.

The Fort Ruger Pathway on the outside of the crater remains open.

Is it safe to walk through the Kahala Tunnel?

During the closure the pedestrian-access lane was made wider, by converting two-way traffic lanes to one. This was done to improve safety. Vehicle traffic is controlled by traffic lights at both ends of the tunnel. Only drive into the tunnel when the light is green.

What COVID-19 safety protocols are in place?

Masks must be always worn at Diamond Head State Monument. At the tunnel on the summit trail visitors are asked to try to maintain 6-foot distance from the people around them. Boot marks on the trail indicate six-foot distances. At the small lookouts on top visitors are asked to be considerate and not linger after taking photographs and while quickly enjoying the view. The fire control station is closed.

For more information on Diamond Head State Monument or other Hawai'i State Parks visit:

https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/