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## RECREATION

### *Enjoying Mauna Kea's Unique Natural Resources*

Before the first road to the summit was built in 1964, only hardy recreationalists hiked Mauna Kea's slopes. During this time, hunters were active on the mountain's lower slopes. Stone cabins built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s served as the base camp for hunters, hikers, and explorers. The name of the mid-elevation area, Hale Pōhaku, derives from these cabins.

Ever since the first road was developed to the summit, people have come to Mauna Kea to hike, play in the snow and sightsee. Hunting is also an important activity which may be viewed as recreation but for many is an integral part of their lifestyle, subsistence and culture. Hunting continues to occur at the lower elevations of the mountain outside the Science Reserve.

Residents and visitors alike come to Mauna Kea simply to experience this place that is unlike any other in Hawai'i. Many are drawn to the mountain to witness the world class telescopes, feel the chill of the air, and appreciate the desolate beauty and natural land forms of Mauna Kea. What they must also keep in mind is that the extreme weather conditions on the mountain make all recreational activities potentially dangerous.

### *Hiking*

Hikers visit Mauna Kea for an experience that is unmatched in the Hawaiian Islands. The clear skies, cool air, and awe-inspiring landscape draw experienced and novice hikers alike. The factors that make Mauna Kea such a uniquely appealing place to hike are also cause for health and safety concerns. Hikers must be prepared for the affects of high altitude on their bodies and the possibility of a sudden and severe change in weather.

Hiking is most popular in the Ice Age Natural Area Reserve and along existing roads. Individuals typically drive up the mountain for a distance before parking and hiking. The Humu'ula-Mauna Kea trail runs from the old sheep station at Humu'ula to Wai'au. A few individuals brave the low temperatures and swim in Wai'au.

### *Snow Play*

Big Island residents and visitors look forward to those winter periods when snow falls at the higher elevations of Mauna Kea. Families and individuals visit the mountain to ski, snowboard, and play in the snow. Often, people load their pickup trucks with snow to take down to Hilo and other towns so that others can enjoy the snow.

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The Summit Access Road is kept clear of snow by Mauna Kea Support Services staff. Private vehicles typically park along the roadways and visitors play nearby. The most popular ski and snowplay areas are those easily accessed by roadways. The ski run known as Poi Bowl is the most popular because it is accessible by roads at both the top and bottom of the run. Skiers typically establish an informal shuttle system where the skier is dropped off at the top of the run and then met at the bottom. If the snowfall is heavy enough, the area to the east of the summit, known as King Kamehameha run, is used for longer ski runs although the bottom of the run is not accessible by vehicle and the skier must hike back to a roadway. At times it is possible to ski from the summit to the edge of the Science Reserve. Once or twice a year, depending on the snow conditions, a skiing or snowboarding competition is held on the mountain. Popular ski areas are shown in Figure IX-25.

The weather patterns for any particular year will determine how much and where snow falls. Snow typically falls first and melts last from the northern slope of Pu'u Hau Kea (also known as Goodrich). At times it is the only place on the mountain with snow. When snowfall is light, people tend to hike between snowy areas.

### ***Sightseeing and Stargazing***

Sightseeing is another favorite activity for residents and visitors alike. Before proceeding up the mountain visitors are asked to spend time at the Visitor Information Station (VIS) to view the exhibits and acclimate to the altitude. A number of visitors use private vehicles to explore the summit on their own. Visitors will drive up to the summit possibly stopping along the way to walk around a bit and take photographs. At the summit, the public can visit the Keck Visitor Gallery to view exhibits and see the inside of one of the Keck domes. Other visitors will join MKSS-led tours twice a week. In 1998, an estimated 38 visitor vehicles traveled to the summit of Mauna Kea daily (Koehler, 1999). Another 100 to 150 vehicles visited the VIS only each week. Approximately 100 students visit the VIS each month during the school year and even more visit in the summer months.

While many residents and visitors drive to the summit area themselves, others join commercial tours. DLNR issues a limited number of Commercial Activity Permits to tour operators who pay annual and per customer fees. Commercial tours register at Hale Pōhaku each time they ascend the mountain. In 1999, eleven Commercial Activity Permits were active (Unoki, 1999). Of these, ten allowed tours to the summit and one provided commercial access to Hale Pōhaku only. Tour operators take visitors for six to eight hour trips which can include an observatory tour, lunch, hikes to Wai'au, and narratives on the area vegetation and natural history. In the Fall of 1998, an estimated 30 tours per week went to the summit (Koehler, 1998).

Taking sightseeing to a higher level, the MKSS offers stargazing programs at the Visitor Information Station seven evenings a week. These stargazing programs drew an average of 80 participants per evening (320/week) in 1998 (Koehler, 1998).

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The same factors that make Mauna Kea a premier spot for major astronomy research also provide excellent conditions for amateur astronomy. Many of the evening visitors to the mountain, especially the VIS area, are amateur astronomers.

### ***Hunting***

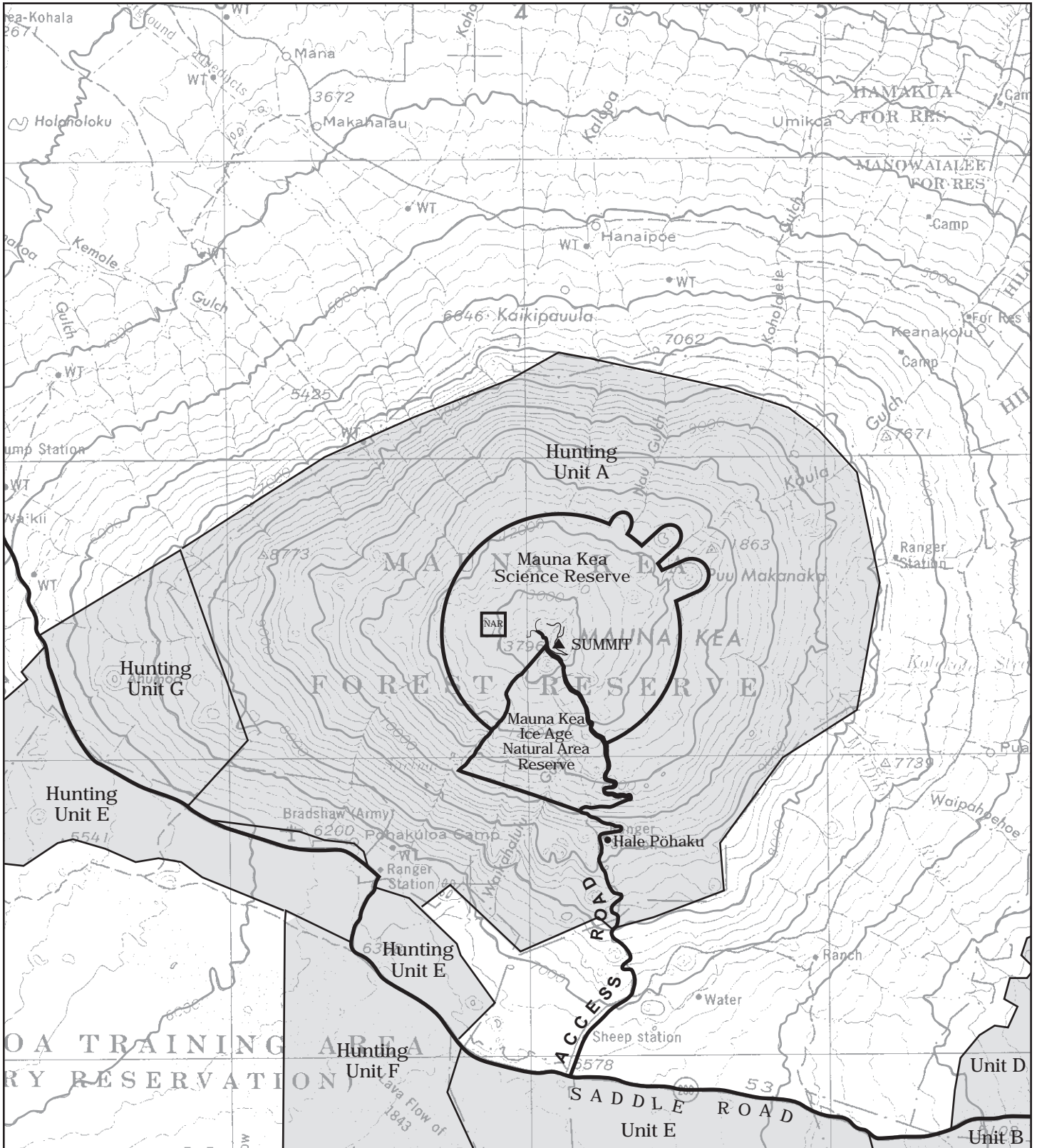
Long a tradition on the island, hunting continues on Mauna Kea in a managed structure. Hunting on Mauna Kea occurs largely outside of the Science Reserve on the mountain's lower slopes. Today, pigs, sheep, goats, and a variety of gamebirds are hunted by rifle or archery in three dozen hunting units concentrated in the central portion of the Island of Hawai'i (Figure VII-1).

Lloyd Case, interviewed in Kepā Maly's oral history study for Mauna Kea, describes hunting with his family on Mauna Kea.

“I started going hunting with my brothers, from five years old, I went out several times. Then later on, from eight years old to ten, I started going more and more with my brothers. But Mauna Kea was one of our particular areas that we liked to hunt. One of our favorite places because it had a variety of game. You could go there and get your *pua'a* (pig), you could get your *hipa* (sheep), there were goats in those days too. But our family, we grew up on sheep, so Mauna Kea was a place that I always went to gather sheep.” (p. A-345 in Maly, 1999)

“What we used to do is, we'd sleep right there, and in the morning, the sheep would come down for eat. So what we would do is go right above and wait for them to come back up.” . . . “They come down to eat. So what we'd do is walk up a little bit and intercept them on their way back up. And it's all down hill then, so we'd pack 'em right down to the road yeah.” (p. A-345 in Maly, 1999)

Gamebirds including turkey, pheasants, quails, chukars, and francolins are also present on Mauna Kea's slopes. There are over 3,000 licensed hunters living on the island. The Mauna Kea Forest Reserve (elevations over 7,000 feet) is a hunting unit where pigs, goats, sheep and birds can be hunted with archery and firearms. Sport hunting is a popular activity which contributes to the island's economy. While sheep, goats, pigs and some game bird species sometimes enter the Science Reserve area, most of the birds and mammals are hunted on the mountain's lower slopes.



Source: Saddle Road (SR 200) Mamalahoa Highway (SR 190) to Milepost 6 DEIS, Technical Appendices, Volume V, 1997

DLNR Hunting Units

Mauna Kea Science Reserve  
Master Plan

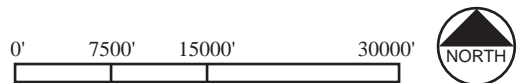


Figure VII-1  
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