

Governor’s Military Advisory Committee on Army-Leased Lands

January 9, 2026

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

First Lady Jaime Green

Alice Roberts

Assistant Secretary Jordan Gillis

Ed Sniffen

William Ailā

Captain Rachel Sullivan

Ryan Kanaka’ole (excused)

Summer Sylva

Kūhiō Lewis

Kali Watson

Laurie McAllister Moore

Noe Noe Wong-Wilson

Mahina Paishon

Scott Glenn

I. Welcome and Roundtable Introductions

The facilitator opened the meeting, welcomed participants, and noted that while an agenda was provided, the discussion was intended to function primarily as a talk story session to allow for open exchange, shared understanding, and candid dialogue. The meeting was framed as an opportunity to deepen relationships, clarify perspectives, and hear directly from both community leaders and federal representatives.

Participants introduced themselves and briefly described their roles. Invited attendees included senior leadership from the U.S. Army with responsibilities for installations, land management, energy, and environmental stewardship. The presence of federal leadership was noted as a valuable opportunity for direct listening and dialogue.

Introductions highlighted the diverse experiences and perspectives represented in the room, including long-standing involvement in Native Hawaiian advocacy, land stewardship, cultural preservation, housing, environmental protection, military–community relations, and state and federal administration. Several participants emphasized deep personal and generational connections to Hawai‘i’s lands and

communities, and a shared commitment to ensuring that decisions regarding military land use reflect respect for place, people, and history.

Federal representatives emphasized their intent to listen and better understand community concerns. They emphasized the importance of civilian oversight and long-term obligations associated with military land use. They also acknowledged that the accelerated timeline for resolving lease issues originated at the federal level and was driven by senior Army leadership priorities. They noted that this sense of urgency shaped early interactions with the State and contributed to public discussion of potential unilateral federal actions. Members discussed that this acknowledgment helped clarify the context in which state officials made public statements emphasizing urgency and risk, and reinforced the importance of creating space for community input, legal review, and more deliberate consideration before decisions are advanced.

The facilitator reiterated that the advisory committee's role is consultative and intended to support informed executive consideration. Participants were encouraged to engage openly, raise questions, and share perspectives to help inform ongoing discussions regarding military land leases, land use practices, and community priorities.

II. Current Context and Shared Understanding

Participants discussed the current legal and policy context for military training lands. It was noted that any continued Army use of state lands requires congressional authorization through the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), as required by law, and that the lands play a role in supporting ongoing military training and operations.

Army representatives described the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process as the primary mechanism through which environmental, cultural, and operational impacts of military training have been studied and disclosed. They noted that the EIS includes extensive analysis of land use, water resources, cultural and archaeological sites, environmental impacts, and mitigation measures, and is intended to provide a comprehensive public record to inform decision-making.

Army representatives discussed the national security role of the training lands, noting that they support readiness for units operating in the Indo-Pacific region and provide terrain and conditions that are difficult to replicate elsewhere. They emphasized that these lands are used to prepare service members for real-world operational environments and that continued access to appropriate training areas is viewed as essential to meeting national defense responsibilities. Members discussed the importance of understanding this national security context alongside environmental, cultural, and community considerations when evaluating future land use.

Army representatives also addressed questions about whether virtual or simulated training could replace training conducted on these lands. They explained that while simulation and virtual tools are increasingly used and valuable for certain aspects of training, they cannot fully replicate the complexity, scale, environmental conditions, and human factors involved in real-world field training. Army representatives noted that live, in-person training is viewed as necessary to prepare units for coordination, decision-making, and operational stress in environments that reflect the terrain and conditions service members may face. Members discussed the importance of understanding both the capabilities and limitations of simulation when considering alternatives to on-the-ground training.

Army representatives emphasized a desire for information contained in the EIS to be more widely available, better understood, and more fully incorporated into public discussion. They noted that some aspects of the Army's proposal are not widely recognized, including that the proposal does not seek renewal or continued use of all currently leased lands. As an example, they noted that areas on both Hawai'i Island and O'ahu are proposed not to be renewed for military lease or use. Members discussed that clearer communication of these elements could help reduce misunderstanding and support more informed dialogue.

The committee discussed the broader context in which current discussions are occurring, noting that community concerns are shaped by long-standing impacts from past military practices, including environmental damage, unexploded ordnance, and

restricted access to land. These experiences continue to influence levels of trust and expectations today.

Army representatives described how training practices, environmental standards, and oversight have evolved over time, including improvements in safety protocols, technology, environmental compliance, and mitigation requirements reflected in the EIS. It was acknowledged that while practices have improved, the legacy of past harm and remaining risks remain central to community concerns.

Army representatives provided clarification regarding what is meant by “live-fire” training, noting that the term is often understood by the public to imply widespread use of high-explosive munitions or unrestricted weapons fire. They explained that live-fire encompasses a range of training activities, many of which involve limited, controlled use of ammunition under strict safety and environmental standards, and that most live-fire activities do not involve high-explosive ordnance. Army representatives emphasized that training methods, munitions, and controls have evolved significantly over time, and that distinctions between inert training, limited live-fire, and higher-impact activities are described in the EIS. Members discussed that clearer explanation of these distinctions could help reduce misunderstanding, while also recognizing that concerns about risk, cumulative impact, and past harm remain important and unresolved for many residents.

Members discussed that, despite these explanations, community confidence remains low, particularly where assurances about safety, cleanup, and monitoring have not been supported by comprehensive data or visible action. Water protection was discussed as a central concern, with members noting distrust of assurances related to aquifers and drinking water in the absence of sufficient monitoring and publicly accessible data. Army representatives discussed existing protections and standards, while acknowledging the importance of additional monitoring, transparency, and clear communication.

The committee also discussed that uncertainty also exists around the scope and completeness of environmental surveys in impact areas. Members noted that some areas have not been fully surveyed for unexploded ordnance, cultural resources, or ecological impacts, limiting the ability to assess risk or plan responsibly for the future.

Members discussed the broader question of national security needs in relation to community and environmental impacts. While acknowledging the importance of military readiness, members emphasized the need to clearly distinguish which activities are essential to national security and which practices may be modified, relocated, or mitigated without compromising core defense requirements.

The committee also discussed the importance of legal clarity and accountability. Members emphasized that any continued use of state lands for military purposes must include clear legal obligations for cleanup, restoration, long-term monitoring, and funding to carry out those responsibilities. Past experiences where cleanup was delayed or under-resourced were cited as contributing to skepticism about future commitments.

Overall, the committee emphasized that the current context is shaped by a combination of historical harm, incomplete information, evolving military practices, and unresolved trust issues. Members underscored that establishing a shared factual foundation through data, transparency, and clear commitments is a necessary step before meaningful progress can be made on future land use decisions.

III. Community Perspectives and Priorities

The committee discussed a range of community perspectives related to military land use, with emphasis on the lived experience of communities most affected by past and current military activities. Members noted that many concerns are grounded in intergenerational experience, including loss of land, impacts to sovereignty, and long-term environmental harm that remains unresolved.

Native Hawaiian perspectives were discussed as central to understanding these priorities. Members emphasized the importance of 'ike kupuna, cultural practice, and ancestral connection to land, and noted that military land use has often disrupted access, stewardship, and cultural continuity. Participants underscored that engagement with Native Hawaiian communities must reflect respect for place-based knowledge and long-term stewardship responsibilities, and extend beyond procedural consultation.

Members identified several core community priorities, including:

- Protection of water resources, particularly aquifers and drinking water sources, and the need for monitoring and transparent sharing of data.
- Comprehensive environmental and cultural surveys of impact areas, including unexploded ordnance, archaeological resources, and ecological conditions, prior to long-term decisions.
- Clear and enforceable commitments to cleanup and restoration, informed by past experience and lessons from places such as Kaho‘olawe.
- Improved access to information, including maps, data, and technical materials presented in ways that are understandable and accessible to the public.

Members also raised concerns about the continued use of live-fire training and emphasized the importance of regularly reassessing training practices in light of evolving technology and community expectations, particularly where activities may pose higher risks to land and water.

Overall, the committee discussed that community priorities center on protection of land, water, and cultural integrity, as well as accountability for past and future impacts. Members emphasized that progress will depend on visible actions that demonstrate respect, responsibility, and a commitment to long-term stewardship.

IV. Pathways Forward and Conditions for Progress

The committee discussed potential pathways forward for addressing military land use and emphasized that progress will depend on meeting clear conditions that respond to long-standing community concerns. Members noted that while specific outcomes remain undecided, there was broad agreement that future discussions must be grounded in trust, transparency, and accountability.

Members discussed the importance of establishing credible safeguards to protect land and water resources. This includes implementing monitoring early, rather than waiting for future agreements, and ensuring that data related to water quality, environmental conditions, and risk is publicly available and independently verifiable.

The committee discussed the need to clearly define legal responsibilities and enforcement mechanisms related to cleanup, restoration, and long-term monitoring. Members emphasized that any continued or future use of state lands must include enforceable commitments, adequate funding, and clear lines of responsibility so that obligations are not deferred or left unresolved.

Members discussed reassessing military training practices in light of modern technology and standards. This includes examining whether certain activities, such as live-fire training, can be reduced, modified, or replaced with lower-impact alternatives where doing so would not compromise essential national security needs.

The committee emphasized the importance of timely and accessible information-sharing. Members discussed the need to make maps, surveys, and technical materials related to land use, environmental conditions, and cultural resources available in formats that allow communities to meaningfully engage and provide informed input.

Members also discussed that progress should not be limited to training land negotiations alone. Broader actions, such as increased investment in cleanup efforts, additional resources for places like Kaho'olawe, and proactive stewardship measures, were identified as ways to demonstrate good faith and address harm regardless of final land arrangements.

Army representatives emphasized that communities should clearly articulate what they believe is needed to address past harm and support future stewardship. They acknowledged that requests for additional resources or commitments, such as increased funding for cleanup, restoration, or places like Kaho'olawe, are appropriate to raise and should be part of the discussion.

Overall, the committee emphasized that pathways forward must be shaped by conditions that rebuild trust and demonstrate respect for Hawai'i's people, lands, and waters. Members underscored that meaningful progress will depend less on speed and more on the willingness of the State and federal government to meet these conditions before advancing long-term decisions.

V. Next Steps

The committee discussed near-term steps to support continued dialogue, improve shared understanding, and enable more informed community engagement. Members emphasized that next steps should focus on strengthening the factual foundation and improving access to information before advancing major decisions.

Members discussed the importance of improving the availability, organization, and accessibility of information related to military land use, including through the Engage website. This includes sharing maps, environmental and cultural surveys, monitoring data, and other technical materials in formats that are understandable to the public, as well as clearly directing community members to reliable information sources and points of contact for questions.

The committee discussed continued use of the Engage website and other online tools, alongside in-person discussions, to share information and gather community input. Members emphasized that engagement efforts should clearly communicate how input will be documented, considered, and reflected as discussions move forward.

Members discussed the need to revisit unresolved technical and policy questions in future meetings, including water monitoring, environmental surveys, training practices, cleanup responsibilities, and long-term stewardship. Sequencing these discussions to allow time for learning and reflection, rather than rushed conclusions, was identified as important.

The committee also discussed the importance of coordination across state agencies and with federal counterparts to support consistency and follow-through. Inviting additional subject-matter expertise—such as energy, environmental, cultural, or infrastructure specialists—was identified as a potential next step where relevant.

Overall, the committee emphasized that next steps should prioritize information-sharing, coordination, and continued listening. Members underscored that maintaining an open, steady process will be essential to building trust and supporting informed discussion as the advisory committee's work continues.