



# News Release

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Soldiers support construction of Kipuka 21 trail

PŌHAKULOA TRAINING AREA, Hawaii -- Four Soldiers were just about done with unit training at Pōhakuloa Training Area when a different kind of service called.

Spec. Anthony Cardenas, Pvt. 1st Class Spencer Brown, Pvt. 2nd Class Monica Brown, and Pvt. 2nd Class Julius Rogers, from Oahu-based 8th Theater Sustainment Command, were chosen to support a much-needed Na Ala Hele-Trails and Access Systems work project at the Kipuka trail, located at the 21 Mile Marker on Saddle Road.

The half-mile circular Kipuka Trail, once completed before year's end, will become a place for the public and nature lovers can get closer to nature.

"We plan to build a pavilion, with two picnic benches, and a railing to overview the forest and a user-friendly trail for school-age children, adults, and seniors," said Virginia Aragon, an information and education outreach specialist for the Division of Forestry and Wildlife. "At this time we need volunteers to make improvements to the trail so that it is safe for children and senior citizens to walk through when they walk around the forest."

"The area provides a place where people can see native bird species, such as the akepa and the palila in their natural habitat," she added.

Aragon said she appreciates all volunteers as this project continues to evolve and becomes completed for the public.

“The Soldiers are valuable in trying to complete the trail as we rely upon volunteers for much of the work that we need to accomplish here,” she added. “The Division of Forestry and Wildlife truly appreciates their effort, and we hope that we can continue to rely on this partnership with Pōhakuloa.”

An appreciation of nature is all it takes as one of the Soldiers sees it.

“I’ve been working on the trail for about an hour-and-a-half, basically hauling rocks and placing them at an area where there is a need to slightly level off part of the steep trail,” said Spec. Cardenas. “I understand what this work means as we develop this trail into a much safer place to navigate. By carefully laid-out rocks and the gravel along the path, we are making this into an enjoyable means for people to appreciate various wildlife, birds, and plants.”

Soldiers’ support for this trail is beneficial in two ways, according to PTA staff member.

“I think that two of the greatest things we do at Pōhakuloa Training Area are partnering with our local community and preserving the environment, working with the State’s Na Ala Hele trails program,” said Robert Misajon, PTA plans and operations officer. “It’s our way of giving back to the aina (land) and is also educational for the Soldiers supporting Na Ala Hele. Virginia Aragon is an expert on the flora and fauna in the Kipuka and always shares her knowledge and love for the land with volunteers and Soldiers who help out.”