



Media Release

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“Malama na Koa”

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Army Plans Big Island Goat and Sheep Drive

POHAKULOA TRAINING AREA, Hawaii –More than 75 volunteer “paniolas,” or cowboys, from across Hawaii will participate in the Army’s version of a modern-day goat and sheep drive, here, Saturday.

The group of students, environmentalists, recreational hunters and scientists are combining efforts to drive approximately 1,500 wild sheep and goats out of Army training areas that are home to native Hawaiian endangered plants.

The drive is the result of a 2003 order by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to protect endangered plant species at Pohakuloa Training Area (PTA). According to the USFWS, wild sheep and goats are major threats to critically endangered native plants in the area, and sport hunting, alone, has not been sufficient in saving the endangered plants on PTA.

The Army’s plan will drive wild sheep and goat populations out of areas that the USFWS has identified as containing endangered plants. Bird hunting will still be permitted inside the fenced areas, and hunting will continue as normal outside fenced areas.

“It’s difficult balancing the public’s desire to practice sport and subsistence hunting against federally mandated native habitat restoration initiatives,” said Dr. Peter Peshut, biologist, PTA Natural Resources office. “The issues are indeed complex and difficult to approach, but we believe that we have been able to strike an effective middle ground for all concerned.”

PTA occupies 130,000 acres. The USFWS order directs that up to nine major fence units, with area totaling approximately 45,000 acres, must be fenced off and cleared of all non-native browsing animals, mainly wild sheep and goats. When the fencing initiative is complete, there will potentially be up to 45,000 acres still available for hunting.

“The Army is sympathetic with the hunting community. Hunting and available hunting grounds are valuable socio-economic factors for life on Hawaii Island,” Peshut said. “Wild harvest is part of our most ancient heritage, a distant echo of cultural evolution in all peoples, even of the most

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modern and urbanized city-dweller. However, restoration of native habitat is just as important.

“Our goal is to develop a formal hunting program at PTA in the near future, with infrastructure and a full-time game warden,” Peshut added. “If managed properly, there is enough land at PTA to satisfy federal requirements for protection of native species, to provide for military training, and to safeguard hunting interests for the long term.”

It has taken more than six years to acquire funding and install fencing for the current area. According to Peshut, fencing the remaining identified areas will take several more years.

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MEDIA NOTE: Media wishing to attend the animal drive should R.S.V.P. by 5:00 p.m. Friday, to Loran Doane, USAG-HI Media Relations chief at 656-3157 (office) or 317-847-2222 (cell) or Becci Ellison at 808-220-9223. Coordinating instructions will be issued at that time.

****Due to sometimes difficult weather conditions and rugged terrain, jeans and comfortable, closed-toe walking shoes are strongly recommended.**