



# Media Release

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Public Affairs Office  
U.S. Army Garrison, Hawaii  
(808)656-3157/542-9489  
*“Malama na Koa”*

Release number: 2011-04-02  
April 7, 2011

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Army opens PTA areas to hunting to reduce goat population

POHAKULOA TRAINING AREA, Hawaii — U. S. Army Garrison-Hawaii Command will open portions of the training area, here, to local hunters the next two weekends, in a continuing conservation initiative to eliminate the wild goat and sheep population in PTA conservation areas.

Licensed hunters will be given access to PTA beginning at 5 a.m. Friday, April 8. Check-in stations used for PTA hunting will be the Huluhulu station on the east side of PTA, and the Kilohana station on the west side of PTA. At the check-in stations, hunters will receive handout information including maps detailing approved access areas, travel routes, and hunting areas on the installation.

Big Island hunters are being encouraged to monitor the PTA Hunter’s Hotline at 969-3474 for specific information.

“We’ve consulted with (the Department of Land and Natural Resources) and local hunting and conservation groups to engage the community regarding our strategies to eliminate the goats and sheep in our conservation areas,” said Lt. Col. Rolland C. Niles, PTA commander. “These animals are devastating to this region’s unique native environment.”

Hunting of wild, or “feral,” goats and sheep is being used to help eliminate the ungulate population here, now estimated to number approximately 300-400 across a 25,000-acre area, according to Dr. Peter Peshut, biologist, PTA Natural Resources Office. In 2009, an estimated 1,700 ungulates were driven from PTA conservation areas and were released live to open game-management areas.

Feral ungulates are hooved animals, including goats and sheep, and were introduced to the Hawaiian Islands about 200 years ago.

“These browsing animals are the primary threat to habitat conservation efforts in Hawaii, and the elimination of feral ungulates has broad support from our environmental community,” Peshut said.

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## HUNTING 2.2.2

Once public hunting no longer efficiently reduces the goat and sheep population, the Army will inform the state's Division of Forestry and Wildlife that public hunting for mammals will no longer be permitted in training areas 17, 19, 20 and 22. The Army will apply for an Animal Control Permit from the state for the eradication of the remaining ungulates, which are primarily goats.

The ungulate elimination will be followed by habitat restoration initiatives, which will ultimately include 45,000 acres of fenced areas to prevent goat and sheep incursions. The decision to fence portions of eastern and western PTA for conservation areas was based on the requirement to conserve native and endemic (unique) plants and animals which are protected under the Endangered Species Act. The fencing at PTA began in 2001 and has an expected completion date of 2012.

"At PTA we have 15 species of federally protected plants, and four species of animals, and 17 bird species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act," Peshut said.

"All of these protected species, as well as native plants and animals in general, require an intact native habitat to survive. Without a strong conservation commitment, to include the elimination of feral browsing animals, native Hawaii ecosystems will continue to degrade," he added. "As native ecosystems degrade, more of our unique species will be in jeopardy of extinction, and more species will be considered for protection under federal statutes."

Peshut coordinates the \$4 million-a-year Army conservation program that has been developed to protect the fragile PTA environment.

The end to goat and sheep hunting in PTA conservation areas, however, is not expected to completely end public hunting at PTA.

"We have discussed the future of hunting in the Ke'amuku Manuever Area with the Division of Forestry and Wildlife," Niles said. "We look forward to further discussions and the potential opening of the maneuver area to hunting when training is not scheduled.

"We are committed to being a good community member, as well as a good steward of these lands that are under our care," he added.

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**MEDIA NOTE:** Media wishing to learn more about environmental and archaeological programs related to PTA please contact Jack Wiers, Media Relations chief, U. S. Army Garrison-Hawaii Public Affairs at (808) 656-3157 or cell (808) 542-9489.