

Notes from Kapa‘au Community Update Session
Hisaoka Gymnasium
Monday, August 28, 2023
4:00 – 5:30pm

Number of Community Members Attending: 10 in-person, 1 on Zoom

Speakers:

- Director Doug Adams, Department of Research and Development (R&D)
- Council Member Cindy Evans
- Glenn Sako, Economic Development Specialist, Agriculture Program, R&D
- Riley Saito, Economic Development Specialist, Energy and Infrastructure Program, R&D

Agenda and Notes

- I. Opening Remarks, Director Adams
- II. Agriculture Updates, Glenn Sako
 - The Big Island Feral Pig Control Project model was initiated by Malama o Puna with R&D funding. It was chosen as it was the first project-based plan that R&D received to deal with the growing feral pig population.
 - Malama o Puna is creating a website to inform hunters of sightings; creating a hunter code of conduct, including a ban on snares; organizing workshops for education on hunting, butchering, and cooking to prevent disease transmission; promoting value-added products; and creating a system to distribute pigs for household consumption.
 - Agricultural theft is a top concern of producers, but there are limited statistics on it. Theft should be self-reported to save time, assist limited police resources, and collect statistics.
 - R&D is generating a Self-Reporting Agricultural Theft/Trespass form, which will be on the website and collects data for the Police Department and Prosecuting Attorney’s Office.
 - The Police Department has known culprits. The County will publicize the identities of those who are indicted agriculture thieves, as it is legally allowed to.
- III. Broadband Updates, Riley Saito
 - R&D is invested in digital equity (how to access and utilize the internet to participate in society), with an emphasis on supporting underserved communities. The Hawai‘i Island Digital Equity Coalition (HIDEC) provides a space for the County and partners to collaborate on digital equity.
 - With [Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment](#) funding from the federal government, the state will build internet infrastructure in underserved communities. Simultaneously, internet service providers are building more internet infrastructure, but they are more focused on increasing high-speed access to high-consumption areas.
 - R&D created an [ArcGIS Story Map](#) showing the social vulnerability index (populations considered underserved and susceptible to disasters) and areas lacking adequate internet

access on-island. This map provides the foundation for the populations and community anchor institutions that R&D will focus on as they work to expand digital equity.

- R&D is working on expanding current internet access by establishing free Wi-Fi spots at Parks & Recreation sites throughout the island, by partnering with the County's Department of Information Technology. Hisaoka Gym already has Wi-Fi. Kohala Swimming Pool will receive Wi-Fi soon. Kohala Science Center is being evaluated for Wi-Fi expansion. Four other sites in Waimea and Waikoloa are in the process of receiving Wi-Fi, or under evaluation for expansion.
- Households can receive digital services and rebates (Wi-Fi expenses up to \$30/mo. or \$75/mo. for those on Hawaiian Home Lands, one-time computer purchases, etc.) through the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#).

Comments

- Can restaurants use wild pigs and sell them to their patrons?
 - Pigs would need to be dewormed and taken to a USDA-certified slaughterhouse. After that, a restaurant could use feral pig products.
- Can pigs spread invasive species?
 - Yes. Feral pigs can bring plants into areas they are not native to.
- When will the pig products be available?
 - Over time, if there is a market for feral pig products, they may be available for sale.
- Are issues like agriculture theft and feral pigs unique to Kohala?
 - These issues exist throughout Hawai'i Island. R&D hopes to gauge how much of an issue agriculture theft is in specific areas with the data we will gather. This reporting system will help make communities safer from theft and vandalism, and it will especially support smaller farms and producers who lack resources to protect themselves from theft.
- Will the places in North Kohala without any cell phone access benefit from the expansion of broadband? This is a public safety concern.
 - Ensuring cell phone coverage for safety matters is a priority of the County's.
- Is the state doing anything for digital equity?
 - The state is hosting community meetings to learn about community needs as broadband is rolled out. The County will help foster the space for these meetings.
- Will this internet access come from a tower?
 - The County has fiber cables, for which connections will continue to be expanded.
- Is the internet access at Kohala schools good?
 - It likely is, but R&D cannot confirm this specifically.
- Is there consideration of broadband going underground?
 - Yes, though this would cut into the potential equity of operations, as it would limit which places could receive broadband. The Waikoloa and Ka'ū areas, which are dry and susceptible to fire, might not have above-ground lines.
 - All of the funding Hawai'i County has received from the federal government (like American Rescue Plan funds) will be directed towards lower-income, under-served communities, like the [Justice40](#) and [ALICE](#) communities. Hawai'i County recognizes the market will invest in populous, affluent areas, so the County will promote equitable public infrastructure.