



April 25, 2016 | 🌤️ 84° | 🚗 Check Traffic

Hawaii News | Kokua Line

State counts on public input to keep plants off shoreline

[Christine Donnelly](#)

October 29, 2015

Question: It's great that DLNR is reclaiming beaches for the public. Who do we call to report encroachment?

Answer: Call the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands at 587-0378. Be prepared to supply precise locations where property owners are allowing vegetation to encroach from their land onto the public shoreline, impeding lateral access.

The OCCL does not have enough staff to actively monitor every mile of Hawaii's more than 700 miles of public shoreline, so it relies on reports from the public to help focus its enforcement efforts, according to the department.

The recent and ongoing efforts to which you seem to refer have reclaimed a stretch of beach at the base of Diamond Head, known as Cromwells, that had been overtaken by naupaka and beach heliotrope planted at adjacent beachfront homes. The OCCL sent letters instructing property owners to cut back the vegetation and is pleased with the response, according to OCCL Administrator Sam Lemmo, who recently checked the beach and was quoted in a DLNR news release.

"As you can see, people here are cooperating and have agreed to remove the vegetation in front of the walls and so the beach as a whole is much improved," he said, citing similar positive results at Haena on Kauai, in the Kahala area and throughout East Oahu.

A state law that took effect two years ago requires beachfront landowners to trim their

vegetation to keep it from impeding lateral shoreline access. The OCCL focuses its compliance efforts on areas with popular beaches or where there have been complaints from shoreline users.

About 100 property owners in East Oahu, from Cromwells to Portlock, received compliance letters several months ago, instructing them what vegetation to trim, and by how much. Encouraged by the positive response thus far, the OCCL plans follow-up site inspections in November, Lemmo said.

Q: Where can we learn about Hawaii's (open-government) laws? Is there any agency that trains citizens or groups of citizens who want to attend public meetings and make sure that government agencies and boards are following the applicable laws?

A: The best place to start is the training materials index of the state Office of Information Practices, which you can find at oip.hawaii.gov/training.

The site explains the state's Uniform Information Practices Act, Hawaii Revised Statutes Chapter 92, which mandates access to government records; and the Sunshine Law, part 1 of HRS Chapter 92, which mandates open meetings. These are the two main Hawaii laws promoting governmental transparency.

OIP's training tools include detailed written guides, which you can download, and in-depth videos, which you can view on your own, alone or as a group. There also are simpler FAQs for quick reads on specific subjects.

Because the materials online are so thorough, and available around the clock seven days a week, the small staff of the OIP generally does not offer in-person training sessions, said Director Cheryl Kakazu Park. However, "if someone takes advantage of all the resources online and still has questions, then they can call or email us and we will follow up," she said.

The OIP's "attorney of the day" service, available at 586-1400, provides general advice regarding UIPA or the Sunshine Law, usually within 24 hours of the call being received.

You might also want to check out Common Cause Hawaii's Sunshine Project: Public Agency Audit. Between March and May 2015, the nonprofit "good government" group conducted a study to see how Hawaii boards, commissions and agencies are interpreting and complying with the Sunshine Law.

The report found that while most boards comply with major requirements of the Sunshine Law, there is room for improvement, especially in making it easier for the public to contact boards and retrieve minutes of meetings.

You can read more about the Sunshine Project and see the full report of its first phase here, bit.ly/1kc9h6e.

Write to "Kokua Line" at Honolulu Star-Advertiser, 7 Waterfront Plaza, Suite 210, 500

Ala Moana Blvd., Honolulu 96813; call 529-4773; fax 529-4750; or email kokualine@staradvertiser.com.