

1 MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAI'I
2 CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

3
4 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
5 Thursday, May 4, 2023

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7 Overnight camping at Bellows suspended for the return of nesting sea turtles

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9 Closure scheduled from May 16 through Aug. 31, 2023. Weekend, day-use to remain open to public

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11 MARINE CORPS TRAINING AREA BELLOWS - With the return of the sea turtle nesting period approaching, Marine Corps Base Hawai'i (MCBH) and the Honolulu Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) are announcing the suspension of overnight at camping for Bellows Field Beach Park from Tuesday, May 16 through Thursday, Aug. 31, 2023.

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13 This approximately 15-week suspension applies to overnight camping and the twilight use of the bathroom and shower facilities. Weekend day-use of this popular stretch of beach in Waimānalo will continue as regularly allowed, as will military training exercises on the weekdays, though protection measures for identified nesting sites will restrict access to those areas.

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15 The campground closure may be extended past Labor Day Weekend camping period (beginning Sept. 1, 2023) should the existence of additional nesting sites be observed. Further updates will be provided as we approach that holiday weekend.

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17 DPR also plans to use this camping suspension period to renovate the public comfort stations (bathroom buildings) and trim ironwood trees in these areas.

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19 This suspension is necessary to ensure the safety of this federally-protected, culturally significant, endangered species as the turtles nest, incubate, and hatch along this popular shoreline. Community, military, and park officials have documented several human activities in this area that threaten the safety of the nesting turtles, such as: illegal beach off-roading, camping fires, dogs, illegal trash dumping, and the presence of artificial lighting.

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21 Once a nesting site is confirmed, the area surrounding the nest will be cordoned off from human use. Signs will be posted at the public facilities with information about the turtle nesting sites. We encourage everyone to report any disturbing or illegal behavior against the turtles or nests by calling (808) 285-9529 or (808) 257-2123.

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23 Since 2020, green sea turtle nesting sites have been documented along this pristine, Windward O'ahu shoreline. Though the exact reason for this previously unprecedented arrival is not completely certain, the first recorded use of these beaches by the nesting turtles coincided with pandemic park closures which resulted in significantly less human visitation to the beach. Mahalo to the public and the community for their patience and understanding while camping at this location is suspended.

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25 Bellows Field Beach Park, located at Marine Corps Training Area Bellows, is one of 17 campgrounds operated by DPR. Three-day overnight camping is normally allowed at one of the campground's 50 campsites with a permit. For information about this and the other 16 campgrounds, including how to apply for a camping permit, please visit camping.honolulu.gov

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27 Separate cabin/campsite rentals are operated by Bellows Air Force Station and are available for booking by eligible patrons such as active duty military, veterans, and Department of Defense employees. For more information visit <https://www.bellowsafs.com/cabins>

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29 If you need an auxiliary aid/service, other accommodations due to a disability, or an interpreter for a language other than English in reference to this announcement, please contact the Honolulu Department of Parks and Recreation at (808) 768-3003 on weekdays from 7:45 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. or email parcs@honolulu.gov at least three business days before the scheduled event. Without sufficient advanced notice, it may not be possible

to fulfill requests.

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