

## Kohala sites eyed as

□ A House bill lists two heiau and a famous birth site

By Becky Ashizawa  
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Diamond Head, so far the only official "state monument," may soon be joined by other landmarks that symbolize Hawaii's past.

Several locations in North Kohala on the Big Island are candidates for a special monument designation because of their rich historical and cultural value.

"People will be able to say this is where it all began," said Sen. Eloise Tungpalan, chairwoman of the Senate Historic Preservation Committee.

HB 3772, recently amended by Tungpalan's committee, sets out to preserve and protect Kamehameha's birth place, the massive and privately maintained Mookini Luakini heiau and Kukuipahu heiau. Improvements to the sites will help visitors understand their impor-

tance.

The birth site and two heiau are on state land but the acres surrounding them are owned by private developer Chalon International, Kohala's largest landowner.

The state's planned future acquisition of sites at Mahukona, lands now owned by Chalon, are also part of the bill.

Chalon Vice President Mike Gomes said the company is willing to do its part to preserve the sites.

Chalon said it is considering a proposal to swap lands with the state so the entire stretch of land containing the heiau and birth site will be in state hands.

Momi Lum, who has cared for the Mookini heiau for almost two decades, said she believes the monument designation will ensure the site's protection for the future.

Lum, who lives on Oahu, flies weekly to the Big Island to maintain the heiau.

In 1963, the site was designated a national historic landmark and in 1978 Lum turned the heiau over to the state, with the stipulation that her family

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## 'state monuments'

would continue to manage it and that there would be no excavations. She also established the Mookini Foundation.

According to Lum, responsibility for the heiau has rested with members of her family for 1,500 years.

"What we want to do is to preserve and protect these sites intact, to keep it natural for all generations," Lum said.

The proposal of a state monument fits in with the community's overall aim to preserve the region, said Toni Withington of the Citizens for Protection of the North Kohala Coastline, a community group of 364 families.

"In Kohala you have excellent examples of ancient history, some of the best remnants of the Kamehameha era, the missionary and the plantation periods," Withington said.

Sen. Malama Solomon, who represents the Kohala area, called the bill a "hallmark piece of legislation."

"We're no longer using historic sites as a political or economic football for developers along the Kohala coastline," Solomon said. "These sites are no longer a negotiable asset when it comes to deciding on development."



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