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most of Isle land released by military is not developable

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Out of 9,500 acres of land the military is willing to release in Hawaii, only a little more than 500 acres can be considered developable land, The Advertiser learned yesterday.

Nearly 7,000 acres will remain in watershed, forest reserve, park and other conservation-type use.

Details of the location of the military lands were released yesterday along with a copy of "A Plan for Department of Defense Facilities, State of Hawaii," prepared in July 1972. The report emphasized that the lands being given up are marginally useful or are useless to the military.

BUT OF THE 500-plus acres known to be usable, the State and the City and County of Honolulu are expected to put the land to intensive use for general aviation airports, a University of Hawaii community college and medical school, and a sewage treatment plant.

A big question mark remains over the 1,324 acres at Schofield Barracks east range, where some State politicians have been seeking land for the proposed West Oahu College of the University of Hawaii.

The land being made available for release there is the easternmost tip of the range, high up in the watershed area of the Koolau Mountains. One source who had seen a contour map of the site said a couple of hundred acres in the lower portion of the property appear to be developable. But the site does not adjoin the Wahiawa urban area and

there are no improved roads nearby.

The military master plan for facilities in Hawaii says portions of the site "are rugged mountainous regions unsuitable for large-unit training."

AN OPTIMISTIC reaction to the proposed military lands release came from E. Alvey Wright, deputy transportation director, whose department has been actively seeking land for a general aviation airport for light aircraft.

The Air Force will release 135 acres at Bellows Air Force Station and 296 acres at Dillingham Air Force Base. Both sites include landing strips. Wright said the State had already negotiated with the Air Force for the use of Bellows, but the proposed release of Dillingham Field came as a surprise.

The State is hoping to move most of the light-aircraft operations out of Honolulu Airport, where they conflict with large commercial and military jets. Bellows would get a large share of them, but a second general aviation airport also is needed, Wright said.

However, Wright said Dillingham Field is too far away and would be inconvenient for most recreational pilots. He said he would still press for the designation of a new airfield near Mililani Town.

Dillingham Field is heavily used by civilians both for power and glider aircraft. Wright described it as the third busiest airfield in the State on the basis of the number of takeoffs and landings.

CITY PLANNING Director Robert R. Way said he's glad to learn some of the military lands will be coming back to local control. "I've been concerned about this for years, and I'm glad to see a positive step has been taken," he said.

Way said some of the land, such as the 2,381 acres at Kaena Point, will be "great from the standpoint of parks. But there isn't all that much land useful for urban development, which is our principal concern."

The military master plan resulted from a study called FRESH (Facilities Requirements Evaluation, State of Hawaii). The report made it clear that much of the land being released is unused. And most of the unused land is unusable because of rough terrain.

Of the major parcels designated for release, the 1,324 acres at Schofield, 660 acres at Fort Shafter and 820 acres at Lualualei are mostly steep conservation and watershed lands. The 506 acres of Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station land is a bird sanctuary near the main gate.

The 2,381 acres at Kaena Point also are conservation lands, but the State is eyeing them for a major park.

Finally, there are more than 1,000 acres at Wheeler Air Force Base and the Army's Waikakalaua and Kipapa ammunition storage areas — all gulches. But again, there is the potential for park use, Way said.

IN ITS MASTER plan, the military recommends phasing out all Army ammunition storage areas. For reasons of economy, it would be best to let the Navy store all ammunition, the plan says.

The plan points to increasing the joint use of existing military facilities in Hawaii. It proposes moving Air Force radio facilities from Bellows to the Navy's Lualualei station, and from Wheeler to the Navy's Wahiawa station.

However, Bellows and Wheeler will be needed for other joint uses and cannot be released, the report notes. Bellows is used for recreation and training, and Wheeler for joint Army-Air Force helicopter operations. Major training and maneuver areas also will get greater joint use.

The Aliamanu ammunition storage site is foreseen as a new Army-Navy housing area. The Waiawa Army radio station and the Puuloa military reservation will also become housing areas.

LANDS DESIGNATED for release are still subject to approval by the U.S. House and Senate Armed Services committees, and Federal agencies will have first choice of released lands. However, many are already committed through prior agreement, such as the Bellows and Fort Ruger lands going to the State.

A number of properties have expensive buildings and other improvements that the acquiring agency would have to pay for, and there have been some words of caution by local officials that the structures may not be worth it.

For instance, the agency acquiring a nine-acre parcel at Hickam would have to pay \$1.9 million for an administration building annex. The total of such costs is about \$21 million, but the report points out the lands are valued at \$138 million.