

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

SANDY BEACH -- MAKAPUU

By BOB BARRELL

The Island of Oahu, clothed in greenery and surrounded by sparkling ocean, gives the impression of limitless recreation opportunities. To some degree, however, this is deceptive. Despite beach and ocean access, and laws to ensure those rights, the island and the City of Honolulu have proportionally less land acreage dedicated to parks and to recreation than do most urban areas of similar population elsewhere in the United States.

In particular, there is a need here for open, natural public land available for low-density, unstructured, contemplative recreational use. There are few places where the urban dweller can go to walk in natural surroundings, amid essentially unspoiled native vegetation. This need is as important as are the needs for active sports and beach and ocean recreation. If, in addition, such an area gives an opportunity to provide the users with an understanding of natural ecosystems and their significance, that area assumes even greater recreational importance, for it offers intellectual and perhaps even spiritual recreation.

The area makai of the highway from Sandy Beach to and including Makapuu is ideal for this purpose, and should be reserved in whatever political form is feasible. Despite some alteration by past and present uses of the land, it still contains values that are recreationally important. As well as remnants of a native ecosystem containing rare and indigenous plants, it offers bits of cultural history and native wildlife (particularly sea birds) as well as scenic vistas and photographic opportunities.

Vehicular traffic, destructive of the vegetation as well as of the peaceful atmosphere, should, of course, be banned, and replaced by "natural" footpaths leading past (but not through) points of interest. One or more self-guiding nature trails could begin at parking areas along the highway and wind through the interesting terrain. These could be either stake-and-leaflet trails, or, probably more appropriate in this area of little protective supervision, consist of small, low, inconspicuous, firmly-implanted, vandal-resistant metal signs.

Users of this parkland could be categorized in several groups: shore fishermen; individuals seeking a peaceful, natural area, some of them interested in the vegetation and scenic vistas; and school groups. The last category holds perhaps the greatest hope for the future of natural lands and ecosystems in Hawaii, for only if our children are inculcated with respect for and basic understanding of our environment will there be an environment fit for their children to live in. The Sandy Beach -- Makapuu open land can be a significant factor in this urgent task.

STIVE SHELL