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Aloha Stadium opening pushed to 2029

Demolition is slated for late August with the new plan downsizing capacity from 25,000 to 22,500 and will include 10 luxury boxes

By Dave Reardon and Andrew Gomes
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Replacing Aloha Stadium has advanced a step closer to initiation, but the new facility is now slated to be smaller and completed later than previously planned. A state board overseeing the long-envisioned project

voted unanimously Wednesday to initiate a ground lease and an agreement for Aloha Halawa Development Partners to develop and operate a new stadium. But the positive news that allows AHDP, a private partnership led by local developer Stanford Carr, to begin demolishing the old stadium by the end of August was tempered by pushing back

the projected completion date of a new stadium to March 2029 from fall of 2028. "It has to do with the logistics of construction," said Brennon Morioka, former stadium authority chair, who is also dean of the University of Hawaii at Manoa College of Engineering and Gov. Josh Green's special advisor on the New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District project. "A few years ago we set August of 2028 as the target, but always knew it was an aggressive schedule. We could see where there are

costs and supply chain challenges for Hawaiian Dredging and AHDP," Morioka said. "We also looked at December 2028, but that would have also been aggressive and not realistic." Also, the capacity of the new football, soccer and rugby stadium — originally set for around 25,000 — is now planned for 22,500, including 10 luxury boxes, according to Morioka, who said more seating could be added in the future. "Everything will be expandable," he said. "Both sides are not happy about moving back the date,

but we're trying to be as transparent as possible," Morioka added. The change in target completion date would mean the UH football team will continue to play home games at the much smaller-capacity on-campus Ching Field four more seasons instead of three. UH Athletic Director Matt Elliott took the set-back timetable for delivering a new stadium in stride, and called Wednesday's approvals by the Stadium Authority a major step forward for the new stadium and future of

UH Athletics. "For the university, this project is about building a world-class venue that reflects Hawaii's pride and passion for athletics, elevates the game-day experience and strengthens our competitive standing," Elliott said in a statement. "We are excited about the momentum reflected by today's actions, grateful for the progress and fully committed to supporting the work ahead to make this vision a reality for our student-athletes, fans
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HAWAII FISHERIES



GEORGE F. LEE / GLEE@STARADVERTISER.COM

Maunalua Bay has been included as part of the state's fisheries management area, which extends from the Diamond Head buoy near the Diamond Head lighthouse to Spitting Cave. The bay in Hawaii Kai on Wednesday served as the setting for anglers, personal watercraft riders and parasail users.

Maunalua Bay now under conservation management

The new regulations prohibit nighttime dive spearfishing and taking certain species

By Dan Nakaso
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Nighttime spear fishing has been outlawed in Maunalua Bay and new catch limits have been imposed as part of a 20-year conservation effort in East Honolulu that led the Board of Land and Natural Resource to approve the state's latest fisheries management area. The nonprofit group Malama Maunalua announced the new rules Wednesday after bringing together various bay users, including fishers, conservationists, cultural practitioners, and commercial dive boat, personal

watercraft and parasailing companies to find simple ways to better manage and preserve the bay, said Doug Harper, executive director of Malama Maunalua. The new management area extends from the Diamond Head buoy near the Diamond Head lighthouse to Spitting Cave. The inclusion of Maunalua Bay as a Hawaii fisheries management area increases the total size of protected areas in the islands by 40%, Harper said. "It's a pretty significant bump up," he said. The organization also hopes to replenish
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U.S. drinking drops to new low, poll finds

By Dani Blum
New York Times

Americans are drinking less, a new Gallup poll suggests. Data from a national survey released Wednesday showed that only 54% of U.S. adults said they consumed alcohol. This is the lowest percentage in Gallup's 90 years of collecting data on drinking behavior. Those who did drink alcohol said they were consuming less, the poll found. Gallup's annual poll has tracked a steady downturn in drinking: From 1997 to 2023, at least 60% of Americans said they consumed

alcohol. That number fell to 58% in 2024, then to a record low this year. And for the first time since Gallup began asking respondents what they thought about the health effects of moderate drinking, the majority of Americans said they believed that even one to two drinks a day negatively affected a person's health. The survey reflects a persistent trend over the past decade: Young people are drinking less. And it suggests that middle-aged adults — who in recent years have reported drinking more and developed alcohol-related illnesses at

higher rates — are starting to cut back. A decade or two ago, "there was this perception that a glass of red wine with dinner every night might actually help you live longer," said Dr. Scott Hadland, the chief of adolescent and young adult medicine at Mass General for Children and an addiction specialist. In the 1990s, some doctors even encouraged moderate drinking. But over the past few years, the health harms of drinking have come into focus. The number of alcohol-related deaths more than doubled among Americans between 1999 and

2020. And mounting research suggests that even a little alcohol takes a toll on the body, damaging DNA. Last year, Dr. Vivek Murthy, then the surgeon general, stressed that drinking caused preventable cancers and called for alcoholic beverages to carry warning labels, like cigarettes. Gallup's new data was based on telephone interviews in July with about 1,000 adults across the country. Polls aren't bullet-proof — self-reporting isn't always reliable, and people often underreport substance use — but the findings generally align with other data showing

declining levels of alcohol use over the years, especially among young people, said Katherine Keyes, a professor of epidemiology at Columbia University. The Gallup poll found an especially pronounced drop in drinking among middle-aged respondents: Just 56% of respondents 35 to 54 said they drank alcohol, falling from 70% in 2024. That "suggests the message is sinking in across the board, not just with young people," said Johannes Thruel, an associate professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The share of adults 55 and older who said they

consumed alcohol increased slightly from 2024 to 2025, but is still lower than in 2023. Only 50% of those age 18 to 34 said they drank alcohol, the same as in 2024 and down from 59% in 2023. This is consistent with other research suggesting young people are drinking less. The annual Monitoring the Future survey, a national poll of substance use, has shown a significant decline in young people's drinking over the past decade, said Megan Patrick, a research professor at the University of Michigan and the Monitoring the Future panel survey's principal investigator.

BAY

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damaged reefs, improve the bay's water quality and respond to climate change and damaging forces such as coral bleaching and land-based erosion and runoff. Brendt Chang, 55, grew up in Hawaii Kai fishing the bay and said it's since become "depleted." He was skeptical about joining the working group searching for solutions because he wanted to ensure that any strategies were based on science and common sense that took into account other pressures on the bay. "I thought that if I didn't get involved it would be led by conservation efforts based on feeling-based management, not by science," he said. "I wanted to create a science-based management baseline that we could monitor and figure out whether it's working or not. ... I felt it was a fair process. "The fishermen were all consulted," Chang said. "It's the first time that fishermen have worked hand in hand with conservationists to come up with an effective, science-based management plan that includes monitoring and evolution. "We were able to talk to one another and listen to what each other were saying and we used logic and common sense and were made accountable for all claims



GEORGE F. LEE / GLEE@STARADVERTISER.COM

The new Maunaloa Bay Fisheries Management Area calls for preservation management in an area popular for recreation activities. Tourists and local residents Wednesday enjoyed riding watercraft and parasailing.

we made." Matt Ramsey, 47, senior director for Conservation International's Hawaii program, also grew up fishing in Maunaloa Bay and said, "I've definitely seen a decline in the nearshore fisheries." Asked what he hopes results from the new management area, Ramsey said, "more fish. Simply that." "We went through a very long process that was very much a compromise between more stringent rules and fishers," Ramsey said. "... My long term hope is that

my kids and their kids will continue to enjoy eating the fish out of Maunaloa Bay." He hopes the public and even tourists get involved with the bay's progress and even attend meetings, saying that "with fishing regulations it's often the perspective from fishers that they're vilified and pointed out as the source of decline." But other forces also damage the reef, such as land-based pollution, erosion and coral damage. Spear fishers appear to have accepted the ban on

nighttime fishing because the state Department of Land and Natural Resources' conservation officers have yet to cite anyone, as far as Harper knows. "We want better conservation but we don't want to eliminate the abilities of fishers," he said. The new regulations prohibit nighttime dive spearfishing and limit the taking or possession of species, including the spotted reef crab, known as the seven-eleven crab, horned helmet, Triton's trumpet, spiny

lobster and slipper lobster. Unlike other Hawaii fisheries management areas, the new Maunaloa Bay Fisheries Management Area calls for preservation management in a bustling area of urban Oahu that's popular with tourists and local residents as a diverse recreational destination. Organizers hope that the collaboration by Malama Maunaloa, Conservation International-Hawaii, the Hawaii Fishermen's Alliance for Conservation and Tradition, and commercial interests

will serve as a model for other communities across Hawaii and the mainland, Harper said. "This is what real leadership looks like — when communities lead and government follows through," Gov. Josh Green said in a statement accompanying Wednesday's announcement. "The Maunaloa Bay FMA proves that Hawai'i can lead the nation in collaborative conservation that respects our environment and our traditions." State biologists conducted underwater surveys at nearly 300 sites across the bay to establish baseline data, which will be used to evaluate the impact of the new rules. Officials said the efforts set a new standard for U.S. marine management. "This is a powerful example of how diverse voices can overcome challenges to find a mutually beneficial path for the greater good of protecting the resources, not only for today but the future," DLNR Chair Dawn Chang said in a statement. "Hawai'i is showing the rest of the country how government and communities can work collaboratively to address the impacts of climate change and overfishing through 'aina based stewardship."

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and community." Board members of the Stadium Authority, a state agency, authorized the head of the agency, interim Stadium Manager Chris Sodayasu, to sign a ground lease and a stadium development operating agreement with AHDP. This is expected to happen by the end of August.

There are two other pieces of the contract, a master development agreement tied to redeveloping land around the stadium, and an easement and shared infrastructure agreement. But these complex agreements don't need to be signed now for AHDP to begin demolishing the stadium and developing the new one, Morioka said. "We are still going through the legalese on those," he said. "What we're doing today allows us to continue on the critical path of demolition (and design)." The board expressed satisfaction after emerging from an executive session meeting before its vote. "We've come so far just to get started," Stadium Authority Chair Eric Fujimoto said after the vote. "Today we met the challenge. Today we're starting our journey." The stadium is part of a first phase of the NASED development, which includes an envisioned new community on 78 acres in Halawa surrounding 20 acres occupied



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Target date for the completion of the new Aloha Stadium, which will replace the current one shown above, is March 2029.

by the stadium to be developed via a public-private partnership over the course of 20 years or more. AHDP is the master developer and will use \$350 million of state funds appropriated by the Legislature toward developing, building, operating and maintaining the stadium for 30 years. The developer is expected to also invest in the construction of the new stadium, currently anticipated to cost about \$475 million. Planned uses for land around the new stadium include retail, entertainment, a hotel and around 4,500 homes. Stadium Authority board member Andrew Pereira said specific plans for such development in phases will be subject to board approval.

If the project progresses as expected, it would realize a more than decade-old vision to replace the 50,000-seat Aloha Stadium, which opened 50 years ago and was closed to spectator use at the end of 2020 after years of deferred maintenance and soaring maintenance costs. Fujimoto noted that the Stadium Authority started discussion about a new facility in 2002, when Charles Togochi chaired the board. He added that when Ross Yamasaki was chair, Yamasaki had the courage to approach the Legislature and executive branch for \$350 million. Fujimoto also applauded Morioka — his predecessor — for leading negotiations with Carr and AHDP. "It literally took a village, that's going to continue to

work hard," Fujimoto said. Carr declined comment Wednesday due to the still-tentative status of the deal with the state. Other lead equity members of AHDP are the U.S. development arm of Japanese construction firm Kajima Corp. doing business as Development Ventures Group Inc., Massachusetts-based energy systems firm Ameresco Inc. and an affiliate of Maryland-based development firm The Cordish Cos. There are also other design, construction and engineering firms that are part of AHDP, including RMA Architects, Populous, SB Architects, Henning Larsen, Alakea Design Group, WCIT Architects, Hawaiian Dredging Construction Co., AECOM Hunt, Castle & Cooke Hawai'i and Wilson Okamoto Corp.