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DAGS STARTS IMPROVEMENTS AT OLD CEMETERIES

Cemetery Office Started Cleanup Effort at Waiʻanae Japanese Cemetery

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HONOLULU — The Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) is in the next phase of its plan to improve the eight state cemeteries under its care. It started at Waiʻanae Japanese Cemetery — with a massive landscape cleanup followed by fencing in the property. This comes after DAGS surveyed the boundaries of the cemeteries this spring.

“The investment we’re making in our cemeteries is really important because these are the final resting places of our loved ones, our ancestors, our friends and our family members. Although we’ve got only eight cemeteries across the state, they haven’t been well-kept over the decades, so there’s a lot of work that needs to be done,” reflects Acting Lieutenant Governor Keith Regan, who is also the DAGS Director and Comptroller.

The state cemeteries are:

- Waiʻanae Japanese Cemetery, 85-271 Waianae Valley Rd., Waiʻanae
- Waiʻanae Catholic/Sacred Hearts Cemetery, 85-759 Farrington Hwy., Waiʻanae
- Puʻukamaliʻi Cemetery, 1821 Kamaliʻi St., ʻĀlewa Heights
- Hanapēpē Cemetery, Lele Rd. (no street number), Hanapēpē, Kauaʻi
- Puea Cemetery, 1440 North School St., Kalihi
- ʻAiea Cemetery, 99-123 Uahi St., ʻAiea
- Makiki Cemetery, 1630 Pensacola St., Makiki
- Kalaoa Fourth Cemetery aka Mauna Ziona Cemetery, 73-4297 Māmalahoa Hwy., Kailua-Kona

DAGS' new Central Services Division (CSD) Cemetery Office is overseeing the work as prescribed under Hawaii Revised Statutes §110-1. Regan, who was DAGS Director at the time, asked the Legislature in the 2025 session for $2.3 million over two fiscal years to properly maintain these aging cemeteries, which he says did not receive the level of attention and care deserving of a last resting place for our community's loved ones.

The DAGS-managed cemeteries encompass a collective 27 acres of state land and include more than 5,900 interments. Prior to this legislative appropriation, there were no state monies dedicated to support care for the state-owned cemeteries. DAGS is grateful for the support from our legislature and Governor Josh Green for providing these resources.

These cemeteries were established in the mid-1800s and haven't had active burials for years. About a quarter of all the graves are marked "Unknown" because burial records were not well maintained.

CSD Cemetery Office Manager Dion Yasui describes the condition of Waiʻanae Japanese Cemetery when his team first arrived. "This area was covered with trash from houseless people who took up residence here, weeds up to my waist and mature albizia trees with tree trunks about five feet in diameter. We had to cut many of the trees down as they were uprooting graves. It took us two months and we removed about five to 10 tons of trash."

Yasui's team installed 2,000 feet of fencing at a cost of $200,000. The job finished in September. The team will next move on to Hanapēpē Filipino Cemetery for work similar to Waiʻanae Japanese Cemetery: clearing the grounds of overgrown foliage and installing perimeter fencing. It hasn't set a date for that yet.

Not all cemeteries will be fenced. The team is still assessing the best way to improve each property.

If members of the public have questions or would like to share information about those

interred in these cemeteries, they are welcome to contact DAGS CSD at centralservices@hawaii.gov or 808-831-6733.

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RESOURCES

(Image courtesy: DAGS)
26-9-23 BROLL Waianae Japanese Cemetery fence_Courtesy DAGS

- Video and stills of Acting Lt. Gov. and the team at Waiʻanae Japanese Cemetery
- SOT with Acting Lt. Gov./DAGS Director/State Comptroller Keith Regan
- SOT with DAGS Cemetery Office Manager Dion Yasui

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