

18 signs added to Hokuala walking trails

On the right path

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Alden Alayvilla/The Garden Island

Debra and Fred Rickman of North Carolina walk on the Hokuala walking paths about four times a week.



LIHUE — Four times a week, Debra and Fred Rickman walk on a trail of loops filled with nene, pueo, endemic plants and trees, hills and gorgeous views from mauka to makai.

Recently, Timbers Resorts installed 18 trail signs to compliment three walking and jogging loops on the former Mokihana Golf Course that totals about five miles.

“I think it’s great because it’s real peaceful and real beautiful back here with nature,” said Fred, who along with Debra, has been coming to Kauai every year since 1999 from North Carolina. “We used to walk the road — and still do — but this is much better.”

Paul Ito, Hokuala operations manager, said the trails encourages a healthy lifestyle as well as an outlet for visitors to enjoy the outdoors.

“For those visiting us from the mainland, coming down here and being able to connect with Hawaii and nature and seeing some of the birds and plants really speaks to them and resonates,” he said.

The trails are open to members of the public from sunrise to sunset.

People may walk, jog, ride their bikes and walk their pets. However, motorized vehicles are prohibited and pet owners must have animals on leashes.

After Waikaha Golf course (formerly part of the Mokihana Golf Course) closed operations in January 2014, nature took over.

“I remember driving in a cart and it was completely impassible,” said Thomas Griffith, Hokuala development manager. “I had no idea other than looking at old Google Earth photos and old map that there was even a cart path there.”

Griffith and a team of about six men starting clearing the pathways in early 2016 and took a few months to get results.

“The premise here is that we have the old golf course. It was quite grown over and the idea was to turn it into these trails for everyone to enjoy,” he said. “Starting with that, the main idea was to clear this space out and have it open for people.”

Because of the vastness of the trails, signs were installed for easier accessibility to members of the public and resort members.

The loops — Aloh'i Trail (2.7 miles), Leiu'i Trail (1.6 miles) and Huna Trial (0.6) miles — trek across a combination of existing roads, cart paths and trail connections the team at Hokuala created.

"This is just one section of what will become a greater whole," Griffith said. "These trails will connect to our development site — Timbers Kauai ocean club residents at the point there."

Ito said there are still some improvements and construction to do on the trail.

"A restroom is being renovated, so folks have the ability use the restroom. We have a couple of structures needed to come down," Ito said. "It's come a long way. It's opening back up and making it more productive and fun and here on the resort."

The restroom is slated to finish renovation in a month. By this time next year, construction and modification of the trail areas should be complete, Griffith said.

"We finished all the clearing. Now we're redoing some paths," he said "We're close to having it completed — this section of the trails. The overall resort, I'd say less than a year out for having signage up."

Griffith is hoping for more feedback from people using the trails.

"The idea is to get some picnic tables, benches," he said. "The sky's the limit (to what we can do here)."

There are no immediate plans to resurface a golf course in the area, Griffith said.

"We knew right away in the beginning of the development we wanted to take this area and not let it sit here and be dormant," he said. "How can we take this place and make it something that can benefit the community, benefit our guests and make it a nice usable space?"

If a golf course does return, Ito said some kind of walking and golf element are going to be part of what of the overall design.

"We're always going to have walking trails and the ability to access and see natural parts of the property," he said. "Will it be exactly the same? I can't tell you that for sure."

Debra Rickman said she enjoys the improvements.

"It's just beautiful how it rounds around the property," she said. "The signs are beautiful. They've done a wonderful job. Even last year, we would walk the trail because it was so nice out here."

In January, Timbers Resorts completed renovation of the Ocean course at Hokuala, formerly known as the Kiele Course at Kauai Lagoons.

The course and trails are part of the 450-acre spot, behind the Kauai Marriott Resort, Timbers purchased for \$60 million in January 2015.

Once construction is complete by 2020, Hokuala will include a hotel, single-family homes, condos, a restaurant and a golf course.