Guide to Building on Conservation District Land in East Hawai‘i (Hāmākua Coast)

Building on **Conservation District** lands in East Hawai‘i – especially along the scenic Hāmākua Coast – is challenging and heavily regulated. This guide provides realtors and buyers with a detailed overview of what to expect, including state and county regulations, special local considerations, and the processes for homes or agricultural uses on these protected lands.

Understanding State vs. County Jurisdiction

Hawai‘i’s Land Use System: All land in Hawai‘i falls under one of four State Land Use classifications: Urban, Rural, Agricultural, or Conservation. The Hāmākua Coast has significant areas designated as **State Conservation District**, meant to preserve natural resources. Key points include:

- **State Conservation District (DLNR/OCCL):** Managed by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) through its Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands (OCCL). The state has primary land-use authority here, under **Hawai‘i Administrative Rules (HAR) Title 13, Chapter 5** and **Hawai‘i Revised Statutes Chapter 183C** dlnr.hawaii.gov . All uses are *conditional* – there is **no “by-right” development** in Conservation; any proposed use can be modified or denied by the State’s Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) dlnr.hawaii.gov .
- **County of Hawai‘i’s Role:** The County does **not** zone or entitle uses on state Conservation lands (the county zoning code mainly governs Urban and Ag lands planning.hawaiicounty.gov). However, the county is involved in certain permits and compliance:

- **Building Permits & Codes:** Even with state approval, any structure must meet county building code and obtain County building permits.
- **Special Management Area (SMA):** Many Hāmākua Coast parcels near the shoreline lie in the SMA (coastal zone regulated by Hawai'i County under HRS 205A). If so, a county SMA permit (minor or major) is required for construction, in addition to state approvals thepapakeacollection.com .
- **General Plan/Community Plan:** The Hawai'i County General Plan and Hāmākua Community Development Plan designate these areas for preservation. While not permitting development, these plans can influence the state's decision (e.g. identifying "natural beauty" areas at Kolekole Gulch where visual impact must be considered bigislandvideonews.com).

Bottom line: *Any* construction or land use on Conservation land must get State Conservation District approval first. The County's role comes later (building permits, SMA, and ensuring consistency with broader planning goals).

Conservation District Subzones and Allowed Uses

State Conservation lands are divided into five **subzones**, ranked by environmental sensitivity hawaiilife.com . The subzone of a parcel is critical – it determines what uses (if any) can be approved:

Subzone	Purpose	Examples of Allowed Uses (with Permit)
Protective (P)	Highest protection for fragile ecosystems, watersheds, cultural sites.	Very few uses. Generally **no new structures**. Only conservation, research, or traditional practices may be allowed.
Limited (L)	Limit uses due to hazards or constraints (steep slopes, flood zones, etc.).	New dwellings *generally not allowed* unless meeting specific criteria (e.g. replacing an existing use). An odd exception in HAR allowed a residence if in a flood/coastal hazard zone with proper design hawaiilife.com , but if not in such a hazard area, a home could not be permitted on Limited subzone land. hawaiilife.com This subzone often frustrates buyers – *a real example:* an oceanfront Big Island lot was Limited subzone

Subzone	Purpose	Examples of Allowed Uses (with Permit)
		and found to be **unbuildable for a home** despite adjacent houses hawaiilife.com .
Resource (R)	Sustainable use of natural resources (forestry, agriculture, etc.).	Some **limited development** possible. E.g. **Agriculture** or a **single-family residence** *may* be allowed **if the land had that use historically** dlnr.hawaii.gov . New uses can be proposed but require a full permit and often a management plan.
General (G)	Open space with lower sensitivity (often buffer areas).	**Single-family residences** and other uses are more feasible here (still need permits). This is the *least restrictive* subzone for private use. BLNR can allow a house with conditions, especially if similar development exists nearby hawaiilife.com .
Special (S)	Specific unique lands (e.g., astronomical sites, etc.).	Case-by-case as defined by the land's special designation (not common on Hāmākua for residences).

Important: Even in Resource or General subzones, a **Conservation District Use Permit (CDUP)** is required for a house or farm use. Protective and Limited subzones generally prohibit new residential construction unless grandfathered as a non-conforming use (e.g. parcel was clearly intended as a house lot prior to Conservation designation) environment-hawaii.org .

Special Challenges on the Hāmākua Coast

The Hāmākua Coast's landscape and resources impose additional constraints beyond the statewide rules:

- **Steep Terrain and Drainage:** Much of Hāmākua consists of sheer gulches, cliffs, and gulch bottom streams. Any building site must avoid geologically unstable areas. Engineering studies (geotechnical, drainage) may be needed to prove the home won't trigger erosion or landslides. In one Puna case, a proposed house site was flagged as "highly susceptible to subsidence and wave damage" – BLNR staff advised moving it mauka (inland) environment-hawaii.org .

- **Access and Infrastructure:** Many Conservation parcels lack developed roads, water, or utilities. Creating an access road or installing utilities can itself require Conservation permits (for grading, tree removal, etc.). Off-grid solutions (catchment water, solar, septic) are often necessary – these must comply with health and safety regulations (e.g. an adequate individual wastewater system approved by the Dept. of Health) environment-hawaii.org .
- **Scenic and Cultural Resources:** The Hāmākua Coast is renowned for natural beauty. Certain gulches and viewpoints (e.g. Kolekole Beach Park area) are designated *"natural beauty"* sites in the County plan bigislandvideonews.com . Any structure in such areas faces scrutiny for visual impact. Mitigation like natural screening or rustic design may be required. (In one approved case overlooking Kolekole, the owner agreed to use a lava rock façade and foliage to blend the house into the environment bigislandvideonews.com bigislandvideonews.com .)
- **Special Management Area (Coastal Zone):** If the site is near the shoreline, it falls in the SMA. This triggers a separate Hawaii County review focusing on coastal impacts (marine resources, beach access, tsunami/flood hazards). Often a **Shoreline Setback Variance** is needed if the building is within the shoreline setback (typically 40 feet from the certified shoreline, or more for erosion zones).
- **Endangered Species & Historic Sites:** Hāmākua's forests are habitat for native species (e.g. Hawaiian hawks, bats) and its lands harbor cultural sites (old plantation infrastructure or ancient Hawaiian sites). A **Biological survey** and **Archaeological survey** will likely be required as part of the environmental assessment. Discovery of an endangered species or significant site can impose restrictions (for example, limiting clearing during bird nesting season, or preserving archaeological features in place).

In short, the Hāmākua Coast presents *additional* hurdles – from engineering to environmental – that must be addressed in the planning and permit process.

Permit and Approval Process Overview

Building even a single house on Conservation land is a multi-stage process involving intensive review. Below is an overview of the typical steps, permits, timelines, and costs:

1. **Determine Feasibility Early:** Before purchase or design, **verify the parcel's legal status and subzone.** Ensure the lot was legally created (state approval is needed for any subdivision in Conservation environment-hawaii.org) and check if any existing entitlements or non-conforming use rights exist (e.g. was there a house or farm legally on-site before?). *Tip:* Request an OCCL **"No Objection" letter** if a use is obviously allowable by rule. Minor uses needing no permit (category A) can get a simple confirmation letter dlnr.hawaii.gov .
2. **Consultation and Pre-Application:** It's wise to consult with OCCL staff early. They can advise on subzone rules and likely issues. Engaging an **experienced architect or planner** familiar with Hawai'i Conservation rules is highly recommended thepapakeacollection.com .
3. **Environmental Assessment (EA):** *By law*, **any Conservation District Use Application must include a draft EA or EIS** oha.org . This is a critical step:
    - **Studies:** Hire consultants to conduct required studies (environmental, archaeological, cultural impact, engineering). The EA will analyze potential impacts of your project (clearing, construction, visual impact, etc.).
    - **Draft EA Publication:** Submit the Draft EA to the State Environmental Review Program (published in "The Environmental Notice"). There is a 30-day public comment period.
    - **Final EA & Determination:** Address comments and submit a Final EA. If impacts are mitigable, the agency (DLNR) will issue a **Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)** bigislandvideonews.com . If not, a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required (rare for single homes if well-designed).
    - **Timeline:** ~6 months to a year (could be more if studies find issues). **Cost:** This can be significant – applicants should budget for consultant fees (potentially **$10,000-$50,000**+ for all studies, depending on complexity).
4. **Conservation District Use Application (CDUA):** This is the formal application to DLNR/OCCL for the use (e.g. single-family residence, agriculture). Key points:
    - **Permit Type:** The proposed use is classified by HAR 13-5 as A, B, C, or D:
        - **A**: No permit needed (very few cases).
        - **B**: **Site Plan Approval** by OCCL (minor projects, e.g. certain small improvements). ~30 day process, fee $50 dlnr.hawaii.gov .

- **C**: **Departmental Permit** – Chairperson of BLNR can approve. Fee $250 dlnr.hawaii.gov . *Relatively minor uses* with lesser impact.
- **D**: **Board Permit** – Full BLNR approval needed (likely for a house). Fee = **2.5% of project cost** (min $250, max $2,500) dlnr.hawaii.gov . This typically applies to residences, major land alterations, or anything in a more sensitive subzone.

- **Processing:** OCCL reviews the CDUA for completeness (within 30 days). If information is missing, they'll request more oha.org . *Importantly*, any outstanding violations on the property must be resolved before a new permit can proceed oha.org .
- **Public Input:** Departmental (C) permits will be noticed in the Environmental Notice for 30 days for public comment oha.org . Board (D) permits may require a public hearing if in Protective subzone or if the Chair deems it in public interest oha.org . Even without a formal hearing, neighbors or community members can submit input or request a **contested case** if they have standing (contested case = quasi-judicial hearing if the permit is controversial).
- **BLNR Decision:** For a Board Permit, a staff report with recommendation is prepared after analysis (including the EA findings and any agency comments). This is presented at a BLNR meeting for decision. If approved, the BLNR may impose specific **conditions** (e.g. size limits, mitigation measures, time deadlines). If denied, the applicant can appeal via a contested case or judicial review.
- **Timeline:** From CDUA submission to BLNR decision is often several months. By law, BLNR is supposed to decide within 180 days of a complete application or the permit could be automatically approved by default environment-hawaii.org . (In practice, DLNR will often deny rather than let the clock force an approval, if issues are unresolved.)
- **Costs:** Application fee ($250 or up to $2,500 as noted), plus public hearing notice costs if required (e.g. ~$250 hearing fee + newspaper publication fees) dlnr.hawaii.gov . Also, professional fees if you hired a consultant to assemble the CDUA package.

5. **After Approval – Additional Permits:** An approved CDUP is **not the end**:

- **County Building Permits:** Plans must be approved by County Department of Public Works (DPW) for building, electrical, and plumbing codes. Expect to hire a licensed architect/engineer to produce permit-ready drawings. County will not issue a building permit without evidence of your **CDUP**.
- **Special Management Area:** If applicable, obtain the SMA permit from the County Planning Commission (or Planning Department if minor). Often the EA done for the CDUA can be used to satisfy SMA documentation. The SMA process can run concurrently, but final SMA approval usually requires you already have the CDUP (or vice versa – agencies may coordinate).
- **Other Approvals**:
  - **Grading/Grubbing Permit (County DPW):** Required if you will grade more than a minimal area or volume of soil.
  - **NPDES Permit (State DOH):** If disturbing over 1 acre of soil, a state water quality permit (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System for stormwater) and erosion control plan is required.
  - **Wastewater Approval (State DOH):** For your septic or wastewater system if no sewer.
  - **Shoreline Setback Variance (County):** If any part of the structure/improvement lies within the shoreline setback area, you must obtain a variance from the County (a public hearing process).
  - **Historic Preservation clearance (DLNR SHPD):** If your EA found archaeological sites, you may need a monitoring plan or preservation plan approved by SHPD before ground-alteration.
- **Timeline:** Obtaining construction-related permits can take 2-6+ months. Many are routine once the CDUP is in hand, but some (SMA, shoreline variance) involve public hearings and add months.
- **Costs:** Building permit fees are based on project value (for a home, often a few thousand dollars). Grading permit, variance fees, etc., are smaller in comparison. However, compliance with any conditions (e.g. archaeological monitoring during construction, or special engineering for foundations) can add to construction cost.

6. **Construction and Compliance:** With all approvals, construction can commence. Keep in mind:
    - **Time Conditions:** CDUPs typically come with deadlines (e.g. you must start work within a set time and complete construction by a certain date). For example, BLNR often uses a **two-year initial deadline** to initiate construction, with possible extensions environment-hawaii.org . Missing deadlines can invalidate the permit, as happened in one North Kohala case where a permit lapsed after multiple extensions when no work started.
    - **Permit Conditions:** You must adhere to any BLNR conditions – common ones include: construction best management practices to prevent runoff, preserving certain trees, painting structures with natural tones, size limits on the building, etc. The DLNR can inspect and will enforce if violations occur.
    - **Ongoing Management:** Especially if the permit was for agriculture or forestry, there may be requirements for ongoing resource management or reporting.

Feasibility: Primary Home vs. Agriculture vs. Second Dwelling

Not all activities are equally feasible on Conservation land. Here's a breakdown of typical scenarios buyers inquire about:

- **Building a Primary Home:** This is **possible only in certain cases**:
    - *Subzone matters*: If the parcel is Resource or General subzone (or Limited but previously had a home), you have a fighting chance. If it's Protective or never before built Limited, new residential use is likely prohibited or will face denial.
    - *Justification*: You should demonstrate either an existing old homesite or a need related to managing the land. OCCL tends to **discourage speculative or luxury home-building** that doesn't support land management environment-hawaii.org . Showing you will actively steward the land (control invasive species, maintain the forest, etc.) can help.

- *Scale*: Keep the proposed home modest in size and impact. In past approvals, homes in conservation have often been constrained to modest footprints. (One allowed "house" in North Hilo was just ~413 sq ft interior, basically a cabin, approved as an "after-the-fact" farm shelter conversion environment-hawaii.org .)
- *Likelihood of Approval*: Case-by-case. There have been approvals – e.g. a residence above Kolekole Beach Park was approved with a FONSI after meeting design mitigations bigislandvideonews.com – but also denials – e.g. a Puna couple's application was denied due to an illegal lot issue and the availability of other buildable area outside the Conservation zone environment-hawaii.org environment-hawaii.org . **Expect intense scrutiny**. If there are safer or less sensitive areas (even on a different part of your parcel in another state land use district), OCCL will prefer you build there environment-hawaii.org environment-hawaii.org .
- *Timeline/Cost*: Expect ~1-2 years of permitting before you can break ground, and significant upfront costs (studies, fees). One couple spent **$65,000** on the process (EA, plans, etc.) only to hit an unexpected roadblock with lot legality environment-hawaii.org . Be prepared for this level of investment *before* construction.

- **Agricultural Use (Farming/Ranching):** Many Hāmākua Conservation lands were former sugar cane or grazing lands. Agriculture is often cited as a desired use. Considerations:
  - *Allowed?* Small-scale ag **may** be allowed, especially if the land was historically in agriculture dlnr.hawaii.gov . Clearing some vegetation to plant crops or maintain pasture typically requires at least a permit or site plan approval if over a certain area. For instance, cultivating more than one acre is listed as a use needing a permit dlnr.hawaii.gov .
  - *Management Plan:* The DLNR may ask for a **Management Plan** detailing how you'll conduct agriculture without causing erosion or harming resources. Sustainable, soil-conserving practices will be required (coordinate with the local Soil & Water Conservation District for a conservation plan).

- *Infrastructure:* Agricultural structures (barns, sheds) also need Conservation permits. In one Hilo case, a permit was given for a "work shed" and "shade house" for agricultural use environment-hawaii.org – but the owners were **not** allowed a formal dwelling at first. (They later converted the shed to a small dwelling without permission and had to seek after-the-fact approval, demonstrating how risky unauthorized changes are environment-hawaii.org .)
- *Feasibility:* If the goal is a commercial farm, Conservation land may not be ideal unless reclassified to Agriculture (a lengthy Land Use Commission process). For **subsistence or supplemental farming**, it can work if you follow the rules. Just know that anything beyond minimal gardening is likely to trigger the permitting process, and you'll need to avoid impacts to native forest areas.
- *Livestock:* Fencing pasture in Conservation might require permits for fence installation (especially if in Protective subzone). Grazing should not lead to runoff into streams; you may be required to manage livestock to prevent environmental damage.

- **Second Home or Rental Unit:** Building a second dwelling (e.g. an ʻohana unit or a rental cottage) on Conservation land is **extremely difficult**:
  - The Conservation rules generally contemplate at most **one single-family residence per lot** (if at all). There is no allowance for a duplex or second separate rental house as you might have on agricultural or residential-zoned land.
  - "Transient rentals" (vacation rentals) are actually defined in HAR 13-5 and essentially **prohibited** unless specifically approved as a use (which is unlikely) dlnr.hawaii.gov . A Conservation lot is not the place to plan a B&B or Airbnb – permits for such commercial uses would be an uphill battle.
  - There is a concept of a **"cabin"** in the rules – a small <600 sq ft shelter intended for management of remote areas. However, a cabin *cannot* be used as a principal residence or for rental dlnr.hawaii.gov dlnr.hawaii.gov . It's meant for temporary shelter (think: a hunting cabin or field station).

- **Bottom line:** If you secure a permit for a primary dwelling, do not expect to add another home on the property. Your best avenue, if a second living space is needed, might be to design it as an integrated addition (like a connected ohana suite) to the one approved house – but even that should be proposed upfront as part of the CDUA. Piecemeal addition of dwellings later will raise red flags with OCCL.

Common Pitfalls and Challenges

Many landowners have stumbled in the process of developing Conservation land. Learn from these real examples to avoid common pitfalls:

- **Illegal Construction or Expansion:** Never build or clear **before** getting your permits. Conservation enforcement is strict. For instance, a North Hilo couple (Silva) bought an 11.8-acre Conservation property and **expanded** a house without approval – they were fined **$85,000** in 2024 environment-hawaii.org environment-hawaii.org . The previous owner had only a permit for a small 413 sq ft farm shelter, which the Silvas enlarged to 3,390 sq ft, far beyond what was allowed environment-hawaii.org . When they tried to sell, potential buyers alerted OCCL, leading to enforcement action environment-hawaii.org . **Lesson:** Unauthorized work will be found and can result in hefty fines and even orders to tear out unpermitted structures.
- **Assuming "It's my land, I can do X":** Ownership doesn't confer the right to do whatever on Conservation land. For example, an owner of a **Limited subzone** lot assumed a home could be built because neighbors had homes. In reality, the subzone prohibited it, and the owner had to abandon plans hawaiilife.com . **Always verify permissions** – do not assume past usage on adjacent parcels applies to yours.
- **Lot Legality Issues:** Ensure the parcel's boundaries and existence are legal. A Big Island couple spent years and tens of thousands on permits for a house, only to have DLNR realize their lot was the result of an **illegal subdivision** (state law requires Land Board approval for subdividing Conservation land, which hadn't been obtained) environment-hawaii.org . Their CDUP had to be denied despite a completed EA, because the lot was not technically valid environment-hawaii.org environment-hawaii.org . **Do title and permit research** during escrow due diligence, including checking Land Use Commission and County records for any red flags.

- **Missing Permit Deadlines:** After securing a CDUP, you typically have a deadline to start and finish the project. Extensions can be granted but are not guaranteed indefinitely. In one case, a landowner got **four extensions** on a house permit but still hadn't built anything eight years later; the permit finally lapsed. If you go through the trouble of obtaining approvals, be prepared to execute the project in a timely manner or risk losing the permit.
- **Underestimating Costs and Time:** As detailed, the process is expensive and lengthy. **Budget accordingly:** not just money, but effort. Hiring specialists (environmental consultants, civil engineers, cultural consultants, attorneys for contested cases, etc.) may be necessary. Also, community opposition can introduce delays – if neighbors or activists object, you might face a contested case hearing which is essentially a trial-like process adding months or years.
- **OCCL Scrutiny and Conditions:** Expect that the OCCL and BLNR will thoroughly vet your proposal. They often attach many **conditions**. For instance, they may require you to implement specific erosion controls, limit tree removal, or even **downsize your plans** (in one case, staff urged a couple to shrink their house footprint to fit outside the conservation zone portion of their lot environment-hawaii.org). Be flexible and work with the agencies – showing a willingness to adapt can make the difference between approval and denial.

Case Studies: Lessons from Hāmākua and Hawai'i Island

- **Successful Example – Kolekole Gulch Home (Hāmākua Coast):** An application to build a private residence on a bluff above Kolekole Beach Park succeeded after careful planning. The site was in the Conservation District (Resource subzone) and within a county-designated scenic area bigislandvideonews.com . The owners completed an Environmental Assessment and committed to mitigation measures: using earth-tone materials and retaining dense foliage so the house would be hidden from view below bigislandvideonews.com . They also demonstrated sensitivity to the area's beauty and obtained county concurrence. DLNR staff found no significant impacts – the BLNR approved the CDUP with conditions bigislandvideonews.com . **Takeaway:** Even in a beloved scenic spot, a well-designed project that respects the landscape can win approval, but it required an EA and a persuasive case that the visual and environmental impacts would be minimal.

- **Unsuccessful Example – Puna Shoreline House Denial:** (Just south of Hāmākua, but illustrative) John and Maureen Gapp sought to build a home on a 5.5-acre lot part in Conservation near Maku'u, Puna. They dutifully prepared an EA (incurring major costs) and applied for a CDUP environment-hawaii.org environment-hawaii.org . During review, OCCL discovered the lot resulted from a 1999 subdivision of Conservation land done **without BLNR approval** – meaning the lot shouldn't have existed environment-hawaii.org . Additionally, the proposed house site was very close to an eroding shoreline. BLNR deferred the matter, but due to the 180-day deadline they had to deny the permit to avoid a default approval of an illegal lot environment-hawaii.org environment-hawaii.org . The applicants were heartbroken. They filed for a contested case to try to resolve the lot issue. **Takeaway:** A building permit will not "fix" underlying land-use illegality. All land transactions and alterations must comply with Conservation district rules – even county-approved actions can be invalid if not also approved by the state.
- **Cautionary Example – North Hilo Agricultural Shed Turned Home:** In North Hilo (Hāmākua area), a prior landowner obtained a CDUP in 2001 for agricultural uses with a modest work shed, greenhouse, and water catchment environment-hawaii.org . Instead of a house, only these ancillary structures were permitted (likely because a residence wasn't justified at the time). However, the shed was secretly built as a de facto small house environment-hawaii.org . The DLNR eventually granted an **after-the-fact permit** for that tiny dwelling (413 sf interior, 1067 sf including porch/carport) with a $650 fine, given it was already there environment-hawaii.org . Fast forward: new owners bought the property and **expanded** that house threefold without any new permit environment-hawaii.org . When they tried to list the property for sale at a huge profit, OCCL was alerted. The result: BLNR fined them $85k and the expanded portions are effectively illegal environment-hawaii.org environment-hawaii.org . **Takeaway:** If you do purchase land with an existing small, legal structure, do *not* enlarge or modify it without permission. Also, be aware that any sale listing of a Conservation property will be monitored; prospective buyers often call DLNR to verify legality, which can expose violations environment-hawaii.org .

These cases show that success in building on Conservation land requires **thorough due diligence, regulatory compliance, and respect for the land's limitations**. Skirting the rules or neglecting details can lead to costly penalties or a derailed project.

Tips for Realtors and Buyers

- **Do Your Homework:** When listing or considering a Conservation land property, gather all documentation: past CDUPs, any existing Conservation permits, correspondence with DLNR, etc. Check the State Land Use District maps for the subzone hawaiilife.com . This will help set realistic expectations on buildability.
- **Engage Experts Early:** A land use attorney or consultant can be invaluable in complex cases (e.g. resolving an illegal subdivision or guiding through a contested case). An architect with Conservation experience can design within the constraints and interface with regulators. As a realtor, connecting your client with these experts adds value.
- **Patience and Commitment:** Emphasize to buyers that developing Conservation land is not a quick process. It requires patience and a genuine commitment to stewardship. Those looking for a fast turnaround or solely profit-driven development may find this route untenable. The DLNR explicitly *"discourages speculative activities in the Conservation District"* that treat the land as a commodity rather than a resource environment-hawaii.org .
- **Consider Alternatives:** Sometimes the best advice is to consider buying a property already in the State Agricultural or Urban district if a home or farm is the primary goal. Conservation lands are best suited for those who prioritize preservation, privacy, and are willing to navigate the regulatory maze for the privilege of a very unique home or land use.
- **Community and Culture:** Remind buyers that they are stepping into an area that often has deep cultural and community significance. Engaging with the local community (neighbors, area experts, even cultural practitioners) in a respectful way can ease the process. In some cases, community support (or at least lack of opposition) can make permitting smoother, while opposition can lead to contested cases. Being a good future steward of the land is not just a permit box to tick – it's part of being accepted in the community.

Conclusion

Developing on Hāmākua Coast Conservation land is **feasible, but difficult**. It demands navigating a rigorous approval process with State and County agencies, complying with strict regulations, and adapting plans to fit environmental and cultural sensitivities. As a realtor, providing this candid guidance will help clients make informed decisions – whether they choose to take on the challenge or pursue properties with fewer strings attached.

In summary, **"conservation" land truly means what it says**: conservation first, development second. Any allowed use is a *privilege* earned through careful planning and respect for Hawai'i's natural and cultural resources. By understanding the regulations and learning from past cases, buyers can avoid pitfalls and, if determined, successfully create a home or farm that **coexists with the treasured Hāmākua landscape** dlnr.hawaii.gov

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