News Release
For Immediate Release: June 23, 2021

COUNTY OF KAUA‘I
KAUA‘I POLICE DEPARTMENT
TODD G. RAYBUCK, CHIEF
(808) 241-1600

Missing diver’s gear found in waters off Glass Beach

‘ELE’ELE – Multiple agencies continued on Wednesday to search for 47-year-old Nelson Kupenes of Waimea.

Around 9:45 a.m., the Kaua‘i Fire Department’s (KFD) Rescue 3 aboard Air 1, along with KFD’s Ocean Safety South Rove ski team, located the missing diver’s floater and float line. The location of the equipment was about 25 to 30 yards offshore between Hanapēpē Bay and Wahiawa Bay, just east of what is commonly known as Glass Beach.

KFD rescue divers were deployed and, with the assistance of Kaua‘i Police Department (KPD) personnel, the South Rove ski team, and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) personnel via a USCG 45-foot Response Boat-Medium (RB-M), they were able to recover two rubber slippers, two spearguns and a weight belt.

However, they were unable to locate Kupenes.

The initial report of a missing diver was made on Monday at approximately 7:50 a.m. According to the report, Kupenes was last seen preparing for a dive Sunday afternoon at Glass Beach in ‘Ele’ele.

KPD personnel continued to lead today’s search efforts in collaboration with KFD, Ocean Safety Bureau, USCG, and Rescue 3 aboard Air 1. All agencies have been working together on land, air and sea search efforts since Monday.
Other agencies also assisted in Wednesday’s search, including the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources, and personnel from the Japanese Coast Guard vessel, Kojima.

Search areas have encompassed land and air between Hanapēpē Bay and Wahiawa Bay, as well as more than 900 nautical miles.

Additional assets allocated by the USCG included an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter, an HC-130 Hercules aircraft and a cutter.

“I want to thank all of the people and the agencies they represent for their assistance in this comprehensive operation,” said Investigative Services Bureau Assistant Chief Bryson Ponce. “Everyone put in an incredible effort, and without the teamwork, we might not have been able to recover Nelson’s gear and hopefully bring some semblance of closure to his family and friends today.”

The active search has been suspended pending any new information.

Photos of Wednesday’s search efforts courtesy KPD.

###