



Ka Wai Ola

NEWS FOR THE LĀHUI

kawaiola.news

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BELOW THE SURFACE

A Burden Washed Ashore

PAGES 17-20

Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project (PMDP) technicians remove a large, derelict fishing net (also called a "ghost" net) from the shallow coral reef habitat at Manawai (Pearl and Hermes Atoll) within the Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Sanctuary. - Photo: Andrew Sullivan-Haskins, PMDP

KAMEHAMEHA DAY
CELEBRATIONS ACROSS
THE PAE ‘ĀINA

Go to
KamehamehaDay.Hawaii.Gov
for more information.

HAWAII ISLAND

King Kamehameha Floral Parade and Ho‘olaule‘a

June 6, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Kona along Ali‘i Drive in Historic Kailua Village to Hulihe‘e Palace.

Kohala Kamehameha Day Celebration

June 11, Kapa‘au, North Kohala
· 5:30 a.m. - Sunrise Protocol
· 8:00 a.m. - Procession and Lei Draping Ceremony
· 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. - Parade and Ho‘olaule‘a - Akoni Pule Hwy from the high school to the statue, gathering at Kamehameha Park.

O‘AHU

King Kamehameha I Tribute

June 11, 9:00 - 9:30 a.m. Kamehameha I statue at Ali‘iōlani Hale in Honolulu.

Sponsored by the Daughters and Sons of the Hawaiian Warriors – MĀMAKAKAUA.

King Kamehameha Statue Lei Draping

June 12, 2:30 - 5:00 p.m. at Ali‘iōlani Hale in Honolulu.

109th King Kamehameha Floral Parade and Ho‘olaule‘a

June 13, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. from ‘Iolani Palace to Kapi‘olani Park.

MOLOKA‘I

King’s Gala

June 12, 6:30 p.m. at Moloka‘i Yacht Club in Kaunakakai.

Ho‘olaule‘a

June 13, 5:00 - 10:00 p.m. at Moloka‘i Yacht Club in Kaunakakai.

KAUA‘I

King Kamehameha Celebration Floral Parade and Ho‘olaule‘a

June 13, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Līhu‘e, Kaua‘i

Parade from Vidinha Stadium along Rice Street to the Historic County Building. Ho‘olaule‘a on the Historic County Building Lawn.

MAUI

Nā King Kamehameha Commemorative Pā‘ū Parade and Ho‘olaule‘a

June 20, Kahului, Maui

9:00 a.m. - Ho‘olaule‘a begins at Queen Ka‘ahumanu Center.

9:45 a.m. - Parade from Mahalani Street/Kanaloa Ave. along Ka‘ahumanu Ave. to Queen Ka‘ahumanu Center.

Ka ‘Aha Hula at Waimea - The Gathering of Hula at Waimea

June 1, 7, 11, 14, 17, 20 & 27,
11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.

Waimea, O‘ahu

Enjoy hula presentations by a variety of hālau. waimeavalley.net

Royal Hawaiian Band

June 5, 12, 19 & 26, Noon - 1:00 p.m.
Honolulu, O‘ahu

The Royal Hawaiian Band holds free concerts on the ‘Iolani Palace Grounds most Fridays. rhb-music.com

Ocean Day

June 6, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Waimea, O‘ahu

Keiki art contest exhibit, educational booths, activities, and entertainment. waimeavalley.net

World Oceans Day

June 8
World Oceans Day was officially recognized by the United Nations in 2008 to unite and rally the world to protect and restore our blue planet.

Museum After Hours

June 12, 5:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Kapālama, O‘ahu

Outdoor screening of *He Mo‘olelo Wahi Pana: A Storied Landscape*, plus food and artisan vendors. bishopmuseum.org

‘Aha Niu Festival 2026

June 13, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Kahului, Maui

FREE event celebrating the revitalization and protection of niu (coconut) across Maui Nui. Registration required bit.ly/ahaniu2026.

The 10th Annual Steel Guitar Festival

June 13, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Kāne‘ohe, O‘ahu

Free concert featuring Hawaiian steel guitar masters at Windward Mall. The festival will be livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube @HawaiianSteelGuitarShowcase. hawaiiansteelguitarfestival.com

Father’s Day Gift Fair

June 13, 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Kapolei, O‘ahu

Celebrate Father’s Day with fresh, hand-crafted gifts from local makers at Ka Makana Ali‘i. islandcraftfairs.org

Kama‘āina Sunday

June 14, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Honolulu, O‘ahu

Audio tours of ‘Iolani Palace, ‘ono food, lively entertainment, and local vendors. A free event. iolanipalace.org

Lauhoe: Father’s Day Regatta Festival

June 14, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Nānākuli, O‘ahu

Cultural opening ceremony and workshops at Kalaniana‘ōle Beach Park followed by the Father’s Day Regatta. IG @leewardkaicc

Kona Kai Festival

June 14, 10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Kailua-Kona, Hawai‘i Island

Live music, storytelling, food, art, and workshops by ocean innovators, cultural practitioners, and community members. symbrosia.org

Mālama Hulē‘ia Community Workday

June 20, 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Līhu‘e, Kaua‘i

Every 3rd Saturday volunteer to do conservation work at ‘Alekoko Fishpond. malamahuleia.org



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Ka Wai Ola: The Waters That Carry and Sustain Us

Aloha mai kākou,

This month’s *Ka Wai Ola* centers wai – not only as ocean, but as the continuum of water that shapes life across our pae ‘āina and beyond.

At a recent Kaua‘i island meeting, a beneficiary spoke to the centrality of wai in everything. She raised concerns about Hawaiian-focused charter school haumāna learning on sites where water safety is uncertain. Her mana‘o carried an undeniable truth: without clean water, there is no learning, no health, no future. Her reflections resonated and pointed toward the foundational role of wai in every OHA priority, from education to land stewardship to community wellbeing.

A beloved family member once shared the story of his son’s birth, marked by a rush of water that signaled life arriving into the world. In that awe-filled moment, he named him Kawaiola – lifegiving water. The child grew up drawn to the ocean, finding in it both joy and refuge. Even during the false missile alert years ago, when fear moved across our islands, it was the ocean that held him in calm, safety, and peaceful contentment.

For many of us, wai is both origin and return.

In graduate school at UH Mānoa, I encountered the writings of Epeli Hau‘ofa, whose vision of Oceania reshaped how I understood our place in the world: not as small, isolated islands adrift in distant seas, but as peoples connected across vast waterways through movement, memory, and ancestral pathways.

That understanding expanded how I thought about scale, belonging, and power. It challenged notions of wealth rooted only in land or extraction, and instead centered on water – its connectivity, abundance, and capacity to carry people, literally and figuratively.

That shift in perspective shaped my early legal work in East Maui where generations of commercial stream diversions starved once-thriving waterways and communities of the ola that sustained them. Alongside communities fighting to restore streamflow, water was not simply resource, but relationship, responsibility, and inheritance. That hana ultimately set me on my path to OHA.

Wai is also law. Kanawai finds its roots in the governance of water systems; waiwai measures wealth through life-sustaining abundance. Water is never inert – it is movement, exchange, and renewal.

Our origin stories reflect this truth as well. Kalo grows in wai. Streams nourish lo‘i. Freshwater flows outward to the muliwai, where river and ocean meet. Currents intermingle, and life begins again. Ka wai ola – life giving water – is not metaphor. It is memory, practice, and future.

This month’s *Ka Wai Ola* – from marine debris to deep sea mining, from *Hōkūle‘a*’s voyaging legacy to the stewardship of our ocean spaces – reminds that every story is, in some way, a story of wai.

From the waters that first carried us into life, to the island homes and oceans that sustain us still, to the ancestral pathways and future voyages that remain our inheritance, ka wai ola is not only this publication’s name. It is who we are. ■

Aloha nō,
Summer Lee Haunani Sylva
Ka Pouhana Kūikawā
Interim Chief Administrator



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Pu'uhonua MākekeJune 20, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Products, services, and businesses from Pu'uhonua across Hawai'i. Pu'uhonua o Waimānalo in the Pavilion. FB/IG @puuhonuamakeke

Ho'ike o nā WāhineJune 20, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Honomū, Hawai'i Island

Fundraiser and kīhei tying ceremony celebrating completion of the Hāumana KūkāKūkā Program. hehoomakahouanaopuna.org

E Ola Mau ka Po'e FestivalJune 20, 11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Colorado Springs, CO

A free celebration of Native Hawaiian, Polynesian and Pacific Islander communities across Colorado. Live performances, vendors and workshops. Presented by 'Aha Kuleana Foundation. ahakuleana.com

Ola Nā Mo'oleloJune 20, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.
Honolulu, O'ahu

Enjoy an evening of traditional storytelling by Uncle Kealoha Kelekolio. Presented by the PA'I Foundation. Tickets are \$40, keiki 12 and under are free. paifoundation.org

Make Music JammiesJune 21, Noon - 1:00 p.m.
Honolulu, O'ahu

A monthly concert hosted by the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame at the second-floor stage at Nā Lama Kukui. IG @nalamakukui

Waipā Community Workday

June 27, 9:00 a.m. - Noon | Waipā, Kaua'i

Check in at the old Waipā poi garage before 9:00 a.m. Bring shoes, water, gloves, hat, rain gear, a towel, a change of clothes, snacks and/or lunch. Lunch is provided if you RSVP in advance. waipafoundation.org

Summer Concert SeriesJune 27, 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Waimea, O'ahu

Live Hawaiian music and hula featuring Jerry Santos and The Vitals. waimeavalley.net

Hot Kūpuna NightsJune 28, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Honolulu, O'ahu

Bring your 'ukulele to the second floor of Nā Lama Kukui and join in the kanikapila. Food available for purchase. IG @nalamakukui

Burial Laws Disregarded

By Kamakana Ferreira and Leinā'ala Ley

Since the passage of Hawai'i's burial protection laws in 1990, The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) has steadfastly advocated for the protection of iwi kūpuna through enforcement of Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 6E and meaningful consultation with descendants and communities.

On April 14, HGTV's *Renovation Aloha* disregarded both these laws and deeply rooted cultural values by broadcasting footage of iwi kūpuna interred within a burial cave on Hawai'i Island. Uncensored clips depicting the iwi were also widely circulated across social media platforms.

Under rules implementing HRS Chapter 6E, photographing or examining iwi kūpuna is strictly prohibited without the consent of Island Burial Councils which provide cultural expertise to the state and ensure the voices of lineal descendants are heard.

These protections are grounded in Native Hawaiian beliefs that iwi kūpuna should never be exposed to light – mai kaula'i i nā iwi i ka lā – as they are meant to remain in Pō.

As required by law, the disturbance was reported to both the Hawai'i Police Department and State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD), the agency responsible for administering Hawai'i's burial protections.

However, it was only after SHPD pursued legal action and secured a temporary restraining order (TRO) that subsequent episodes were edited to remove images of the iwi from rebroadcast. OHA remained in communication with SHPD throughout the matter.

This type of desecration can be prevented through direct consultation with SHPD during the permitting process, and OHA urges all members of our community to familiarize themselves with HRS 6E requirements. Currently, it's unknown to OHA whether the *Renovation Aloha* team obtained proper permits to proceed with work and filming on the parcel where the burial cave was found.



However, when consulted, SHPD will often require a survey ahead of construction work in high-risk areas with lava tubes, sand dune systems, or other known indicators of burial sites to identify them in advance. Further, archaeological or cultural monitoring is often recommended in high-risk areas as surveys rarely cover a project's full footprint and a knowledgeable archaeological or cultural monitor on site can help prevent "accidental" disturbance.

With due diligence, accidental disturbances can be readily avoided and our ancestors left to rest in peace.

If you encounter exposed iwi kūpuna, immediately contact your county police department and SHPD. OHA also remains available as a resource, although it does not have authority to enter private property or to directly enforce HRS chapter 6E in the field.

Under the law, however, any entity – including private individuals – may seek a TRO to prevent imminent harm to iwi kūpuna. OHA can also assist beneficiaries with issues related to access across private property to mālama registered burials, the burial registration process, applications for island burial councils, and other rights tied to the protection of iwi kūpuna.

Our collective voice is strongest when united. Ola Nā Iwi! ■

Kamakana Ferreira is OHA's Compliance Archaeologist and Leinā'ala Ley is OHA's Chief Advocate.

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Legislature Releases \$55M Owed to OHA

By Bill Brennan, OHA Director of Communications

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) welcomes the recent action by the Conference Committee on SB903. As amended, the measure now advances to a final floor vote in the Hawai'i State Legislature.

SB903 does two important things. First, it releases \$55 million in Public Land Trust funds already owed to OHA but held back under the current annual cap. These are resources intended to benefit Native Hawaiian communities at a time when federal funding reductions, threatened cuts, and continuing attacks on longstanding Hawaiian programs have heightened uncertainty for many families and communities. Second, it strengthens the mandate of the Public Land Trust Working Group and creates space to determine a pathway toward resolving longstanding funding disputes. In doing so, it does not predetermine any outcome but instead allows work to continue toward establishing a fair, consistent formula for how Public Land Trust revenues are calculated and paid to OHA going forward, with greater accountability from the state. "OHA's support for SB903 reflects both responsibility and urgency," said Summer Sylva, OHA interim chief administrator. "At a time of growing federal funding uncertainty and increasing pressure on Native Hawaiian-serving programs, the immediate release of \$55 million in Public Land Trust funds is critical. These are resources already owed to Native Hawaiians, and they strength-

en OHA's ability to respond to external pressures that threaten programs our communities depend on. For years, OHA has been careful not to advance processes that predetermine outcomes for our people. That has not changed. What this measure also does is create space for Native Hawaiians to lead a broader conversation about ea, political and economic autonomy, and the state's continuing obligations to our people." For many years, OHA - and the broader Native Hawaiian community - have approached master settlement proposals with scrutiny and circumspection, particularly when proposals overreached or sought to control matters that legally and morally belong to the Native Hawaiian community alone. That caution has been grounded in a core principle: the future of Native Hawaiian self-governance must not be predetermined for Native Hawaiians. That principle remains unchanged. What has changed is the urgency of the moment. As federal support becomes less certain, Native Hawaiians are increasingly confronted with important questions: how do we exercise greater political and economic autonomy consistent with our values and our obligations to past, present, and future generations? What pathways to exercising ea exist - not only familiar ones, but those yet to be explored? And how must the state remain accountable for helping correct past and present injustices while serving as a constructive partner moving forward? OHA believes the necessary conditions, boundaries, and safeguards are now in place to allow these conversations to proceed in good faith. OHA enters this process with eyes wide open and with clear expectations estab-

lished at the outset, while remaining equally clear that the substance, direction, and ultimate decisions must be determined wholly and fully by Native Hawaiians. **SB903 does not alter those fundamental principles.** • It does not compel a master settlement. • It does not diminish OHA's autonomy. • It does not decide Native Hawaiian self-governance.

"The Board of Trustees remains firmly grounded in a simple principle," said Chairperson Kaiali'i Kahele. "The future of Native Hawaiian self-determination will be determined by Native Hawaiians. The release of these long-overdue resources strengthens OHA's ability to respond at a critical moment of funding uncertainty and continued challenges to Native Hawaiian-serving programs. Our responsibility is not only to protect that principle, but to help build the stronger political, economic, and institutional foundations that present and future generations will need to exercise it." OHA extends its mahalo to the House and Senate conferees, their respective committees, and members of the Native Hawaiian Caucus for their leadership and care in advancing this measure. OHA also extends special appreciation to Speaker Nadine Nakamura, Senate President Ronald Kouchi, Representatives Tarnas, Todd and Kahaloa, and Senators Dela Cruz, Richards, and Keohokalole for championing this issue throughout the 2026 legislative session and for standing alongside Native Hawaiians and OHA in carrying this important kuleana. ■

Native Hawaiians impacted by Kona Low storms, help is here.

You may qualify for up to \$15,000

Financial assistance is available for Native Hawaiian families whose homes experienced **major damage** or were **destroyed**.

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kakoomai.org/oha

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HAWAI'I ISLAND

OHA Satellite Office Dates

OHA's Beneficiary Services travels to serve Native Hawaiian beneficiaries in various communities each month on Wednesdays from **8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Locations subject to change

June 3 - Waimea
Parker Ranch Center - 66-1185 Hawai'i Belt Rd. 96743

June 10 - Nā'ālehu
Shirakawa Hotel Unit 10 - 95-6039 Māmalahoa Hwy. 96772

June 17 - Pāhoa
Puna Kai Shopping Center - 15-2714 Kai Pihoa Village Rd. 96778

June 24 - Kona
Pua Ka 'Ilima o Kawaihae Surf Park - 74-380 Kealakeke Pkwy. 96740

 oha.org | 808-594-1835

OHA Takes Native Hawaiian Voice to Washington, D.C.

By Rozelle Agag, OHA Associate General Counsel

At a time when conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion are being rolled back across Washington, D.C., and the nation, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs traveled to the nation's capital carrying a message grounded not in politics or ideology, but in trust responsibility and meaningful engagement: Native Hawaiians must have a seat at the table in decisions about the future of military leases of Hawai'i's public trust lands.

The OHA delegation – Chair Kaiali'i Kahele, Vice Chair Keoni Souza, Chair Emerita Hulu Lindsey, Interim Chief Administrator Summer Sylva, and I – spent several days meeting with congressional leaders from both parties, members and staff of the House Armed Services Committee and Senate Armed Services Committee, as well as senior Department of War officials at the Pentagon.

OHA's mission centered on an issue that will shape Hawai'i's future for generations to come: the future of military-leased lands set to expire between 2028 and 2031. Those lands include major installations on Hawai'i Island, O'ahu, and Kaua'i, including Pōhakuloa Training Area, Mākua Military Reservation, and the Pacific Missile Range Facility.

Those lands – leased by the State of Hawai'i to the U.S. military in 1964 for just \$1 over a 65-year term – include tens of thousands of acres held in the public land trust, which constitute crown and government lands intended to benefit Native Hawaiians and the people of Hawai'i.

At the time those leases were executed, OHA had not yet been established. Today, pursuant to Chapter 10 of the Hawai'i Revised Statutes, OHA serves as the state's principal public agency responsible for Native Hawaiian affairs, including advocacy and trust responsibilities relating to the public land trust and the betterment of Native Hawaiian beneficiaries.

Against that backdrop, OHA's delegation carried a clear message to Washington, D.C.: that meaningful Native Hawaiian participation in decisions concerning Hawai'i's public trust lands is integral to the trust duties OHA was created to uphold.

Importantly, the conversations in Washington remained focused on shared responsibilities and practical governance. OHA framed the issue as one grounded in constitutional law, state trust obligations and long-term community stability – a framework that appeared to resonate across meetings and offices.

For several lawmakers and congressional staff, the



Members of OHA's delegation meet to discuss military leased lands with Sen. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois who serves on the Senate Armed Services Committee. - Courtesy Photos



OHA Chair Kaiali'i Kahele talks with Rep. John Garamendi of California who serves as the House Armed Services Committee Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Readiness.

meetings marked their first substantive introduction to OHA and its role within Hawai'i's governmental structure. Delegation members observed bipartisan understanding that Native Hawaiian inclusion in military lease negotiations is not a political question, but a matter of state constitutional responsibility, sound governance, and meaningful community engagement.

The delegation also delivered another firm message: condemnation or any permanent dispossession of public trust lands are unacceptable outcomes for OHA. Any future military presence in Hawai'i should proceed through transparent, lawful, and community-informed processes that create the conditions for trust and long-term stewardship to be strengthened over time.

Related themes surfaced publicly during a House Armed Services Committee hearing on U.S. military posture in the Indo-Pacific.

During the hearing, Hawai'i Congresswoman Jill Tokuda questioned Admiral Samuel Paparo, commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, about the importance of meaningful consultation with local and Native Hawaiian communities in sustaining military readiness in Hawai'i.

Tokuda also underscored that condemnation should not be part of future negotiations over continued military access to leased lands.

Those discussions also began to carry over into broader defense policy deliberations in Washington. Perhaps most significantly, the conversations helped advance discussions around potential language in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) – the annual defense policy bill that shapes defense priorities, budgets and operational directives. Among the concepts being explored is language that would expressly acknowledge OHA's role and responsibilities in negotiations involving military-leased lands in Hawai'i.

The delegation also addressed another urgent concern facing Native Hawaiian communities: federal funding uncertainty and the potential impacts on Native Hawaiian programs and services. Meetings with Hawai'i's congressional delegation included discussions about safeguarding critical resources that support Native Hawaiian communities.

OHA leaders also continued advocacy related to long-awaited public land trust funding for OHA – efforts that helped elevate awareness around the issue and support passage of legislation authorizing \$55 million for the agency during the closing days of the state legislative session.

The measure now awaits the governor's signature.

Even as OHA addresses pressing fiscal and policy challenges, leaders acknowledge that longer-term work surrounding Hawai'i's military leases and public land trust is only beginning. To help inform that work, OHA assembled a Technical Advisory Group composed of community, cultural, legal, environmental, and policy leaders with diverse perspectives and expertise. The group is guiding OHA's policy development, negotiation strategy, and engagement efforts as discussions with the state and federal government move forward.

The decisions made over the next several years will shape not only the future of military presence in Hawai'i, but also the stewardship of lands deeply tied to Native Hawaiian identity, history and long-standing interests in how those lands are governed and cared for.

For OHA, the significance of the trip to Washington extended beyond politics or policy.

The trip itself marked an important step in establishing the kind of sustained Native Hawaiian engagement OHA believes must continue as future lease negotiations move forward: meaningful Native Hawaiian presence and participation in the rooms where these decisions are being made and at the tables where their terms are negotiated. ■

Mālama Honua Disaster Fund

The Mālama Honua Disaster Fund (MHDF) provides a limited number of **\$10,000** repair grants to eligible Native Hawaiian homeowners whose homes sustained **minor damage** during the March 2026 Kona low storm events.

For more information, go to:

oha.org/floodrecovery



20 Years of Pono Management in Papahānaumokuākea

By Leinā'ala Ley, OHA Chief Advocate

June 15, 2026, marks the 20th anniversary of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. At the time the monument was designated by President George W. Bush in 2006, it was the largest marine protected area in the world, limiting permitted activities and access to the area to educational, scientific, and cultural endeavors.

Native Hawaiian advocates, lawai'a (fishers), kūpuna, and cultural practitioners were critical in securing this victory. Early efforts to limit commercial fishing in Papahānaumokuākea were led by Native Hawaiians who had fished in the northern islands as early as the 1940s and personally observed the outsized negative impacts even a small commercial fishery can cause in this pristine and nutrient-limited environment.

Native Hawaiian leadership continued through the monument's first superintendent, Aulani Wilhelm, and within the larger community. In January 2015, a group of seven prominent Native Hawaiian scholars and leaders, including former Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Chief Executive Officer Dr. Kamana'opono Crabbe, sent a letter to President Barack Obama that helped galvanize momentum in support of expanding the monument and adding OHA as a co-trustee on the Monument Management Board.

When President Obama issued the 2016 proclamation expanding the monument to its current boundaries (582,000 square miles), he recognized the area as "part of a highly pristine deep sea and open ocean ecosystem with unique biodiversity and that constitute a sacred cultural, physical, and spiritual place for the Native Hawaiian community."

OHA was added as a co-trustee shortly thereafter, joining the State of Hawai'i, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of Interior as the highest level government stewards of this place and its biocultural



The voyaging canoe, Makali'i, approaches Mokumanamana in Papahānaumokuākea in 2019. This was her first voyage to our northern islands. - Photo: Brad Ka'aleleo Wong



Nā Kupu'eu Pae Moku visited Mokumanamana with voyaging canoes Hōkūle'a and Hōkūalaka'i during the summer solstice 2005 to conduct cultural protocol. - Photo: Courtesy of PMNM Cultural Working Group

treasures – which include the primary nesting and pupping grounds for a range of culturally significant and endangered species, such as honu (green sea turtles) and 'īlioholoikaua (monk seals).

Mai Ka Pō Mai: A Native Hawaiian Guidance Document for Management of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (2021), is a model for elevating Indigenous principles and worldviews within conservation management and advancing a rights-based framework that recognizes Indigenous decision-making as critical for environmental stewardship.

Key within the ecosystem of Kānaka 'Ōiwi leaders who have ensured that the conservation of this place occurs in a culturally grounded manner is the Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group, which serves as OHA's key community partner for management decisions. OHA extends its deepest mahalo to the

Cultural Working Group for its work to protect Papahānaumokuākea, which predates and was foundational to the establishment of the monument.

In celebration of this 20th anniversary, the author recommends two publications by noted archaeologist Dr. Kekuewa Kikiloi, a Cultural Working Group member: *Rebirth of an Archipelago: Sustaining a Hawaiian Cultural Identity for People and Homeland* (2010) and *Kūkulu*

Manamana: Ritual Power and Religious Expansion in Hawai'i the Ethno-Historical and Archaeological Study of Mokumanamana and Nihoa Islands (2012).

These papers are available online and provide a rich introduction to the historical use of the Northwestern islands, the significance of the islands within traditional Native Hawaiian cosmology, and the physical and oral record that illuminates these ancestral ties to place.

Dr. Kikiloi's work is foundational to the reintroduction of the Hawaiian place names now commonly used to reference the islands, and essential reading for further understanding of the cultural significance of this area.

I ka wā ma mua, ka wā ma hope. The future is found in the past. ■

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument will be celebrating 20 years with an Art and Coloring Contest from June 15 to August 31, 2026. More information to be available soon.

Read Dr. Kekuewa Kikiloi's publications

Rebirth of an Archipelago:
Sustaining a Hawaiian Cultural
Identity for People and Homeland



Kūkulu Manamana: Ritual Power and
Religious Expansion in Hawai'i the
Ethno-Historical and Archaeological Study
of Mokumanamana and Nihoa Islands

Download Mai Ka Pō Mai

Mai Ka Pō Mai: A Native
Hawaiian Guidance
Document For Management
of Papahānaumokuākea Marine
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Legislative Outcomes Underscore the Need for Continued Advocacy

By Leinā'ala Ley, Deja Ostrowski, and McKenna Woodward

Throughout the 2026 legislative session, Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) staff reviewed hundreds of bills to identify measures that would meaningfully advance the interests of the agency and its beneficiaries, while also working diligently to oppose legislation that could weaken longstanding protections for Native Hawaiian rights.

While several important measures advanced this session, only one of the six OHA package bills introduced to directly benefit the Native Hawaiian community was ultimately transmitted to the governor for signature. Moreover, none of the 16 nominees to the Island Burial Councils (IBCs) submitted to the governor by OHA were advanced to the senate for confirmation.

These outcomes underscore the continued importance of sustained community engagement at the capitol and the year-round advocacy and relationship-building carried out by OHA staff, beneficiaries, and community partners.

Progress

SB903 marked a historic and hard-fought victory for Native Hawaiians, passing its final reading with celebratory remarks from legislators on both sides of the aisle. This bill will release \$55 million from the state's holding account for public land trust (PLT) revenues previously identified as part of the 20% share owed to OHA. Its passage reflects decades of unwavering advocacy by beneficiaries, community leaders, and supporters committed to ensuring that the state fulfills its constitutional trust obligations to Native Hawaiians.

At a time when many federal programs serving Hawaiians face uncertainty, the legislature's decision to honor these commitments represents a powerful reaffirmation of support for Hawaiian-serving programs, institutions, and communities. OHA extends its sincere mahalo to the legislature for this significant action.

In another important victory for community-driven stewardship, HB2218 advanced under the leadership of KUA (see the February issue of *Ka Wai Ola*), creating a pathway for 'āina-based nonprofits to enter into co-management agreements with the Department of Land and Natural Resources. Native Hawaiian communities in Hā'ena, Kīpahulu, and Miloli'i have already demonstrated the success and value of empowering communities to mālama and steward public lands.

HB2104, an OHA package measure aimed at reducing procedural barriers that prevent IBCs from meeting, was also transmitted to the governor. The IBCs remain one of the most important forums ensuring

that Native Hawaiian lineal and cultural descendants have a meaningful voice in decisions regarding iwi kūpuna threatened by ground-disturbing activities.

Together, these measures reflect encouraging progress toward greater recognition of Native Hawaiian 'ike, leadership, and place-based decision-making in shaping Hawai'i's future.

As in prior years, the urgent need for affordable housing was frequently cited to justify non-affordable development proposals and deregulation efforts that risk undermining critical environmental protections and safeguards for iwi kūpuna. Against this backdrop, SB2552 emerged as a welcome and thoughtful alternative.

The measure would allow individuals to save up to \$20,000 annually toward a down payment without incurring state tax liability, with a lifetime contribution cap of \$100,000. By directly supporting local families seeking to remain rooted in Hawai'i, the bill reflects OHA's longstanding position that meaningful housing solutions must prioritize local residents and long-term stability, rather than relying solely on accelerated development.

Unfinished Work

Several measures with broad community and stakeholder support ultimately stalled near the finish line.

HB2049 which would dedicate a portion of conveyance tax revenues from high-value property transactions to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands stalled in the senate. However, the momentum behind this measure in the house reflects the growing recognition that the state's obligations to Native Hawaiians require reliable and sustainable funding sources.

Other measures addressing healthcare workforce shortages, housing affordability, out-of-state incarceration, and compassionate release also failed to advance, despite widespread support.

Collectively, these outcomes highlight ongoing questions about whether Hawai'i is prepared to invest more fully in systems rooted in prevention, community stability, restorative approaches, and long-term wellbeing, rather than maintaining longstanding status quo systems.

OHA's advocacy team looks forward to continuing conversations with OHA beneficiaries and community members in the months ahead as work begins on developing OHA's 2027 legislative package. We deeply appreciate the continued engagement and support of our beneficiaries and partners throughout this session.

If you have feedback or thoughts you would like to share regarding this year's legislative session, please contact us at publicpolicy@oha.org. ■

Leinā'ala Ley, Deja Ostrowski, and McKenna Woodward are part of OHA's Public Policy Team.

Ku'u Ola Huaka'i

My life journey through Pōhakuloa Training Area

By Moses Kaoiwi Jr.

In September 1983, after returning from Basic Training and joining the 2nd Battalion, 299th Infantry of the Hawai'i Army National Guard, I attended my first training weekend at Pōhakuloa Training Area.

I knew little about Pōhakuloa beyond its reputation as an Army training ground. Packing my gear in the unit locker room, my squad leader advised me to bring a sleeping bag. I opted for my poncho liner instead – a decision I regretted when the cold, piercing air at midnight made for the coldest night of my 17 years.

That unforgettable night taught me the importance of listening to experienced leaders and marked the begin-



Pōhakuloa Training Area. - Photo: Jason Lees

ning of many enduring lessons at Pōhakuloa about resilience, perseverance, and the value of training.

Over the years, I came to appreciate Pōhakuloa's rugged, remote location. Its volcanic high-elevation terrain and subalpine tropical dryland climate created unique challenges for training and leadership. Here, Hawai'i Guardsman learned to be adaptable, resilient, and to work as a team.

The environment demanded readiness for anything, from abrupt weather changes to strenuous tactical drills, which tested and revealed our individual fortitude and perseverance.

Pōhakuloa taught me invaluable decision-making skills under pressure and in rugged terrain. These lessons guided my actions in real world missions: such as when

I secured Hanalei after Hurricane 'Iniki; planned recovery for the 2000 Big Island floods; deployed to Iraq and Kuwait; led operations after Hurricane Iselle; managed crises during the 2018 Wainiha floods on Kaua'i and the Leilani Estates lava flow on the Big Island; and commanded the Hawai'i National Guard Joint Task Force during COVID-19.

As the future of Pōhakuloa is being carefully considered, I hold both gratitude and kuleana – responsibility grounded in relationship. I recognize the deep concerns surrounding its stewardship and the enduring connection many lineal descendants have to this land as wahi pana.

At the same time, I know, personally, how Pōhakuloa shaped my growth, my leadership, and my commitment to serving Hawai'i. For me, Pōhakuloa is more than just a training area; it is a place that made me who I am today.

My hope is that a path forward can be found – one that restores, protects, and honors this 'āina, while thoughtfully allowing future generations of Hawai'i Guardsmen to learn the same hard lessons of resilience and perseverance that Pōhakuloa taught me.

Whatever decisions emerge, may they be guided by aloha 'āina and wisdom for those yet to come. ■

Upholding the vision of our ali'i

On June 11, we honor Kamehameha Pai'ea, our namesake and the visionary 'Ōiwi leader whose strength and intelligence unified the Hawaiian Islands and shaped a lasting future for our lāhui.

We carry forward his legacy alongside that of our founder, Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, through the haumāna we nurture, the communities we uplift, and the 'āina we steward across Hawai'i.

E kūlike kākou! Stand with us as we mālama and protect the vision of our ali'i.

Ke Kula'o Kamehameha

Imperfect High Seas Treaty is Still a Victory for the Ocean

By Puanani Fernandez-Akamine

For Indigenous Peoples, scientists, and conservation advocates working to prevent deep-sea mining (DSM), 2026 has brought both a major victory and a sobering reminder of how much work remains ahead.

On January 17, 2026, the United Nations' Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), commonly known as the "High Seas Treaty," officially entered into force.

Adopted in 2023 after years of negotiation and advocacy, the treaty represents one of the most significant international ocean conservation agreements in modern history.

The BBNJ seeks to protect biodiversity in international waters and supports the global "30x30" conservation initiative – an effort to place at least 30% of the world's oceans under protection by 2030 to halt biodiversity loss, build ecosystem resilience and mitigate climate change.

Its implementation comes at a critical moment.

For the past several years, the International Seabed Authority (ISA), established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), has debated whether to approve regulations that could open the door to commercial deep-sea mining in international waters.

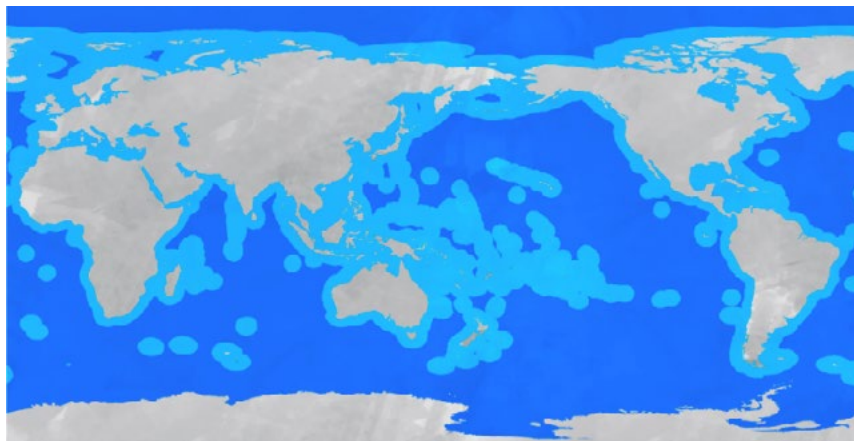
Now, the two agreements will shape the future governance of the high seas together.

"UNCLOS and the ISA govern the seabed itself," explained Hawaiian cultural practitioner and international ocean advocate Solomon Pili Kaho'ohalahala. "The BBNJ governs the living ocean above it — the water column and biodiversity. Between the two, they now influence the future of nearly two-thirds of the world's oceans."

"High seas" includes all parts of the ocean beyond the 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zones (territorial seas, internal waters or archipelagic waters) of a nation state. UNCLOS further establishes the high seas as the "common heritage of humankind" regardless of a nation's proximity to the ocean.

A total of 89 United Nations member states ratified the BBNJ treaty, far surpassing the 60 ratifications required for it to take effect. Notably, Pacific Rim nations such as Chile, Panama, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Mexico, Japan, and China ratified the agreement. The United States, Russia, and Canada did not.

For Indigenous advocates, one of the treaty's most critically important advances is its recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems and the role of Indigenous Peoples in ocean stewardship. Indigenous participation is framed through consultation and knowledge-sharing, and the treaty acknowledges that traditional knowledge and western sci-



The high seas (shown in deep blue) cover about 43% of the Earth's surface and comprise 64% of the ocean's surface. The United Nations has established the high seas as the "common heritage of humankind" regardless of a nation's proximity to the ocean. Exclusive economic zones (light blue) extend 200 nautical miles from the coastline and are the areas of sea and seabed over which coastal nations have jurisdiction and an exclusive right to resources. (Map data source: Marine Regions) - Graphic: Diego Cobos / Dialogue Earth)

ence can work together to protect marine ecosystems.

Yet despite that progress, many Indigenous leaders believe a critical opportunity was missed.

In the final stages of negotiation, Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) were unable to reach consensus on language that would have more directly formalized Indigenous participation in decision-making processes under the treaty.

"It's disappointing," Kaho'ohalahala said. "We came very close to establishing stronger mechanisms for Indigenous participation in international ocean governance. That would have changed the future of these discussions."

The issue is expected to resurface during the first Conference of the Parties (COP1) for the BBNJ treaty in January 2027, where governance structures and implementation mechanisms will continue to be negotiated.

For Kaho'ohalahala, however, the debate reaches far beyond legal frameworks and treaty language.

At the center of his work is a broader concept he describes as "ocean governance" — an Indigenous framework grounded in relationship and responsibility rather than ownership and extraction.

"Indigenous peoples of Oceania come from the ocean," he said. "We understand ourselves as part of creation, not separate from it. That creates a very different relationship to governance."

He often points to the *Kumulipo*, the Native Hawaiian creation chant, as a foundation for understanding humanity's genealogical relationship to the natural world.

"The *Kumulipo* reminds us that the ocean is not a resource separate from ourselves. It is our ancestor. That worldview is fundamentally different from systems built around control, ownership, and domination."

Kaho'ohalahala argues that many existing international governance systems continue to reflect colonial-era assump-

What is Deep-sea Mining?

Deep-sea Mining (DSM) is the extraction of commercially valuable mineral deposits from the ocean floor. It is essentially undersea strip mining whereby massive machines (think 35 tons) are lowered to the ocean floor by surface ships.

There, at depths of 2.5 – 3.5 miles below the surface, they bulldoze over the pristine ocean floor, scraping off the top layer of sediment – and every living organism in their way – to extract the polymetallic nodules that rest on the ocean floor.

Polymetallic nodules are fist-sized rocks comprised of layers of precious metals like copper, nickel, manganese and cobalt, that build up over millions of years around marine debris, such as bits of coral.

The sediment and nodules are sucked up through giant tubes to the ships, and then the excess water and sediments are returned to the ocean, creating a sediment plume that includes dissolved heavy metals and other toxins.

These "mid-water discharge plumes" are not released on the ocean floor, but at depths about halfway between the seabed and the surface. As a result, the toxic sediment can travel on deep ocean currents anywhere from tens to hundreds of miles from the discharge site. They can also work their way into our food chain through pelagic fish like 'ahi, aku, mahi-mahi and ono.

DSM would have a catastrophic, irreversible impact on the health and biodiversity of our marine ecosystem and possibly the entire planet.

Of particular concern to Hawai'i is the Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ), located about 500 miles south of Ka'ū, Hawai'i Island. It is believed to have one of the richest deposits of polymetallic nodules and if DSM is approved, the CCZ will be a primary target of mining corporations.

SEE DEEP-SEA MINING ON PAGE 12

Hōkūle'a: Reconnecting Oceania

By Puanani Fernandez-Akamine

“Voyaging takes us into a place that only our ancestors have been,” Lucy Lee reflected. “On the deck of the canoe, especially on longer voyages, you’re transcended back into how they felt and the way that they lived.”

Lee is the volunteer coordinator for the Polynesian Voyaging Society (PVS) and a crew member who has already completed six voyages. Part of “Gen Z,” she is also an emerging leader in the organization. “I just turned 25, so I’m half the age of the [first] voyage and the canoe,” she quipped.

When *Hōkūle’a* arrived in Pape’ete, Tahiti, 50 years ago no one could have fully predicted the impact that this achievement would have – not only on Hawai’i, but on all of the peoples of Moananuiākea.

On June 4, 1976, more than 17,000 people gathered on the beach at Pape’ete Harbor – some paddling outrigger canoes or swimming out to greet the first voyaging canoe from another Pacific archipelago to arrive on the island in more than 600 years. It was a homecoming unlike anything before or since.

In the 50 years since her maiden voyage, *Hōkūle’a* has sparked cultural pride and rediscovery across Oceania, inspiring generations and birthing the Pacific-wide revival of way-finding and open-ocean voyaging.

Matahiarii Tutavae, a Tahitian journalist from the island of Mo’orea and a PVS crew member, was born several years after *Hōkūle’a* made her historic landing in Pape’ete but heard about the event growing up.

“The first voyage was really impactful [because it proved] that it could be done,” Tutavae said, referencing the debunked early 20th century theory of “accidental drift.”

Over the years, as *Hōkūle’a* continued voyaging to Tahiti, he observed a renewed relationship forming – and a new perspective of not just being Tahitians, but being a people of the ocean.

Tutavae points out that *Hōkūle’a* and voyaging also affirmed that our ancestors were scientists. “That’s something we didn’t hear about. It was always myths and legends, and the scientific world was from elsewhere,” he said. “Now I see that. And it’s important. Our people were here for thousands of years so they have scientific knowledge based on observation, on empirical evidence.”

In 1985, *Hōkūle’a* sailed to the Cook Islands for the first time on her Voyage of Rediscovery. Her visit inspired former Cook Islands Prime Minister Sir Tom Davis to found the Cook Islands Voyaging Society in 1992. He designed and built the Society’s first replica canoe,



Thousands crowd around *Hōkūle’a* as she arrives at Pape’ete Harbor on June 4, 1976.

- Photo: Nicholas DeVore III, used with permission



Lucy Lee and Matahiarii Tutavae.

- Photo: Puanani Fernandez-Akamine

Te Au o Tonga, in 1994.

“Fortunately for us in Tahiti, in 2007 a German by the name of Dieter Paulmann saw *Te Au o Tonga* sail into Sāmoa,” Tutavae recounted. Excited by the crew’s use of traditional knowledge to navigate, Paulmann, a sailor himself and CEO of the Okeanos Foundation for the Sea, reached out to the Cook Islands Voyaging Society. Their collaboration resulted in the Okeanos Foundation financing the building of seven traditional wa’a in 2009 to support Pacific voyaging.

One of those canoes, *Fa’afaite*, was gifted to Tahiti. That same year, Tutavae helped to establish the Fa’afaite-Tahitian Voyaging Society and over the years, he has sailed on *Fa’afaite* throughout the South Pacific and to Hawai’i and back. He has also sailed on *Hōkūle’a*, including during the Mālama Honua Worldwide Voyage (2013-2017).

From the beginning, PVS has focused on advancing the art and science of traditional voyaging through experiential educational programs designed to inspire current and future generations to care for themselves, each other, and the earth. Through voyaging, the organization aspires to educate all of humanity about the critical ecological importance of our oceans, Indigenous knowledge, community, and sustainability.

Under the guidance of venerated leaders like Pwo Navigators Nainoa Thompson, Bruce Blankenfeld and others, *Hōkūle’a* has sailed more than 275,000 nautical miles relying on traditional navigation techniques, cementing her place in history and elevating awareness of and respect for the sophistication and depth of Indigenous knowledge.

Looking ahead, the next chapter of *Hōkūle’a*’s story has yet to be written.

Lee believes that it will be critical for future generations of voyagers to approach the next 50 or 100 years with the same mindset as their mentors: keeping safety, reverence for the ocean, and aloha for our homes and culture at the center of decision-making.

As natural and existential threats to our oceans accelerate – from climate change, sea level rise and acidification of the oceans to microplastics in the marine food chain; from extractive commercial fishing to destructive deep sea mining – tomorrow’s voyagers will face different challenges than those who came before them.

“These things weren’t around 50 years ago. We will have to rise to the occasion and show the importance and relevance of voyaging to our youth. That is what’s in front of us,” Lee said.

“It’s about finding ways to remain relevant as the world around us continues to evolve

and change.”

Despite the challenges facing future voyagers, there is also optimism. The international impact of *Hōkūle’a* has been undeniably transformative – especially for the peoples of Moananuiākea.

PVS has a roster of more than 400 crew members from around the world. And there are now 25 voyaging canoes, 21 voyaging organizations, and more than a thousand active voyagers throughout 11 Pacific Island nations. As it did centuries ago, voyaging has once again reconnected Oceania.

“We used to say that ‘we are island people.’ People from little islands,” Tutavae said. “Now it’s become ‘we are people of this ocean.’ And as such, we are responsible for its wellbeing.”

Tutavae hopes that one day people on the continents – especially America, China and Europe – will come to understand Pacific people’s aloha for and relationship to the ocean.

“Although we are a big ocean, we are people who are connected to each other and to our ocean. We love our ocean. And we see it differently than the people who see it as a way to make money,” he added.

“*Hōkūle’a* is no longer just a Hawaiian canoe. Borders are man-made and [designed] to control. But *Hōkūle’a* and voyaging – in a very smart way – broke those borders. Is still breaking borders. And it’s not just borders between Melanesia and Micronesia and Polynesia. It’s also the borders we have in our minds,” Tutavae reflected. “Voyaging allows us to go beyond our genetics, beyond our looks or our names. This is something that is learned from *Hōkūle’a*.”

“I think one of the most important parts about voyaging is that it’s communally shared. That’s a testimony to

DEEP-SEA MINING

Continued from page 10

tions about authority and resource management. “European powers developed systems based on dominance over lands, peoples, and resources,” he said. “Those systems still shape international policy today.”

He believes Oceania has the potential to offer another path.

“If Pacific peoples stood together and asserted our collective responsibility to care for the ocean — not merely exploit it — that could become a powerful force in international affairs.”

That conversation becomes especially urgent as the United States unilaterally accelerates efforts to advance deep-sea mining within the waters of its Pacific territories, irrespective of the debate taking place at the ISA and despite resolute opposition from residents of the affected communities.

In April 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order titled “Unleashing America’s Offshore Critical Minerals and Resources,” intended to fast-track access to strategic seabed minerals.

Several months after the EO was issued, and with the backing of every major political leader in American Sāmoa, Congressional Rep. Amata Coleman Radewagen wrote in comments to the

Department of the Interior, “There is strong opposition to any exploration or extraction of minerals from the ocean floor in waters near American Sāmoa.”

Similarly, in a letter to Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chair Mike Lee earlier this year, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Gov. David Apatang and Guåhan (Guam) Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero called for a moratorium on deep-sea mining in the Marianas.

Nevertheless, on May 21, 2026, the *Associated Press* reported that at least nine companies are currently in talks with the Trump administration, queueing up to obtain licenses and leases to mine in waters off American Sāmoa, CNMI, Guåhan and Alaska.

“The United States is moving forward as if Pacific peoples do not exist,” Kaho’ohalahala said. “As if our voices and concerns are irrelevant because these territories fall under U.S. authority. That is deeply offensive.”

He also notes a significant shift in the rhetoric surrounding the need for deep-sea mining.

Initially promoted as necessary for “green energy” technologies such as electric vehicle batteries, proponents increasingly frame DSM as essential for military readiness and national security competition with China and Russia.

One reason for the shift has to do with emerging developments in green technology. In August 2025, Japanese automaker Toyota unveiled what it calls a “water engine” likely based on hydrogen combustion or hydrogen fuel cell technology powered by water-derived hydrogen. If successful, this zero emission technology would be revolutionary.

“The narrative around deep-sea mining is changing,” Kaho’ohalahala observed. “Now it’s about militarization and strategic dominance.”

Still, he remains cautiously optimistic.

Despite years of discussion and industry pressure, no commercial-scale deep-sea mining operation currently exists anywhere in the world. Major technological, financial, legal, and environmental hurdles remain unresolved. Kaho’ohalahala speculates that commercial scale capacity is at least five years away.

“There is still no fully operational system capable of mining at commercial scale in the deep ocean,” he said. “Much of the technology is still experimental.”

Kaho’ohalahala believes this reality creates an important window of opportunity for Indigenous peoples, Pacific communities, scientists, and environmental advocates to shape international policy before irreversible harm occurs.

“We are not powerless,” he said. “Pacific peoples have observed and understood the ocean for generations. That knowledge is an inheritance. The question now is whether we will put it into action.”

“For Hawai’i and for all of Moananuiākea, this is ultimately about responsibility — to our ancestors, to future generations, and to the living ocean itself.” ■

RECONNECTING OCEANIA

Continued from page 11

the people of the Pacific,” Lee said. “We only have this knowledge today because people from different places worked to ensure that this type of seafaring continued.”

When Lee thinks about the artificial divisions that have been placed between people groups — both self-inflicted and externally imposed — it reinforces her belief that we need to be more curious.

“Nainoa says there are two questions: Where are you, and where are you going? Another question is, where did you come from? You can’t emphasize enough how important of a role that Papa Mau [Piailug] had for the revitalization of voyaging — specifically in Hawai’i and then throughout the wider Pacific,” Lee asserted.

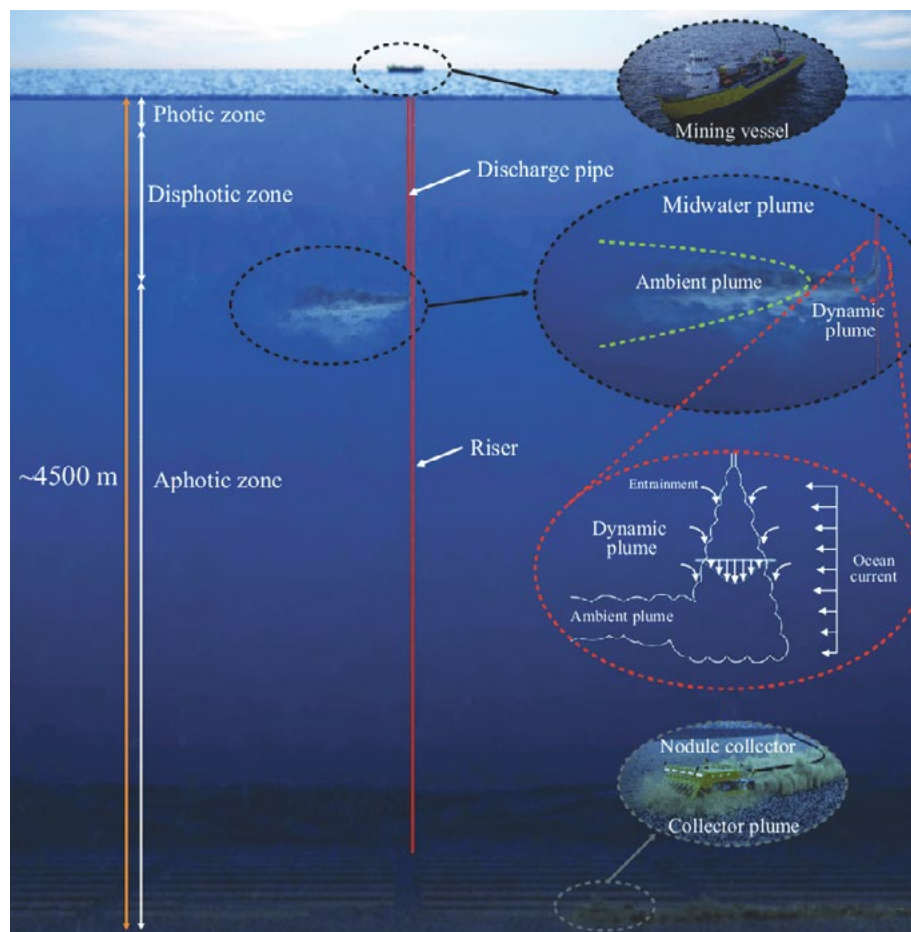
“Everything PVS has accomplished, and the story of *Hōkūle’a*, it all leads back to the teacher.”

That aspect of *Hōkūle’a*’s origin story is itself a lesson. The revival of Polynesian voyaging and wayfinding was made possible because a Micronesian navigator from Satawal was open to sharing his knowledge with Polynesians in Hawai’i — a testament to the way our connection as people of Oceania supersedes the political and anthropological divisions imposed on us over the past century.

“Throughout Moananuiākea there is a collective pride and joy that comes from being the people of this ocean and knowing that our ancestors held the same respect and affinity for one another,” said Lee.

“I’m sure that’s part of what kept voyaging alive for so many centuries. It’s inspiring that so many of our stories have ties to one another and it really does emphasize the point that the culture of Moananuiākea, and the culture of the people of the Pacific, is a shared one.”

“That idea that we’re all part of the same wa’a — which is earth — is becoming more real and making sense to a lot more people now,” added Tutavae. “I think we have something to share with the whole world.” ■



Schematic of a polymetallic nodule mining operation. From top to bottom, the three zoom-in panels illustrate the surface operation vessel, the midwater sediment plume, and the nodule collector operating on the seabed. The midwater plume comprises two stages: (i) the dynamic plume, in which the sediment-laden discharge water rapidly descends and dilutes to a neutral buoyancy depth, and (ii) the subsequent ambient plume that is advected by the ocean current and subject to background turbulence and settling. - Graphic: Carlos Muñoz-Royo, [researchgate.net/wikimedia commons](https://researchgate.net/publication/351111111)

Commercial Fishing is Not a Cultural Practice

Bearing the Weight of WESPAC's Push for Extractive Fishing in Papahānaumokuākea and Other Sacred Pacific Ocean Spaces

By Kenika Lorenzo-Elarco and Hau'oli Lorenzo-Elarco

What does protection mean when even some of our most sacred and carefully protected ocean spaces are being reopened to commercial fishing? As World Ocean Day approaches, there is a renewed attention to the need for marine protected areas that are strong not only on paper, but in purpose and practice.

While the world is being urged to strengthen ocean protections, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WESPAC), fueled by the Trump Administration, has moved to restore commercial fishing access of all four Pacific Marine National Monuments: Pacific Islands Heritage (PIH), Muliava (Rose) Atoll, Marianas Trench, and Papahānaumokuākea.

Despite massive opposition, WESPAC took final action recommending the reopening of commercial fisheries in the 3 to 200 nautical mile (nm) zone of Papahānaumokuākea. Additionally, they voted to reopen commercial fisheries in the 12 to 50 nm zone at Muliava, Sāmoa, 0 to 50 nm in the Marianas Trench Islands, and 50 to 200 nm at Jarvis and Wake Islands, and Johnston Atoll in PIH.

These final recommendations will move into further federal review by NOAA and for public comment. Papahānaumokuākea, with the extra protective national marine sanctuary designation layer, would require additional congressional steps.

That procedural detail matters, but only up to a point. The deeper issue is not simply what zone might be opened or under what regulatory conditions, but what it means to revisit commercial extraction in places already recognized as culturally sacred and ecologically critical.

At the WESPAC meeting, Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group (CWG) member William Ailā Jr. warned the council that “those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” Commercial fishing, though labeled as “sustainable” and with the misappropriated term “pono,” risks repeating past mistakes.

Since the commercialization of fishing in Hawai'i, particularly in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI), unsustainable and harmful practices have caused irreparable damage to both the ecological and cultural wellbeing of our ocean.

As early as the 1840s, foreign commercial traders nearly wiped out the Hawaiian pearl oyster from Pearl Harbor within a short 30-year period. After a massive population of large pearl oysters were discovered at Manawai (Pearl & Hermes), an estimated 100 tons of pearl oysters



A team member of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project carries a massive ball of fishing gear across a plain of Mōlī on Kuaihelani. - Photos: Andrew Sullivan-Haskins, PMDP



Remnants from a prohibited commercial fishing industry net entangles a coral head in Papahānaumokuākea.

were extracted from Manawai in just three years (1927-1930) for global trade. Nearly a century later, that population still has not recovered.

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the lobster fishery in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) caused a near ecosystem collapse. Lobster populations plummeted, precious coral reefs were damaged by traps, and the endangered Hawaiian monk seal, which depends in part on lobster as prey, also declined. The fishery was closed in 2000 to avoid further catastrophe.

That same year, the shark population in NWHI was ravaged by a single commercial fishing vessel that killed 990 manō in just 21 days. In 2014, longliners reported a catch of 11,700 'ahi from the now protected expanded area of Papahānaumokuākea, along with more than 5,600 sharks as bycatch, meaning one shark was caught for every two 'ahi. Most sea animals caught as bycatch do not survive.

Fishing is a rich cultural practice shared amongst many people. Native Hawaiians, like many of our Pacific cousins, have lived in harmony with the ocean through pono fishing practices since time immemorial.

However, commercial fishing is not a cultural practice, and it threatens our ability to live respectfully with the ocean.

In just a few decades of colonial, destructive, and prof-

it-driven fishing, populations of important species have plummeted resulting in near-catastrophic ecosystem collapses. With this renewed push to restore commercial fishing, we no longer risk repeating past mistakes, we are deliberately choosing them.

Commercial fishing continued in Papahānaumokuākea until 2016. The late Uncle Buzzy Agard was one of the commercial fishermen in NWHI. Over a 10-year period, he witnessed a massive fish population decline from fishing in the area.

From that point forward, he along with many other respected kūpuna including Auntie Laura Thompson, Uncle Eddie Ka'anā'anā, Uncle Walter Paulo, Auntie Wilma Holi, Uncle Kawika Kapahulehua, Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell, Dr. Carlos Andrade and others lobbied state and federal agencies to establish a marine protected area called the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve in 2001.

Through their efforts, the CWG was established. Guided by these kūpuna, Papahānaumokuākea was born as a national marine monument in 2006, expanded in 2016, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010, and designated a national marine sanctuary in 2025.

WESPAC argues that Pacific Island peoples carry an unfair burden of global marine conservation goals. But that argument ignores a central truth: these protections were never forced on Pacific Island peoples. We fought for them.

Indeed, we embody the words of late Tongan-Fijian writer Epeli Hau'ofa, “No people on earth are more suited to be guardians of the world's largest ocean than those for whom it has been home for generations.”

Rather than framing ocean protection as a burden, we should instead ask why Pacific Island peoples, and our protected and sacred oceans, are forced to bear the unfair burden of industrial fishing.

As World Ocean Day on June 8 calls attention to strong marine protected areas, Hawai'i faces a harder question: what does protection require of us when the place in question is sacred, storied, and entrusted to future generations?

Papahānaumokuākea reminds us that some places are not meant to be measured only by what can be taken from them, but by the relationships they carry, the memory they hold, and the responsibilities they call forth. ■

J. Hau'oli Lorenzo-Elarco is from Waimea, Hawai'i. He sits on the leadership board as the coordinator of the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group (CWG) and chair of the Nomenclature Subcommittee. He is also an assistant professor of Hawaiian language at Honolulu Community College. Kenika Lorenzo-Elarco is a Kanaka 'Ōiwi educator and scholar from Waiāluā, O'ahu. He is a member of the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian CWG and serves as the co-chair of the communications subcommittee. Kenika also serves as the community engagement manager at the W. M. Keck Observatory and a junior specialist faculty at UH Mānoa.

By Restoring Our Reefs We Restore Ourselves

By Alika Peleholani Garcia

As a first responder during the recent Kona Low storms, I know that addressing the impact of natural disasters on human beings comes first: getting people to safety, protecting their homes when possible, and helping them begin the long road to recovery.

But when the rains stop and the flood waters settle, I wear another hat as the executive director of Kuleana Coral Restoration. In this role, I can see the otherwise unseen impact of such storms below the ocean's surface and the way that extreme weather is affecting our near-shore reefs – and the long-term cost of this damage to our communities.

After the Kona Lows were over, I went underwater and saw it clearly: a thousand corals torn loose, flipped, or shattered by storm surge waves and flood debris. And that was just a tiny portion of the reef that encircles our entire island.

Across O'ahu and throughout our pae 'āina, the damage is real and widespread.

When corals are ripped out, we lose more than coral – we lose shelter for reef life, habitat for fish, and part of the reef's natural ability to take the punch out of waves before they reach our shoreline. That loss affects our food systems, livelihoods, and community health.

While repairing portions of the reef after the Kona Low damage, Kuleana Coral Restoration recently reached a milestone: 10,000 corals planted and repaired. The number is worth celebrating, but only if we understand what it represents.

A reef is not just coral. A reef is a community: fish moving through structure, crabs sheltering in crevices, shrimp flashing in and out of shade. When coral sur-



Alika Garcia sets up his SCUBA gear for the next restoration dive.

- Photo: Elyse Butler

vives, it becomes structure, and structure invites life back. That's the neighborhood returning.

But we hold a firm truth alongside the celebration: planting corals is not enough by itself. Corals live within a system shaped by what happens above them. In Hawai'i, our reefs sit at the ma kai end of the water cycle where everything collects.

Ma uka to ma kai water carries life. It also carries consequences. Our corals live downstream of our choices; what we allow to happen upstream affects the lived conditions for our reefs downstream. A Kona Low is an acute example of that connection, with damage to the land and stress underwater arriving together.

That connection can feel like a mirror of community health, especially for Kanaka communities trying to persist in a modern world that wasn't built with our best interests in mind. Reefs get smothered, stressed, and pushed by forces bigger than any single organism can solve alone – not unlike the way that our people expe-

rience the socio-economic pressures that keep us from thriving in our homeland or that drive us away.

Coral restoration matters because coral is living architecture. It is housing underwater. When reef structure collapses, the smallest relatives lose shelter first. Planting and repairing corals helps rebuild that structure so life can return.

But just like housing on land, simply building more homes doesn't solve the housing crisis. If the systemic forces that push families out remain unchanged, the crisis continues. Reefs face the same reality. If upstream pressures don't change, coral planting becomes temporary.

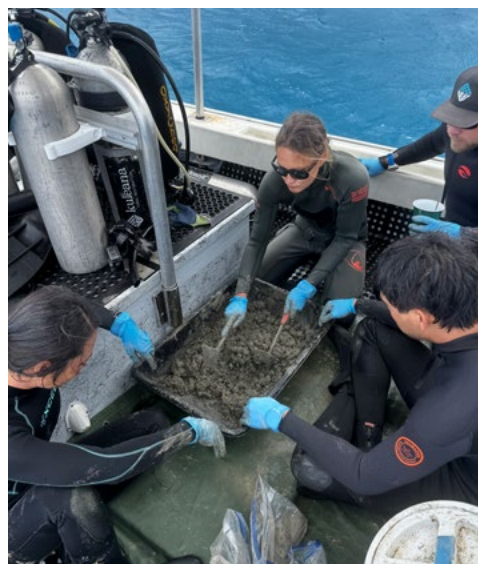
However, "upstream" doesn't mean "out of our control." It means that changes must be made earlier in the system; what we choose, what we tolerate, what we prioritize, and what we build together. Durable reef recovery comes when we align coral restoration work in the ocean with actionable mālama 'āina, from working to ensure that our freshwater streams are cleaner to making smarter shoreline decisions, and everything in between.

And the urgency is growing. With oceans trending warmer and the possibility of a strong El Niño pattern this year, coral bleaching and more damaging storms become more likely.

When reefs are already weakened they can't slow waves as well, and storms can hit our coastline harder. That's why preparation matters: ready crews, ready communities, and a shared plan to respond both above and below sea level.

Planting 10,000 corals is not a finish line. It's a beginning: repairing the reef neighborhood while strengthening the human community that protects it.

By restoring reefs, our eldest kūpuna, we restore ourselves. ■



(Left) The KCR team mixes concrete that will be used on the next restoration dive for the Emergency Repair project in Maunalua Bay. The concrete is used to reattach corals of opportunity to the reef. - Photo: Alika Garcia (Center) A coral table in Maunalua Bay that stores corals of opportunity and coral fragments until they are ready for outplanting onto the reef. The divers are attaching the fragment racks to the dive table for safe keeping. - Photo: Blake Nowack (Right) A group of KCR divers swim over a healthy coral reef. - Photo: Balyee Jackson

'A'ole AQ

'Ōiwi communities fight to end commercial aquarium collection

By Mahesh Cleveland

"Hānau ka lau'īpala noho i ke kai, kia'ī 'ia e ka lau'ī noho i uka."

Born is the yellow tang living in the sea, watched over by the kī leaf living on land.

This line from the *Kumulipo* underscores the connections our people recognize between ocean resources and the land and, by extension, with *kānaka*. Lau'īpala, like other fish and marine life, come before us in our origin story, nurturing us while commanding our respect.

The tale of Hi'iakaikapoliopele provides another glimpse into lau'īpala's cultural importance. When she met a woman whose grandchild was ill, Hi'iaka instructed her to apply a poultice of ma'o flowers and feed him 'uala and lau'īpala, so that he would be healed. The lau'īpala signified "an abundance of food."

"What these mentions tell me is that lau'īpala are an indicator of our marine ecosystem," says U'ilani Naipo, an advocate for traditional stewardship with genealogical ties to Kapalilua in South Kona. "If lau'īpala are bountiful, it means we as a people will be fine. These are the foundational pieces of our universe that have to be there, so when they're threatened, it's up to us to go fix it."

Naipo's uncle, Willie Kaupiko of Miloli'i, was taught by his uncles to look for the schools of lau'īpala coming in over the reef, because other fish would be close behind. "When you see the yellow cloud, that's when you go grab your net."

Reef fish like the lau'īpala are the foundation of our traditional diet. But like so many of our natural resources, they have been abused for financial gain.

In 1953, the Territorial legislature passed a law allowing the capture of Hawai'i's reef fish for sale as aquarium pets. Legislative records reveal that the law was based on the fundamental lie that the fish sought after by aquarium collectors – like lau'īpala, kole, pāku'iku'i, and others – have "no value as food fish." But, the legislature said, "they will sell ... on the mainland market."

This old 1953 law remains on the books, despite its false premise. For decades, our juvenile reef fish have been extracted, maimed, starved, and air-freighted in plastic bags to pet shops on the continent. Most die within a year, even though they can live over 40 years in the wild.

These fish, which have sustained our people for millennia, are treated as disposable playthings, victims to the whims of hobbyists and the greed of sellers and the collectors that supply them.

"This is the only industry that's exporting our reef



Hundreds of Moku o Keawe residents gathered for a meeting at Kealakehe High School on April 1, 2026, to oppose commercial aquarium collection in West Hawai'i. - Photos: Kaiea Nakachi



A lau'īpala at home on a West Hawai'i reef.

fish, and that's what bothers me so much about it," says Uncle Charlie Young of Kealia. "If these fish were being caught to feed our 'ohana, that would be one thing. But this industry just wants to make money off our public resources."

"We Hawaiians are the ones that will always need to speak up for our environment and ways of life," Young added. "As the Indigenous people, we're the ones attached to this place, who can recite mo'olelo and tap into our ancestry to understand why is this fish called that, or why is this resource important from a cultural standpoint."

Since 2012, diver and cultural practitioner Mike Nakachi has been part of a hui that banded together to protect Hawai'i's reef fish from the aquarium pet trade. Although they won a landmark legal victory in 2017 that required the pet industry to examine its environmental impacts,

Nakachi says that in many places, coral and fish populations damaged by commercial collection may never recover.

"When we dive where the water's rough or in more remote areas, we still see places that spiritually uplift you because of the amazing life that is present," Nakachi shared. "But on the other hand, there are a lot of places that bring you down because of the damage that has been inflicted."

Kaupiko, Young, Naipo, and Nakachi, were among hundreds of Moku o Keawe residents gathered at Kealakehe High School in April to oppose re-opening West Hawai'i to commercial aquarium collection; a unanimous community outcry to prioritize natural resources over the financial interests of a handful of collectors. But the Department of Land and Natural Resources plans to move forward with permitting anyway.

Earlier this year, the hui and their allies from across the islands joined the Office of Hawaiian Affairs in urging the state legislature to ban commercial aquarium collection. A ban bill made it all the way to the end of the legislative session, only to be killed behind closed doors.

Since 2023, advocates from across Hawai'i have also urged the Board of Land and Natural Resources to adopt regulations banning commercial collection statewide. The Board will revisit those requests this summer.

"These lawmakers, policymakers, and decision-makers – they are our modern-day konohiki," says Nakachi. "But they still aren't listening to the people."

Meanwhile, the pet industry is also pushing to resume collecting on O'ahu, where reef fish populations collapsed after Hurricane 'Iniki in 1992 and have never recovered.

Nevertheless, Elena Bryant, a Ko'olaupoko kama'āina and member of the Kāne'ohe Bay Regional Council, remains hopeful for the future.

"It's inspiring to see the energy building among our communities, and especially the 'ōpio. This is an issue that affects so many people, but not [one] that many people know about. It's going to be up to our youth to ensure a future Hawai'i where they can enjoy the ocean's bounty like their kūpuna before them." ■

Mahesh Cleveland, born in Honokalā, East Maui, is an attorney with the Honolulu office of nonprofit environmental law firm Earthjustice. Mahesh believes that Kānaka co-management of natural resources is the key to a sustainable future for Hawai'i. For more information about the advocacy efforts discussed above, visit earthjustice.org/experts/kylie-wager-cruz/the-latest-on-commercial-aquarium-collection-in-hawaii.

There is No “Away” in Hawai‘i

Counties face growing landfill challenges

By Donalyn Dela Cruz

Most don't think twice about the garbage thrown out throughout the day and then hauled away once a week by city refuse.

“It's just regular language, ‘throw it away,’” said Allison Fraley, Solid Waste Division chief, County of Kaua‘i. “There is no ‘away’ here on the island.”

With a population close to 74,000 and roughly 1.3 million visitors annually, Kaua‘i produces over 90,000 tons of trash every year. For the last 73 years, its landfill has been in Kekaha and is now close to reaching capacity.

“Finding landfills is never easy. We’ve been trying to do it on Kaua‘i for more than 20 years. We’ve been studying it and it’s been difficult,” said Fraley. “We’re at the point where we’re kind of in a crisis. We don’t have any more capacity unless we expand, so we’re pursuing that.”

Similarly, O‘ahu is facing its own landfill capacity crisis and difficulty finding another site. The “Gathering Place” of the state has a population of nearly one million and receives up to six million visitors annually – all of whom collectively generate roughly 1.2 to 1.7 million tons of residential, commercial, and industrial waste per year.

The search for a new landfill was an issue that Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi was told not to deal with. “These are people in elected office who said, ‘You just leave it alone if you are smart. Let somebody else deal with it,’ which all the more incentivizes me to say, ‘No. That’s not who we’re going to be.’”

In his first term, Blangiardi created a Landfill Advisory Committee (LAC) to help the city identify and evaluate potential sites for O‘ahu’s next landfill before the current Waimānalo Gulch Sanitary Landfill is required to close in March 2028.

In his 2026 State of the City address, Blangiardi underscored the urgent need for a new O‘ahu landfill, describing it as one of the city’s most pressing infrastructure challenges. He reiterated his opposition to placing another landfill on the Wai‘anae Coast, but noted that other sites face significant legal, environmental, and land-use constraints, and called on the state legislature to help address the issue.

In 2020, the Hawai‘i State Legislature passed Act 73, establishing strict landfill siting restrictions, including buffer requirements from homes, schools, and hospitals, and prohibiting landfills in conservation districts.

This is in addition to the fact that there is limited available land in Hawai‘i, the cost of land is extremely high, and Hawai‘i is geographically isolated.

“Like if we were on the mainland, we could just haul it



Act 73, State of Hawai‘i legislation, was passed in September 2020 and prohibits permitting and construction of new - or expansion of an existing - solid waste disposal facility within 1/2-mile of a residential, school, or hospital property line. Act 73 also prohibits the permitting and construction of a solid waste disposal facility located on conservation district land, except in emergency circumstances.

out, you know, just take it somewhere else, drive it out of our community. It would just be the shipping cost,” said Fraley. “But [here] we have to buy land and make sure it complies with all of these criteria.”

The proposed vertical expansion is intended to extend the life of the Kekaha Landfill, which is otherwise expected to reach capacity around 2030.

In response to heightened public concern over aquifer protection following the Red Hill fuel spill, the state legislature enacted additional restrictions in 2025 aimed at preventing new landfills from being sited above sensitive aquifer areas on O‘ahu.

That restriction has made an already difficult situation on O‘ahu even more challenging; in 2022, the LAC rejected all proposed alternative sites due to concerns that included risks to O‘ahu’s aquifers.

“We’re convinced if they were to drill a hole in the ground and spend a million dollars, it’s probably over an aquifer,” said Blangiardi who referred to other development taking place on the island, including high rises.

All counties have implemented programs to reduce the amount of waste going into landfills.

“Each person on O‘ahu generates a little over five pounds of trash every day,” said Josh Nagashima, City & County of Honolulu refuse chief. “It’s kind of wild when you think about it.”

Through incineration, H-POWER produces up to 10% of O‘ahu’s electricity and reduces the volume of waste requiring landfill disposal by 90%, with the remaining

10% in the form of ash. Recycled waste is taken to local recycling facilities.

“Because of H-POWER, we’re already recycling or beneficially using over 70% of our waste,” noted Nagashima. “That doesn’t mean that we can’t do more. There’s a lot of food waste that was identified in what’s going to H-POWER in the waste stream, so we’re trying to remove a lot of that before it gets there.”

In April 2026, Honolulu County launched the G.R.O.W. (Green Recycling Organic Waste) pilot program in select households within Kailua, Hawai‘i Kai, Mililani, Nānākuli, Waipahu, and Kalihi. G.R.O.W. allows those residents to add food scraps and food waste to their existing green compost carts.

“There’s lots of opportunities to reduce, reuse and recycle. But once that’s done, we still have this massive amount of material that needs to be landfilled,” said Fraley, whose department recently held a community informational meeting on the proposed vertical expansion of the Kekaha Landfill, which would increase the landfill’s height to 85 feet. While there has been discussion over a potential new landfill site, there has been environmental and community opposition.

Meanwhile in Honolulu, Blangiardi continues to fight an uphill battle of opposition in the fruitless search for a new landfill site outside of West O‘ahu.

All counties have investigated new technologies, which is an argument often raised by community voices at meetings. However, investments into those technologies are in the billions of dollars. “Everybody forgets about that,” said Blangiardi, who has sat through meetings to learn about waste solutions from gasification to plasma vitrification.

However, as with most major development projects in Hawai‘i, delays in identifying a landfill site result in rising costs.

“I am really concerned we’re gonna run out of time because this is not one of those things that you can say, ‘Well, let’s just squeeze another couple more years in here,’” said Blangiardi. “We’re pushing it as it is.” ■

On May 13, the Honolulu City Council voted unanimously to pass a resolution introduced by Councilwoman Andria Tupola that would establish an “End Landfills Task Force” to develop alternatives to landfill disposal. The task force will have until November 2027 to evaluate strategies for ending landfill dependency and develop a plan to enact them. The task force will include county and state representatives plus subject matter experts from the recycling, waste management and energy sectors.

BELOW THE SURFACE

A Burden Washed Ashore

Marine debris - from lost or discarded commercial fishing nets to plastic and other waste carried to the ocean by streams, rivers and lakes - does not simply disappear at sea. Carried by circulating ocean currents for years - or decades - it collects in ocean garbage patches. Much of the debris collected in the massive Great Pacific Garbage Patch north of Hawai'i eventually converges on our shores - especially in Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Sanctuary. Despite relatively little of this waste originating in Hawai'i, our local community continues bearing the responsibility of ongoing clean-up efforts to protect one of the most sacred and ecologically significant places on Earth.

By Philamer Felicitas

What people often imagine as the “Great Pacific Garbage Patch” is not actually a floating island of trash drifting visibly across the ocean. And despite the attention it receives, it is not the only floating garbage patch in the world.

Scientists have identified multiple large-scale marine debris accumulation zones within major ocean gyres – massive, self-contained systems of circulating ocean currents – across the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans that trap floating debris over time.

There are no towering piles of garbage rising from the sea. No single mass solid enough to stand on. No clear edges separating these accumulation zones from the surrounding ocean. Instead, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is a vast and constantly moving concentration of marine debris created by the circulating currents of the North Pacific Gyre.

Stretching between Hawai'i and California, the gyre functions like a slow-moving spiral, pulling floating debris into rotation and trapping it within its currents rather than allowing it to disperse.

SEE A BURDEN WASHED
ASHORE ON PAGE 18



Technicians use equipment to haul an enormous derelict fishing net - also called a "ghost net" - from the ocean at Manawai (Pearl and Hermes Atoll) in the Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Sanctuary. - Photo: NOAA

Our Kānaka worldview of Papahānaumokuākea has never changed through the centuries. These protections are just another layer placed over a relationship and responsibility that already existed long before them.

- BRAD KA'ALELEO WONG



Technicians remove a fishing net from the shores of Kuaihelani (Midway Atoll). Each year, tons of debris from thousands of miles away end up in Papahānaumokuākea. - Photo: Andrew Sullivan-Haskins, PMDP



Kenika Lorenzo-Elarco and Hau'oli Lorenzo-Elarco of the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group work to remove a large fishing net from the sand at Kuaihelani (Midway Atoll) in April 2026. - Photo: Andrew Sullivan-Haskins, PMDP

A BURDEN WASHED ASHORE

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Covering an estimated 1.6 million square kilometers, roughly twice the size of Texas, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch contains trillions of pieces of plastic suspended throughout the water column, from massive, abandoned fishing nets drifting near the surface to microscopic fragments nearly invisible to the human eye.

Most of the debris, by mass, is believed to come from industrial fishing activity across the Pacific. Lost and abandoned fishing nets alone account for nearly half of the plastic mass within the garbage patch.

Other debris originates from countries and coastlines around the Pacific Rim, carried into the ocean through rivers, stormwater systems, shipping activity and everyday human consumption. Plastic bottles, buoys, crates, ropes, packaging and countless other fragments can remain trapped within the gyre for years, sometimes decades, gradually breaking apart under sunlight and wave action but never fully disappearing.

Eventually, many of those currents converge around the Hawaiian Islands.

As the North Pacific Gyre circulates westward, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands act almost like a comb, intercepting debris drifting across the Pacific. This marine debris regularly washes ashore across Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, one of the largest protected marine conservation areas on Earth and one of the most culturally significant places in the Hawaiian archipelago.

For Hawai'i, the crisis is deeply uneven. Although the islands contribute relatively little to the global volume of marine debris entering the Pacific, Hawai'i often bears the burden of cleanup.

The tons of plastic and fishing gear arriving on Hawai'i's shores originate thousands of miles away. Yet local communities, cultural practitioners, scientists, nonprofits and resource managers continue carrying most of the kuleana for removing it from beaches, reefs and remote shorelines across the pae āina.

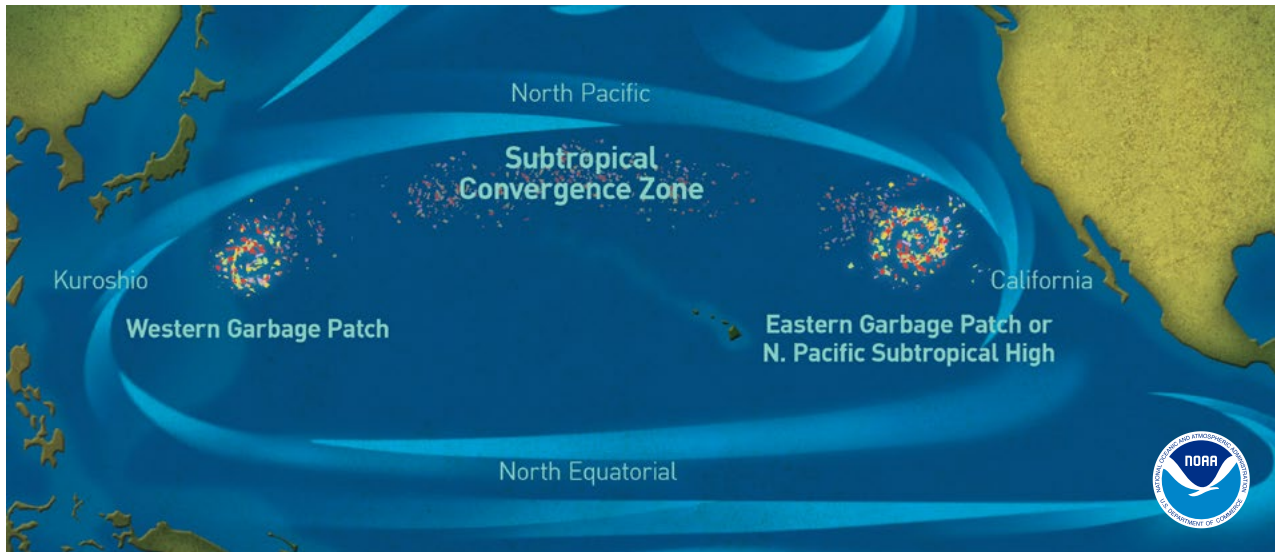
Beyond Hawai'i's shores, most of the world is oblivious to the Pacific's plastic crisis.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Established in 2006 as the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument under Presidential Proclamation 8031, the monument was formally given the Hawaiian name Papahānaumokuākea a year later.

In 2010, it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its combined natural and cultural significance – one of the few places in the world recognized for both. In 2025, marine portions of the monument were additionally designated as Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Sanctuary, becoming America's 18th national marine sanctuary and the largest within the National Marine Sanctuary System.

While the monument and sanctuary now overlap across marine areas of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, the sanctuary designation adds another layer of long-term marine conservation tools, research coordination and public engagement within the National Marine Sanctuary System.

Larger than all U.S. national parks combined, it is home to more than 7,000 marine species, many found nowhere



(Top) Map showing the North Pacific Gyre. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is located north east of Hawai'i. - Courtesy Image. (Bottom) Marine debris transforms the shoreline at Kamole (Laysan Island) in Papahānaumokuākea. Carried across the Pacific by ocean currents and trade winds, plastic garbage and fishing gear wash into one of the most protected and remote places on the planet. Fishing nets entangle endangered monk seals and turtles, while plastic fragments collect in seabird nesting grounds. - Photo: Andrew Sullivan-Haskins, PMDP

else on Earth. Millions of seabirds nest throughout the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, while endangered Hawaiian monk seals and threatened green sea turtles rely on the region's reefs and shorelines for survival.

Yet even after two decades of protection, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument continues bearing the burden of a global marine debris crisis generated far beyond Hawai'i's shores. Carried across the Pacific by ocean currents and trade winds, plastic garbage and abandoned fishing gear relentlessly wash into one of the most remote and protected places on Earth.

Ghost nets snag coral reefs. Plastic fragments collect among seabird nesting grounds. Buoys, crates and ropes accumulate along shorelines after drifting through the Pacific for years. Storms and shifting ocean conditions can rapidly push new waves of debris ashore, even after beaches and reefs have already been cleared.

The cleanup cycle never truly ends.

Much of that work now falls to organizations like the Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project, a Hawai'i-based

nonprofit leading large-scale marine debris removal efforts throughout Papahānaumokuākea. Since becoming an independent nonprofit in 2019, PMDP crews have removed more than 1.28 million pounds of marine debris from the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands through extended cleanup expeditions across remote reefs, shorelines and atolls.

Crews often spend weeks at sea cutting massive ghost nets from shallow reef systems, disentangling wildlife and manually hauling waterlogged debris from isolated beaches under difficult marine conditions. The work is physically exhausting and often emotionally heavy, especially knowing more debris will continue arriving with the currents.

But for many involved, the work is also deeply personal. "If you love something, it's really easy to want to protect it," PMDP Executive Director James Morioka said.

Morioka said PMDP intentionally tries to approach the work through stewardship and responsibility rather than hopelessness. While marine debris continues accumulating throughout the Pacific, he believes local action, cultural connection and long-term restoration efforts still matter.

The scale of the work is immense.

Cleanup expeditions often require weeks at sea aboard research and support vessels traveling between isolated islands and atolls located hundreds of miles from the main Hawaiian Islands. Divers carefully cut massive ghost nets from coral reefs to avoid causing additional damage to fragile ecosystems already under stress. Crews manually haul tons of debris from beaches under intense sun and difficult marine conditions, dragging waterlogged nets across coral rubble before loading the material onto vessels for transport back to Honolulu.

Some recovered nets are eventually processed through Hawai'i's Nets-to-Energy program on O'ahu. Other debris is repurposed for education, research and art. Much of the funding supporting the work comes through federal agencies, particularly NOAA, alongside state support, grants and nonprofit partnerships.

But the labor itself often falls to a relatively small network of scientists, cultural practitioners, conservation workers, nonprofit organizations and volunteers who continue returning despite knowing more debris will inevitably arrive again.

And while larger debris can be removed from shorelines and reefs, the damage extends far beyond what is visible.

Plastic itself never truly disappears. Sunlight and constant ocean movement gradually break larger debris into tiny fragments known as microplastics, which continue moving through marine ecosystems long after the original objects have degraded.

Researchers have found microplastics in fish, seabirds, salt, rainwater and even human bloodstreams. Tiny plastic fragments have been discovered everywhere from the deepest parts of the ocean to remote mountaintops.

Within Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, marine life bears these consequences continuously. Lost or abandoned fishing gear crushes and scours coral reefs as currents drag heavy nets across shallow reef systems. Hawaiian monk seals and green sea turtles become entangled in drifting nets and marine debris. Seabirds mistake floating plastics for food, feeding fragments to their chicks.

But what happens within Papahānaumokuākea does not remain there in isolation.

Ocean currents, migratory species and interconnected marine ecosystems link Papahānaumokuākea to the main Hawaiian Islands in ways that directly affect Hawai'i's near-shore waters, fisheries and long-term food security.

Many species found within the monument travel throughout the Hawaiian archipelago during different stages of life, while healthy reef systems in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands help support broader marine biodiversity across the region.

For island communities, the ocean is not a distant wilderness. It feeds families, supports local fisheries, shapes cultural practice and sustains relationships passed between generations. Fish and marine resources are not simply commodities, but integral parts of daily life throughout Hawai'i.

As plastics break down into microplastics, those fragments can move through entire marine food webs. Small organisms consume them, larger fish consume those organisms, and the contamination continues moving upward



Our endemic and endangered seabirds, Hawaiian monk seals and green sea turtles are extremely vulnerable to marine debris and garbage. Seabirds mistake floating plastics for food and feed fragments to their chicks, while monk seals and honu quickly become entangled in discarded commercial fishing nets that collect just below the ocean surface. This monk seal and honu were found and rescued. Others are not so lucky. - Photos: (Top) Ryan Tabata, NOAA; (Center) Richard Chen, PMDP; (Bottom) Andrew Sullivan-Haskins, PMDP

SEE A BURDEN WASHED ASHORE ON PAGE 20

A BURDEN WASHED ASHORE

Continued from page 19

through the ecosystem.

Researchers continue to study the long-term impacts of microplastics on marine life, fisheries and human health, particularly in island communities that remain deeply connected to the ocean as a source of food, culture and livelihood.

Today, Papahānaumokuākea is jointly managed through a co-management structure involving NOAA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Hawai'i and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. In 2021, OHA was formally elevated to co-trustee status within the monument, placing Native Hawaiian representation alongside federal and state agencies in overseeing one of the largest marine conservation areas on Earth.

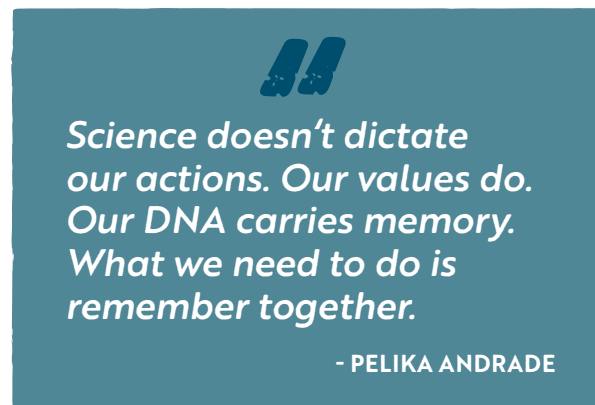
However, Native Hawaiian stewardship within the monument predates federal protections, marine sanctuary designation, and monument boundaries entirely. "Papahānaumokuākea is Hawaiian," former OHA Papahānaumokuākea Program Specialist Brad Ka'aleleo Wong said. "And it's not a Hawaiian place unless you have Hawaiians involved."

Wong spent nearly a decade helping shape OHA's role within Papahānaumokuākea's evolving management structure, working alongside the monument's Cultural Working Group, federal agencies and state partners during a formative period in the monument's history.

"The Cultural Working Group and community were so instrumental in making sure that level of protection continued," Wong said.

Their advocacy helped integrate 'ike kūpuna and Native Hawaiian stewardship into the monument's long-term management framework through initiatives such as *Mai Ka Pō Mai*, a Native Hawaiian guidance document developed collaboratively between the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group, community members, and the monument's co-trustees.

Rather than separating culture and conservation into separate systems, the framework emphasizes stewardship grounded in Native Hawaiian worldview, reciprocity



ity and kuleana.

"Our Kānaka worldview of Papahānaumokuākea has never changed through the centuries," Wong said. "These protections are just another layer placed over a relationship and responsibility that already existed long before them."

For Native Hawaiian cultural practitioner and Papahānaumokuākea Cultural Working Group member Pelika Andrade, the work of protecting Papahānaumokuākea extends far beyond conservation policy or marine debris removal. At its core, she describes the responsibility as one grounded in pilina, memory and cultural continuity. "Science doesn't dictate our actions. Our values do," Andrade said.

While Papahānaumokuākea is internationally recognized for its ecological significance, Andrade emphasizes that it is also an ancestral realm whose meaning cannot be separated from Hawaiian identity, genealogy and spiritual understanding. For many Native Hawaiians, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are deeply connected to concepts of creation, Pō (the ancestral realm) and the continuity of life itself.

For Andrade, preserving Papahānaumokuākea also means protecting the knowledge systems and cultural practices that have long sustained relationships between people and the environment.

"Our DNA carries memory," Andrade said. "What we need to do is remember together."

She describes stewardship of the environment as an act of remembering. Not remembering in the sense of discovering something entirely new, but reconnecting to knowledge already carried through ancestry, lived experience and relationship to place.

To her, knowledge does not exist only within institutions, management plans or scientific reports. It lives within communities, protocol, mo'olelo and the ways people continue showing up for one another and for the environment. Caring for places like Papahānaumokuākea, she suggests, requires collective care rooted not only in conservation, but in relationship. It is a call to reconnect people to the environment, to one another, and to future generations.

That urgency continues growing as younger generations inherit a Pacific increasingly shaped by climate change, biodiversity loss, and plastic pollution.

"The garbage patch is not sourced from Hawai'i, and a lot of it's not even sourced from America," Andrade said. "We could drastically reduce the trash coming out of Hawai'i and we would still be burdened with a global problem."

And while island nations like Hawai'i contribute relatively little to the global volume of marine pollution entering the Pacific, they continue finding themselves on the frontlines of its consequences.

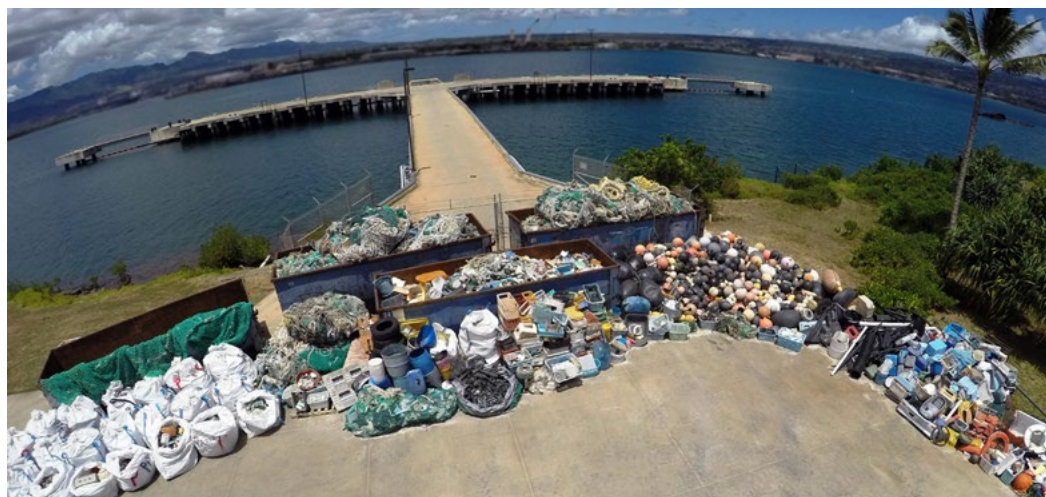
Papahānaumokuākea may sit in the middle of the Pacific, but fishing gear lost thousands of miles away eventually washes ashore on its remote atolls. Plastics carried across the Pacific from continental rivers and coastlines become trapped within the same currents moving through the North Pacific Gyre.

Yet for many who care for these islands and the life surrounding them, stewardship is not measured solely by whether the debris stops arriving. It is measured by the willingness to continue restoring shorelines, protecting marine life and teaching younger generations – despite knowing that the work may never fully end: plastics remain trapped within the gyre; nets continue washing ashore; and debris still arrives with the currents.

But so do the cleanup crews that return again and again. The people who choose to care for it and each other anyway. ■



Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project staff celebrate on a large pile of marine debris removed from the reefs and shorelines of Kuaihelani (Midway Atoll). - Photo: Andrew Sullivan-Haskins, PMDP



NOAA Marine Debris Project shows off their collection of marine debris removed from Papahānaumokuākea at the NOAA Inouye Regional Center on Ford Island in 2017. - Photo: James Morioka, NOAA

Ahupua'a Stewardship Builds Climate Resilience

By Eric Enos

Wildfire in Wai'anae is not theoretical. It is a lived experience. Fire moves quickly across dry grasslands, threatens homes, and leaves 'āina stripped and exposed. Along the Leeward Coast, families understand this risk through memory, loss and the long work of recovery.

In 2012, a wildfire tore through portions of Ka'ala Farm's lo'i and surrounding agricultural lands. The response was immediate and collective. Kūpuna arrived with guidance rooted in experience. Volunteers arrived with tools and resolve. Students arrived ready to learn, work and rebuild. Replanting began while smoke still lingered in the air.

That moment reinforced a lesson long held in 'ike kūpuna: when we care for the land, the land protects us.

Ka'ala Farm exists to restore living culture through active stewardship. Lo'i restoration, invasive grass removal and native planting are not symbolic acts. They are practical, proven strategies that serve cultural practice and public safety at the same time.

Our community knows firsthand how closely fire, water and safety are connected. During the 2012 fire, waterlines were burned, cutting off a critical lifeline just when it was needed most. Community members stepped forward with kōkua, raising funds, purchasing materials and reinstalling the 1 mile of irrigation system so both land and people could recover.

In 2018, another major fire threatened the valley, trapping two school buses filled with keiki as flames surrounded the roadway. We sheltered together in the lo'i, which served as a natural firebreak and safe refuge while other staff fought the fire at our farm entry gate.

These moments made one truth unmistakable: well-maintained agricultural landscapes and water systems are not just about food production. They are essential infrastructure for community safety and resilience. Healthy land retains moisture. Native ecosystems slow fire spread.

Degraded landscapes dominated by invasive grasses do the opposite, accelerating danger and placing entire communities at risk. Wildfire prevention does not begin when sirens sound. It begins years earlier through consistent land management grounded in place-based knowledge.

Stewardship at the ahupua'a scale builds resilience

from the uplands to the communities below, reconnecting ecological systems that once worked in balance.

The new Green Fee Advisory Council's Year 1 recommendations recognize this reality. Proposed investments prioritize native plant restoration, invasive species control and community-led ahupua'a stewardship statewide. These recommendations align directly with the needs of Leeward O'ahu, where decades of underinvestment have intensified wildfire risk.

Community-led efforts in Wai'anae already demonstrate what works. Residents, schools, nonprofits and agencies come together to reduce risk while building long-term capacity. Students learn how fire moves across landscapes. Volunteers clear dry grasses and kīawe from high-risk areas. Families gain tools to protect homes and neighborhoods.

Green-fee funding represents more than environmental spending. It is an investment in wildfire mitigation, water security, food systems and cultural education. Every acre restored reduces fuel loads. Every native planting strengthens water retention. Every lo'i revived feeds families while lowering wildfire risk.

As legislators review green-fee recommendations, the connection must be clear: stewardship equals safety. Cultural practice equals climate resilience. Ahupua'a restoration is public infrastructure.

Wai'anae is showing what it looks like when communities lead. Green-fee investments offer Hawai'i a path forward grounded in responsibility to land, people, and future generations. ■

Eric Enos is the executive director of Ka'ala Farms, Inc. This opinion piece was originally published by the Honolulu Star-Advertiser on February 25, 2026.

Where Personal Kuleana Meets Institutional Constraint

By Kenika Lorenzo-Elarco and J. Kara Dumaguin

As Kānaka working in community-facing roles within astronomy in Hawai'i, we carry kuleana into spaces not built with us in mind. That reality shapes how we show up and what is possible within our roles.

Kuleana calls us to remain accountable to 'āina and lāhui. Institutions operate within their own structures, timelines, and limitations. This is where tension often sits, because these systems often differ from the values

that guide Kānaka relationships to 'āina and to each other. Much of our work exists in the space between the two.

In many ways, it's that space that drew us here. Astronomy is rooted in observation and, for us, that has always been relational. The opportunity to engage the sky while remaining grounded in our pilina to 'āina and to each other is what holds us here.

There are moments when those spaces align, when relationship, intention, and institutional direction move together. But there are also moments when they do not. In those moments, kuleana does not disappear. It becomes more important.

Kuleana shows up in the choices we're asked to make. When to advocate, and how far. When to push, and when pushing may close more doors than it opens. When to speak directly, and when to move quietly to maintain relationships for future movement.

These decisions are rarely straightforward. They are informed by trust, timing, and an understanding that change does not always happen visibly or immediately.

There are limits to what any one person can shift within an institution. There are also risks. Speaking up can carry consequences. So, too, does remaining silent. Kuleana does not remove these realities. It compels us to navigate them with more in mind than ourselves.

For many of us, this means working within constraint without being defined by it, recognizing where movement is possible while continually looking for openings for change.

This work is not always recognized. It happens in conversations, in relationships built over time, and in decisions not visible to others. These moments matter. They shape what becomes possible.

At the same time, there are shifts. In many spaces, 'Ōiwi perspectives are increasingly recognized as essential to shaping responsibility and relationship to place. These shifts aren't uniform or complete, but they create openings to build pilina, bring forward 'ike, and shape how these spaces evolve.

We are not separate from the institutions we are part of, and we are not fully contained by them. We move within them while remaining grounded in relationships that extend beyond them.

Kuleana does not resolve the tension between these spaces. It sharpens our awareness.

We choose this work, not because the path is easy, but because our relationships to 'āina and lāhui are present here too. Our presence is not about fitting into institutions as they are, but in remaining grounded while cre-

SEE HA'I MANA'O ON PAGE 22



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HA'I MANA'O

Continued from page 21

ating space for relationships, 'ike, and accountability to continue.

And in that awareness, we continue deciding how to move. Not with certainty, but with intention, knowing our presence here carries responsibility and possibility. ■

Kenika Lorenzo-Elarco works in public affairs at the W. M. Keck Observatory, and Kara Dumaguin works in community relations at the Canada France Hawai'i Telescope.

Wai Is Life, Trust Is Broken: Hawai'i's Call to Mālama 'Āina

By Inam Rahman, MD

In Hawai'i, land is not just property – it is 'āina, a living connection between people, culture, and future generations. Water, too, is more than a resource. As many shared during the March 23 gathering in Honolulu, wai is life. When water is threatened so, too, is the health of our communities and the continuity of our way of life.

Community members, Native Hawaiian leaders, policymakers, and military representatives came together to discuss the future of military lands. What became clear was not disagreement about the importance of these issues, but a shared recognition that trust has been deeply strained.

For many, this conversation reflects generations of displacement, restricted access to ancestral lands, and decisions made without meaningful consultation. Voices in the room spoke with honesty and emotion: we have lost trust, and we need transparency, not backdoor conversations. These are not simply frustrations – they are a call for respect, inclusion, and accountability.

As a physician serving West O'ahu, I see how these issues directly affect health. Clean water, safe land, and a healthy environment are essential to wellbeing. When communities are uncertain about contamination or access to resources, the impact is not only physical, but emotional and cultural.

Military representatives acknowledged these concerns and expressed willingness to improve communication and coordination. Yet important questions remain. Com-

munities are asking for clarity on environmental safety, timelines for cleanup, and long-term plans for land restoration and return. Without clear answers and visible progress, trust will remain difficult to rebuild.

The discussion highlighted serious environmental concerns, including PFAS contamination and the legacy of past military activities. While a multi-year cleanup process has been discussed, families want assurance that these efforts will be thorough, transparent, and guided by community input. The health of keiki and future generations must remain at the center of every decision.

Mākua Valley stands as both a symbol of past challenges and future possibility. While portions of land have been discussed for return, the broader vision of restoration remains incomplete. For many, this is not only about acreage – it is about cultural healing, connection to 'āina, and honoring mo'okū'auhau.

Moving forward, rebuilding trust will require more than meetings. It calls for kuleana, a shared responsibility to act with integrity, transparency, and respect. This includes ensuring that communities are informed, that Native Hawaiian voices are included early in decision-making, and that commitments are followed by measurable action.

Hawai'i stands at an important moment. The past cannot be undone, but the future can still be shaped by what we choose to do next. By embracing mālama 'āina and honoring our shared kuleana, we can begin to rebuild trust – not just in words, but through consistent and meaningful action. ■

Dr. Inam Rahman is a West O'ahu physician and community advocate focused on health, environmental wellbeing, and practical solutions for Hawai'i's families.

Alternate Ways for Kānaka to Come Home

By Tori Eldridge

A Kanaka Maoli author and tūtū strengthens her connection to homeland and heritage through her novels.

I carry the culture and influences of my youth wherever I go, as I imagine other Kānaka Maoli who were born and raised in Hawai'i and then moved away also do. But once I became a tūtū, that was no longer enough. I needed to connect more deeply. I had become the keeper

of Hawaiian traditions for my mo'opuna, despite having lived away from Hawai'i for over 45 years.

I think this is a common challenge among the Hawaiian diaspora. All of us who care about our heritage must find, reconnect with, and/or continually rediscover what being Hawaiian means to us.

Many in the Hawaiian diaspora also question (or have been questioned by others!) whether we are Hawaiian enough.

This issue of identity is so pressing among Native Hawaiians and multicultural communities at large that I have explored this theme in nearly everything I write, especially in my most recent novels, *Hawai'i Rage* and *Kaua'i Storm*.

In this new series, I incorporate the Hawaiian diaspora experience by writing about a hapa-Hawaiian national park ranger, born and raised on a Kaua'i Hawaiian Home Lands homestead, who has been on the continent for a decade and is now trying to fit in with her family and community back home.

But I also wanted to write authentically about the challenges Kānaka Maoli in Hawai'i are facing today.

Once again, I questioned if I had been away too long.

Fortunately, my research led me to reconnect with and discover many empowering old and new local friends. It also inspired me to take immersion courses in 'ōlelo Hawai'i to better understand the language I had sung and danced to in my youth. I even began chanting again to feel the sounds in my bones. It made me so happy that I began composing little mele to amuse my mo'opuna and lull them to sleep.

I wouldn't have known how to do this if I hadn't been inspired to learn and reconnect.

Mahalo nui loa to the editors of *Ka Wai Ola News* for inviting me to share my diaspora experience and my work. It means so much that you offer this space to give our people a voice. Mahalo wau iā 'oukou a pau! I appreciate you all so much! ■

Tori Eldridge is the bestselling author of "Hawai'i Rage," "Kaua'i Storm," the "Lily Wong" ninja thriller series, and "Dance Among the Flames." Born in Honolulu of Hawaiian, Chinese, and Norwegian descent, she graduated from Punahou School with classmate Barack Obama before performing as an actress, singer, and dancer on Broadway, television, and film, and earning a fifth-degree black belt in To-Shin Do ninja martial arts. She lives in Oregon with her mo'opuna and has continued her studies and enrichment by writing about Hawai'i's rich paniolo culture in her newest novel, "Hawai'i Rage." Learn more at torieldridge.com.

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Nā Mea Makamae Hawai'i ma Lākana 3

Na Kalani Akana, Ph.D.

Aloha e nā hoa makamaka o kēia kolamu 'ōlelo Hawai'i. I kēlā mau mahina aku nei, ua mahalo kākou i nā mea makamae Hawai'i ma ka Hale Hō'ike'ike Pelekania ma Lākana, 'o ia ho'i, nā mea waiwai hiwahiwa ma ka hō'ike'ike hou 'o Hawai'i: a kingdom crossing oceans. Ua 'ōlelo au, he 'ike lihi wale nō ka mea e hō'ike 'ia ana ma kēia 'atikala nei a ua koi au iā 'oukou e kū'ai i kope o ka puke 'o Hawai'i: a kingdom crossing oceans nou ma UH Press.

'O ka pale o ia puke, 'o ia nō ke ki'i o kekahi kapa kahiko. 'O kēlā wahi kapa, ua ho'ohiluhilu 'ia me nā laina a me nā lau kinona nui i pena kī hala 'ia. He kapa kahiko ia – he kapa i hana 'ia ma mua o ka hō'ea 'ana o Kapena Kuke mā. Ua ho'olaina 'ia nā kapa kahiko me kekahi mea hana 'ohe me kekahi mau lā'au 'ē a'e. Ua kapa 'ia kēia mea hana he lapa a ua like ka lapa me kekahi 'ō lō'ihī. Nui ke kupanaha o nā kapa like 'ole ma ka hale hō'ike'ike ma Lākana.

I ka manawa a Kapena Kuke i hō'ea ai i Hawai'i ma ka Makahiki 1778, ua 'imi 'o ia i mau lako no ka holo moana 'ana – ka wai maoli a me ka mea'ai 'io. Ua kālepa ka po'e 'Eulo i mea 'Eulo i nā Kānaka Hawai'i. 'O ka mea kālepa



i make'e nui 'ia e nā Kānaka 'o ia ho'i ke kui hao, ke kui nao, a me nā mea hana mekala e like me ka 'ūpā a me ke ko'i hao.

Me kēia mau mea hao, ua hiki i nā Kānaka ke kālai i ka lā'au me ka ma'alahi. A 'o kekahi mea hana a ke kanaka kuku kapa i ho'okā'oi ai ma muli o

ka hao, 'o ia nō ka 'ohe kāpala. Me ka 'ohe kāpala ua loli nā lau o ke kapa a ua hele a nani loa nā pā'ū, nā kīhei, a me nā malo i hana 'ia no nā ali'i.

Ua loli nō nā kinona me nā lau o ke kapa. Ua no'ono'o kekahi mau kānaka huli kanaka, 'o ka 'āpana lole 'Eulo i kālepa 'ia e like me ka lole 'Īnia (chintz) a me ka lole kohu kaliko (calico), nā lau i ho'opili 'ia e nā Kānaka. Pololei paha, 'a'ole paha. Akā, 'o ka loa'a o ka hao ka mea i ho'ololi i ka mea ho'onaninani kapa – mai ka lapa a i ka 'ohe kāpala.

Manomano a kōli'u ka 'ike o nā kūpuna. Ua hō'ike mai nō lākou ma o ka hana kapa, ua hāmama ko lākou na'au e lawe a ho'ohana i mea 'ē a ho'ololi i mea Kanaka. ■

Kalani Akana, Ph.D., is a kumu of hula, oli and 'ōlelo Hawai'i. He has authored numerous articles on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.

To read this in English go to kawaiola.news.



Eia ke kapa i ho'onaninani 'ia me ka 'ohe kāpala. - Courtesy Photos



Eia nā lapa ma ka hema a me nā kāpala ma ka 'ākau

New Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Planning

By Kamakanaoakealoha Aquino

A new graduate certificate in Indigenous Planning will be offered at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. A partnership between the Department of Urban and Regional Planning in the College of Social Sciences and the Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies in the Hawai'iinuiakea School of Hawaiian Knowledge, this graduate-level certificate offers students and professionals an in-depth understanding of Indigenous Peoples, processes, and practices to enrich urban and regional planning.

Through planning and several consultations over the past 2 years, Dr. Priyam Das, a professor in Urban and Regional Planning, and Dr. Konia Freitas, a specialist in Hawaiian Studies, developed a program that will prepare students to engage respectfully with Indigenous worldviews, knowledge systems, and methodologies; to apply Indigenous and Hawaiian-informed approaches to land use, sustainability, housing, and community development; and to center planning practices around core values such as pilina, kuleana, and aloha, with a focus on ethics, equity, and inclusion.

Students and professional planners will be equipped with culturally grounded tools to navigate complex land-use, social, and environmental challenges. This



certificate requires the completion of six courses: one required course in the foundations of Indigenous planning; one capstone course on an individual project of analysis, plan preparation, policy, and program evaluation; and selection of four elective courses from planning, Hawaiian Studies, geography, law, natural resource management, political science, or Pacific Island Studies.

This new graduate certificate is the latest collaboration between the Urban and Regional Planning and Hawaiian Studies departments, which began in 2017, when both departments signed a memorandum of agreement allowing urban and regional planning graduate students to enroll in designated Hawaiian Studies courses with prerequisites waived.

Then, in Fall 2022, a bachelor's-to-master's degree pathway (BAM) was established. Students can pursue a bachelor's degree in Hawaiian Studies through a master's degree in urban and regional planning within a shorter timeframe of 5 years by double-counting up to three courses at the undergraduate tuition rate. Students are able to save money and time to enter the workforce.

These programs will help build capacity in the planning workforce in Hawai'i and across the Pacific that centers Indigenous values, concepts, and methodologies in the field of planning. ■

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Navigating the Halls of Congress

The Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole Fellows Program

Submitted by the Abigail Kawānanakoa Foundation

For generations, decisions affecting Native Hawaiian communities have often been made far from Hawai'i and without Native Hawaiian voices at the table. The Abigail K.K. Kawānanakoa Foundation hopes to help change that through the Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole Fellows Program, an initiative preparing emerging Native Hawaiian leaders for careers in public service and policy leadership.

Now nearing the completion of its inaugural year, the program places Native Hawaiian fellows in congressional offices in Washington, D.C., where they gain firsthand experience in federal policymaking while bringing their own perspectives, values, and cultural grounding into the work of governance.

"For me, the most meaningful aspect of being a Kūhiō Fellow, has been the ability to be in the same rooms as community leaders and organizations that I looked up to as a child. Working together in partnerships to push forth meaningful legislation is something I never thought I'd have the opportunity to do, and it's been an honor to work and learn alongside the leaders shaping Hawai'i's future," said fellow Kala'i Anderson.

Since arriving in Washington in August 2025, the inaugural fellows have worked across Hawai'i's congressional delegation supporting legislative research, constituent services, communications, and policy development. Beyond Capitol Hill, fellows participate in professional development, mentorship, and shared living at Hale Kaulike, the Foundation's Capitol Hill residence.

The program draws inspiration from Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole, whose service as Hawai'i's delegate to Congress demonstrated the importance of Native Hawaiian representation at the federal level. Best known for championing the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920, Prince Kūhiō understood that meaningful change requires Native Hawaiian voices inside the rooms where decisions are made.

"As I seek to serve the communities that helped raise me, this fellowship has given me the opportunity to better understand the many layers of governance and the interconnected ways decisions at the federal level influence – and are influenced – by state and local currents. I hope to carry this knowledge

back home to uplift my lāhui and community," said fellow Josh Worth.

As part of the program, each fellow completed a capstone project reflecting issues impacting the lāhui today. Topics included environmental stewardship, access to federal funding for Native Hawaiian organizations, pathways to expungement for individuals with nonviolent criminal convictions, and a children's book centered on Native Hawaiian health and wellness practices.



Pictured at the Kamehameha statue in Washington, D.C., are: (l-r) Kenna Higa, Kala'i Anderson, Neill Natori, Joshua Worth, and Brandee Markwith. - Courtesy Photo

For the Foundation, the fellowship represents a long-term investment in Native Hawaiian leadership and civic capacity.

"These fellows are gaining experiences and relationships that will stay with them for the rest of their lives," said Foundation Director Jan Dill. "Just as importantly, they are demonstrating that Native Hawaiians are prepared to lead at every level."

The Foundation recently selected its second cohort of fellows, who will begin their placements in Washington this August, continuing Prince Kūhiō's legacy for a new generation. ■



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I Mua Kamehameha

By KipuKai Kuali'i



King Kamehameha I remains one of the most important figures in Hawaiian history because he united the Hawaiian Islands into a sovereign kingdom in 1810. His leadership ended years of warfare among the islands and established a stable government, legal order, and international diplomacy that allowed the Hawaiian Kingdom to emerge as a respected nation in the Pacific.

We continue to honor him every year across our homesteads and across the state on June 11 with floral parades, lei draping ceremonies, hula and cultural festivals. His holiday was first established by King Kamehameha V in 1871 to honor his grandfather's legacy.

King Kamehameha Day is more than a celebration for us. It's a holiday that symbolizes our survival, unity and pride in our identity. The traditions associated with the holiday – especially the draping of lei over Kamehameha statues and the Pā'ū parades – reconnect us to our ali'i heritage, Hawaiian language and cultural practices.

Long after the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893, the holiday endures because we never forgot the importance of our history and national identity.

The legacy of Kamehameha lives on through the work of The Kamehameha Schools (KS). Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, the great-granddaughter of Kamehameha I, established the Schools in her 1884 Will to educate Native Hawaiian children because she recognized that her people were suffering from population decline, land loss, poverty and cultural suppression.

Today, Kamehameha Schools provides education rooted in Hawaiian culture, language and values while also serving as one of the largest charitable educational trusts in the world.

Recent national legal attacks claiming that Kamehameha's admission preference policy is "racial discrimination" ignores both federal Indian law and the unique political status of Native Hawaiians.

Native Hawaiians, like American Indians and Alaska Natives, are recognized by Congress as an Indigenous people with a special political relationship to the United States. Federal law has repeatedly acknowledged this status through legislation such as the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 (HHCA), the Native Hawaiian Education Act, the Native Hawaiian Health Care Act, and the Apology Resolution of 1993, in which Congress formally acknowledged the United States' role in the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

These laws are not based solely on race, but on the federal government's trust responsibilities toward Indigenous Peoples.

In support of my beloved Kamehameha Schools, I'll state clearly that Native Hawaiian preference policies are consistent with long-standing federal policies supporting our self-determination, education and cultural preservation.

Similar preferences exist in programs serving federally recognized Native American tribes and Alaska Native communities.

The argument that Native Hawaiian educational programs are merely racial preferences ignores the political, historical and legal realities that distinguish Indigenous peoples from ordinary racial classifications.

Defending Kamehameha protects the vision and legacy of our Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop and preserves the future of our Native Hawaiian people. I certainly would not be the homesteader advocate and community leader I am today without my six years of education and personal development at Kamehameha! ■

Keeping Kūpuna Safe

Understanding Health Plan Coverage

By Michael Emmons

Many families in Hawai‘i care for their kūpuna - balancing work, caregiving, and time with keiki. During the summer months - especially if families travel and must coordinate care of their kūpuna while they are away - it is important to plan ahead and ensure kūpuna continue receiving the support they need at home.

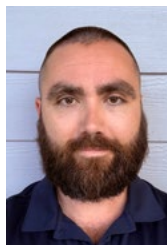
In many local families, caring for elders is rooted in mālama, kuleana, and the shared values of nohona Hawai‘i: making sure our kūpuna are safe, comfortable, connected, and cared for within the home and community.

In our work with families, we see how challenging it can be to understand what “home care” means and what services are actually covered by insurance. Building health insurance literacy supports ‘ohana in navigating benefits and accessing the right in-home supports. Assistance with bathing, dressing, cooking, or keeping the home clean can help someone remain safely in their own home rather than moving into a care facility.

Most major insurers cover home health services when they are medically necessary and ordered by a doctor. These services include skilled nursing care, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy. Some plans may cover short-term home health aide services after a hospital stay or serious illness. In those cases, aides may assist with personal care such as bathing or dressing, but the care must be tied to a medical treatment plan supervised by a nurse or therapist.

However, ongoing help with everyday activities (custodial care) is different. This includes assistance with activities of daily living like bathing, toileting, meal preparation, transportation, and housekeeping. Most commercial health insurance plans do not cover long-term custodial care or chore services.

Medicaid in Hawai‘i (Med-QUEST) may provide in-home support for people



with disabilities or significant care needs. Some Medicare Advantage plans also include supplemental benefits that support limited in-home services.

The best way to understand your benefits is to check directly with your health plan:

1. Log into your member portal. Most plans allow you to review benefits, claims, and coverage details online.
2. Call customer service. Use the number on the back of your insurance card and ask about:
 - Home health services
 - Personal care or home health aide benefits
 - Case management or care coordination
3. Request written plan details. Ask for your Summary of Benefits and Coverage or the Evidence of Coverage for Medicare Advantage and Medicaid plans.
4. Get your Primary Care Provider involved. Many plans require an order/referral from your provider, often your Primary Care Provider, or PCP, and documentation of medical need. When you find out what is covered by your plan, make an appointment with your PCP and ask for a referral.

Many health plans offer care managers who help families understand benefits and connect with services in the community. Knowing how to navigate health plans helps you advocate for your ‘ohana and support kūpuna in staying safe, comfortable, and cared for at home - especially during seasons when family schedules, travel, and caregiving responsibilities may shift. ■

Disclaimer: This article is for general education and does not constitute insurance, legal, or medical advice. Coverage varies by plan and individual eligibility. Always confirm benefits with your health plan and your health care provider.

Michael Emmons is the Community Health Worker manager with Hui Mālama Ola Nā 'Ōiwi serving the island of Hawai‘i.

The Mo‘olelo of Waikīkī

By Kamaka Pili

NaHHA is proud to share an article from one of our Lamakū Ho‘okipa - Beacons of Hospitality - who exemplify the value of mālama and are making a meaningful impact as contributing members of the Native Hawaiian community.



the waters of Mānoa and Pālolo to Waikīkī before being redirected with the construction of the Ala Wai Canal in 1928.

Today, those streams are no longer visible in the same way, and much of Waikīkī has been reshaped through urban development. Yet Waikīkī still remembers.

If you stand in the waters at Kaimana Beach, you are standing where Kamehameha arrived on O‘ahu in 1795 through the Kāpua Channel before the Battle of Nu‘uanu. These are not simply stories of the past, they are living landscapes layered with memory, ‘ike, and meaning.

As a Native Hawaiian, Waikīkī was once a place I avoided. It felt overcrowded and disconnected from the Hawai‘i I knew. But the more I learned its stories through mentors like Uncle Joe Recca and others, the deeper my aloha for Waikīkī grew.

With that aloha also comes kuleana, both a responsibility and a privilege; the honor of being entrusted with these stories, and the privilege of continuing to share them. It is this kuleana of knowing these places and speaking their names which ensures that the story of Waikīkī continues to flow like the fresh waters for which it was named. ■

Kamaka Pili is the owner of Now & Then Tours, a walking tour in Waikīkī that shares the rich history of place. A familiar face to many across Hawai‘i through his years in television broadcasting, Kamaka is widely known for his passion for sharing place names in ways that reconnect people to the deeper identity of Hawai‘i. For more info: nowandthentours.com



A man pushes a canoe from the water at Waikīkī in the late 1880s. - Photo: Hawai‘i State Archives

LT Announces New President and CEO

By Bryan Esmeralda

The Board of Trustees of Lili'uokalani Trust proudly announce the appointment of Jennifer K. La'a as its next president and chief executive officer, effective July 1, 2026. La'a will lead the 117-year-old ali'i trust and private operating foundation into its next chapter, building on a powerful legacy of service to Native Hawaiian children and families.



strategy, programs, and operations. She currently serves as Executive Director of the 97,000-square-foot Lili'uokalani Center on Ward Avenue, where she has helped elevate the Trust's presence and impact in the community.

"Jennifer brings proven executive leadership experience, vision, and heart," said Hugo. "She has a deep understanding of where the Trust has been and our Vision 2045 goal to break the cycle of poverty for Native Hawaiian children. The Board has full confidence in her ability to lead our team into the future."

With more than 20 years of experience across the nonprofit and government sectors, La'a is known for her collaborative leadership and commitment to community impact. Prior to joining the Trust, she served as branch chief of the Community Resources Branch at the Hawai'i Department of Health. Her extensive experience also includes executive leadership roles at Easter Seals Hawai'i and serving as director of Grants Management at the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i.

La'a's appointment signals an exciting new chapter for Lili'uokalani Trust as it continues to expand its work to uplift and empower kamali'i and their 'ohana across Hawai'i. ■

Bryan Esmeralda is the director of external relations at Lili'uokalani Trust.



Lili'uokalani Trust's newly appointed resident and Chief Executive Officer Jennifer K. La'a. - Courtesy Photo

She succeeds Mahina Eleniki Hugo, who has served as interim president and CEO since January. Hugo will resume her position on the Board of Trustees beginning in July.

A dedicated and dynamic leader, La'a has been an integral part of Lili'uokalani Trust since 2022, advancing key initiatives across

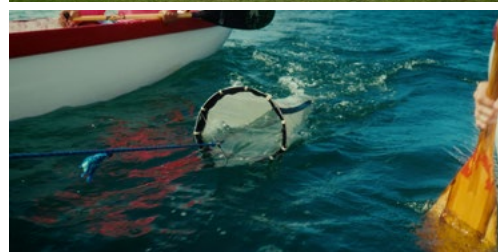
i Hōlani ke Ku'ina i Hōlanikū

By Hōkūokahalelani Pihana

Puka mai ka lā i Kumukahi lā 'eā
The sun bursts forth at Kumukahi
A welo ana i Lehua lā 'eā
And sets at Lehua
He Waialoha ka makani lā 'eā
The wind is the Waialoha wind
'O Hawai'iloa ke alahula lā 'eā
Hawai'i Loa is the frequented pathway
I Hōlani ke ku'ina i Hōlanikū
Joining at Hōlani, at Hōlanikū

"The ocean feeds us, it nourishes us, it is all around us." – Kumu Heanu Weller

i Hōlani ke ku'ina i Hōlanikū is a short film created to share our pilina (relationship) to Papahānaumokuākea through the voices of our ocean community and the next generation of ocean stewards. The Nā Wa'a Mauō (NWM) Marine Stewardship program uses wa'a to care for our ocean and uplift our youth through our wa'a practices and relationship to the ocean. Haumāna from NWM led the creation of the film, conducting interviews with community members about their relationships to wa'a, ocean stewardship, and how these practices connect us to Papahānaumokuākea.



Stills from the short film *i Hōlani ke ku'ina i Hōlanikū*. - Courtesy Photos

Haumāna worked with the filmmaker to creatively tell our story of ocean stewardship and how the work we do in the inhabited Hawaiian Islands contributes to the health and wellness of Papahānaumokuākea.

They shared their relationship with wa'a and how wa'a connected them to Papahānaumokuākea, to each other, and to the ocean. Haumāna saw that the same ocean they



voyage in our wa'a here in Hilo, Hawai'i, is the same ocean that connects us to and surrounds Papahānaumokuākea.

That was a profound moment because to connect our haumāna to Papahānaumokuākea, they needed to feel Papahānaumokuākea. So, when they swam in the ocean or paddled our wa'a they began to feel Papahānaumokuākea.

i Hōlani ke ku'ina i Hōlanikū, was also an opportunity for our keiki to recognize their relevance in marine stewardship and brought their voices to the forefront of our efforts to care for our ocean and Papahānaumokuākea. NWM haumāna have learned how to use wa'a to steward our coastal ocean areas. They apply a blended stewardship approach that combines Indigenous and institutional sciences and practice. This helped them become more closely connected to the ocean and understand the value of using our Indigenous ways of knowing to tend to these places.

i Hōlani ke ku'ina i Hōlanikū, enabled our haumāna to share their experience using wa'a to steward our ocean, express how these practices have impacted them and changed their relationship with the ocean, and how the perpetuation of these approaches strengthens our connection to Papahānaumokuākea.

As the next generation of ocean stewards, it was important to give them a space to tell our story through their voices. It enabled them to contribute to the mo'okū'auhau (genealogy) of Papahānaumokuākea and perpetuate our ancestral practice of storytelling.

"We acknowledge wa'a as kūpuna because at its foundation is our 'ike kūpuna, our ancestral knowledge." – Kumu Kainalu Steward ■

Scan QR code to watch the film.



Hōkūokahalelani Pihana is a mother and marine scientist who has worked with the scientific and Indigenous communities in Hawai'i and the Pacific for many years. She was born in Wahiawā, O'ahu, raised in Long Beach, California, and now lives in Kea'au, Hawai'i, with her sons. Hōkū is a leader in the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group, executive director of Indigenous and Community-based Ocean Governance at Conservation International Hawai'i, and executive director of Nā Wa'a Mauō, a marine stewardship program she developed in 2015 that uses wa'a to care for the nearshore and coastal oceans of Hawai'i.

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Nā Kiele o Hawai'i: Nānū (Nā'ū), Kiele, Tiare mā

By Bobby Camara



(Left) Pua and hua nānū, slightly smaller flower, smooth pod. - Photo: Nānū, Native Plants Hawai'i (Right) Ridged pods of tiare contain orange pulp and make a yellow dye. - Photo: Lisa Schattenburg

Sometimes, there's nothing so lovely as a classic hapa haole song. For us oldies especially, in keeping with this month's atikala, it's *Song of Old Hawai'i* by Beecher & Noble, copyrighted in 1937. "There's the perfume of a million flowers, clinging to the heart of old Hawai'i." Not many endemics are scented. Puapilo, maile, hōlei, 'ōhai, all come to mind.

Then, too, there are our gardenia. All smell slightly different. Kiele haole makes me sneeze. A lot. Nānū, and its hybrids with tiare, I don't care for. But tiare ... tiare has an inimitable scent. Unique, evocative, sigh-causing. And

monoi, the classic tiare-scented coconut oil of Tahiti ... monoi always went beach with me. A thin coating lets kai bead off, avoiding that salted-skin itch when getting dressed, and it's great for the hair.

While nānū is a very rare endemic, we don't know about tiare. *Gardenia taitensis* has long been emblematic of Tahiti. It apparently has origins on West Pacific isles, and may have been brought here very early. Both nānū and tiare provide dye for kapa and, of course, both, or all, are used in lei. Go! Go try smell! See if you can detect the subtle differences. And the real thing beats polymer clay any day! ■



Extracting color and scent from tiare.
- Photo: Lisa Schattenburg



A small kūpe'e of tiare, moa, and lava'e haole by Myoung-Ja. - Photo: Bobby Camara

From 'Ōpū to Mood: The Gut-Brain Connection

By Jodi Leslie Matsuo, DrPH, RDN

Many of us have felt the gut-brain connection before we ever heard the term. We get "butterflies" in our stomach when we are nervous. We may lose our appetite during grief, feel nauseous when anxious, or crave sweet and salty foods when stress is high.

These are everyday examples of a powerful truth: the gut and brain are constantly talking to each other.

This two-way communication is called the gut-brain axis. The brain sends signals to the gut through nerves, hormones, and stress chemicals. When we are under stress, the body releases hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These can change digestion, slow or speed bowel movements, increase stomach sensitivity, and affect appetite. This is why stress can trigger stomach pain, bloating, diarrhea, constipation, or cravings.

The gut also talks back to the brain. Inside our intestines are trillions of bacteria called the gut microbiome. Healthy bacteria help digest food, protect the gut lining, support the immune system, and produce helpful compounds. These compounds can send messages through the bloodstream, immune system, and nervous system, including the vagus nerve, which connects the gut and brain.

A well-nourished gut supports healthy bacteria growth, helping the body feel steadier and more resilient. An irritated or poorly nourished gut may contribute to digestive stress, fatigue, brain fog, anxiety, low mood, or poor sleep. Our daily food choices can affect not only our stomach, but also how we feel, think, and handle stress.

So, what feeds a healthier gut-brain connection? Fiber is one of the most important nutrients, as it feeds beneficial gut bacteria and help them produce



Carotenoids such as papaya act as antioxidants that lower inflammation and support healthy gut lining. - Photo: © AdobeStock/EdNurg

short-chain fatty acids, which support the gut lining and may help calm inflammation. Good choices include kalo, poi, 'uala, 'ulu, oats, tofu, mung beans, lentils, vegetables, and fruits.

Fermented foods, such as sour poi, yogurt, kimchi, natto, miso, and tempeh, also support healthy gut bacteria growth. Avocado, banana, nuts, seeds, and green leafy vegetables provide minerals like magnesium that support the nervous system.

Natural plant compounds, such as carotenoids and polyphenols, act as antioxidants that lower inflammation, supporting the health of the gut lining and brain

cells.

Carotenoids include papaya, mango, kabocha, orange 'uala, watercress, spinach, moringa, sweet potato leaves, and cooked lū'au leaf. Polyphenols are found in purple 'uala and eggplant, berries, ginger, turmeric, and garlic. Fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as 'ōpelu, akule, sardines, salmon, and other fatty fish, also support brain health and inflammation balance.

Diets high in sugary drinks (juice, soda, energy drinks, specialty coffee drinks) and foods, fried foods, processed meats (Vienna sausage, hot dog, spam, deli meats), and packaged snacks support unhealthy bacteria growth and inflammation.

When these foods become the norm, this pattern may gradually make the body less resilient to stress and may contribute to fatigue, brain fog, irritability, low mood, anxiety, or difficulty coping with everyday stress.

Our kūpuna may not have used the word "microbiome," but they understood that food, 'āina, body, and spirit are connected. ■

Follow Dr. Matsuo on:
Facebook (@DrJodiLeslieMatsuo),
Instagram (@foodrxblueprint),
and on Twitter/X (@foodrxblueprint).

POL Defends Health Scholarship Program

On May 15, the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation (NHLC), the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), and Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Walker, LLP filed a motion to intervene on behalf of Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL) in a federal lawsuit brought by the conservative organization Do No Harm to challenge the constitutionality of the Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program (NHHSP).

In recognition of the U.S. government's trust responsibilities to Native Hawaiians, Congress established the NHHSP more than 30 years ago as part of the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act to increase the number of Hawaiian health care professionals in medically underserved areas across Hawai'i.

"The program exists because Congress recognized a critical need and a trust obligation to address severe healthcare shortages in Native Hawaiian communities," said Makalika Naholowaa, NHLC executive director.

Papa Ola Lōkahi jointly administers the program with the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration. Since its creation, the program has helped more than 300 scholars pursue health care profession education.

"This program helps strengthen healthcare access in medically underserved communities across Hawai'i, and we remain committed to that work," said Papa Ola Lōkahi CEO Sheri Daniels,

"The U.S. has acknowledged and affirmed its trust responsibility to Native Hawaiians for decades," added NARF Executive Director John Echowhawk. "Defending these promises is a matter of justice and dignity and is critical for the wellbeing of Native communities."

Honoring the Lives of MMIWGM in Hilo



On May 5, Hilo nonprofits He Ho'omaka Hou Ana 'o Puna and Kū Ānuenue organized a community observance to honor the lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Māhū (MMIWGM) — part of a global movement that began in Canada almost 15 years ago. The Hilo event focused on the destigmatizing trauma, demanding systemic accountability, and fostering a space for collective healing. Local organizers called for improved data collection, culturally grounded response protocols, and justice for impacted families. Recent local tragedies underscore the urgency - including the disappearance of six O'ahu children in a single month. On Hawai'i Island, most missing children are Hawaiians ages 15–17; from 2018–2021, 182 Native Hawaiian girls went missing on Hawai'i Island. Poor, rural, and underserved communities are hardest hit. Hawai'i holds the highest per capita human trafficking rate of any state, according to the Human Trafficking Institute. "Puna and Ka'ū are high risk districts, where Native Hawaiian women and girls face disproportionate rates of disappearance, domestic violence, trafficking, and homicide," said Dr. Dayna Schultz, lead mentor at He Ho'omaka Hou Ana 'o Puna. Hawai'i County consistently reports one of the highest Domestic Violence arrest rates in the state. Through oli, prayer, and sign-waving, the event transformed busy Kanoelehua Avenue into a site of active resistance and solidarity. - Photo: Jaki Knaus

Two 'Ōiwi Named 2026 PPF Fellows

The First People's Fund, a national organization dedicated to uplifting Indigenous artists and culture bearers, recently announced their 2026 fellows and two 'Ōiwi are among them: Pua Case was named a Cultural Capital (CC) Fellow, while Nāwāhineokala'i Lanzilotti was named a Native Performing Arts (NPA) Fellow.

Case, from Hawai'i Island, is a kumu hula, public school teacher and Maunakea kia'i. She has interwoven her college education with traditional teachings



Pua Case - Courtesy Photos

from her kūpuna. Active in the Maunakea movement for the past decade, Case currently serves as the lead coordinator of Mauna Kea Education and Awareness.

The CC Fellowship offers financial support and guidance to



Nāwāhineokala'i Lanzilotti

culture bearers and artists rooted in their communities and committed to passing on ancestral knowledge to future generations.

Lanzilotti is a sound artist and director from Mānoa, O'ahu, and founder of nonprofit Pulse Ocea-

nia — an Indigenous performance incubator rooted in aloha 'āina. Her art explores transformations of sound inspired by the movement of light across the clouds, rain and 'āina using vocals, electronics and the cello.

The NPA Fellowship helps Native Artists create and perform in theatre, music, dance, etc. It provides network-building, professional development training, and funding to work toward a career in performing arts.

Since 1999, First Peoples Fund has honored over 550 artists, distributing over \$10 million. This year, 35 artists in three categories were named FPF fellows, each of whom received a \$10,000 grant to pursue their work.

Celebrating Traditional Storytelling



Kealoha Kelekolio - Courtesy Photo

On June 20, the PA'I Foundation will present a special oral storytelling event, Ola Nā Mo'olelo, featuring Kealoha Kelekolio at the PA'I Arts & Cultural Center in Kaka'ako.

Long before adopting the Latin writing system introduced to Hawai'i by missionaries, our history, stories and genealogies were memorized and carried forward from one generation to the next.

In this vein, Kelekolio, a respected cultural practitioner and storyteller, invites audiences to step into the rich world of Hawaiian oral tradition as he presents an evening of mo'olelo that have been passed down over

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centuries.

Kelekolio will guide listeners on an immersive journey, bringing to life the epic battle between Pele and her sister, Nāmakaokahā'i, and captivate them with the fascinating world of kupua – the demi-gods who embody the connection between nature and the divine.

Throughout his career in performing arts – which includes theatre, dance, and Hawaiian cultural education – Kelekolio has performed with Tau Dance Theatre appearing on stages across the continent including Lincoln Center. He also worked as a storyteller at Disney Aulani Resort.

For information or to purchase tickets go to paifoundation.org.

EPA Rejects Hawai'i's Clean Air Plan

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rejected Hawai'i's Regional Haze State Implementation Plan on May 15, illegally overriding the state's plan to clean up haze-causing pollution from aging oil-burning power plants on Hawai'i Island and Maui.

Without the plan in place, 8,500 tons of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides will continue to pollute the air around these plants each year, adversely affecting nearby communities and resulting in dirtier air at Hawai'i Volcanoes and Haleakalā national parks.

"This action is another in a string of EPA efforts to keep old, inefficient power plants running no matter the costs to the people and places those facilities harm," said National Parks Conservation Association Clean Air Program Director Ulla Reeves.

Under the Clean Air Act, states develop plans every 10 years to reduce the haze pollution that

obscures views in national parks and wilderness areas. Hawaiian Electric (HECO) proposed, and agreed, to retire plants instead of installing the required pollution controls.

But then in August 2025, HECO reversed course asking the EPA to release it from its commitments, citing speculative "grid reliability" concerns. EPA accepted those claims without independent analysis.

"Once again, the law and facts don't matter at Trump's EPA, which would rather protect the fossil fuel industry instead of our environment," said Isaac Moriwake, managing attorney for Earthjustice's Mid-Pacific Office.

"What's worse is that the EPA is letting HECO renege on its own promise to shut down these plants, which are among the cost-

liest, most unreliable plants in the nation."

"Their legal theory won't hold up in court, but in the meantime, families will keep breathing the pollution the Clean Air Act was supposed to clean up," added Abi Vijayan, senior climate attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Pieper Named Senior VP at ASB

Billy Pieper has been named senior vice president, director of commercial banking at American Savings Bank (ASB). Pieper has more than 20 years of experience in the financial industry. Prior to joining ASB in 2021, he held positions at Barclays Bank and Bank of Hawai'i.

At Kamehameha Schools

New 'Ōiwi-Owned Soil Lab Opens in Honolulu



Community members gathered on May 14 to bless the opening of Makali'i Metrics, a new soil laboratory in downtown Honolulu founded by 'Ōiwi entrepreneurs Kūha'o Zane and Daniel Richardson. The new space marks an important step toward putting locally grounded environmental tools and expertise directly into the hands of the communities caring for Hawai'i's 'āina – from homeowners to single-field farms to large operations. Every test combines cutting-edge lab analysis with insights rooted in traditional Hawaiian land management practices. - Photo: Philamer Felicitas

'Aha Pūnana Leo, and on the advisory council for Housing Hawai'i's Future.

He has also served on the boards of Pacific Islanders in Communications and Ke Ali'i Pauahi Foundation, as a Bishop Museum trustee, and a member of the Polynesian Voyaging Society's advancement committee.

Pieper is an Omidyar Fellow, a Pacific Century Fellow, and in 2024 was named a *Hawai'i Business* magazine "20 for the Next 20" leader.

Lipe Appointed Po'o Kula of KS Kapālama



Dr. Punihei Lipe - Courtesy Photo

Dr. Punihei Lipe has been appointed po'o kula (headmaster) of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama (KSK) overseeing the 600-acre campus that enrolls some 3,200 haumāna in grades K-12.

She was selected after a rigorous search that spanned months and was informed by input from more than a thousand community members including current haumāna, kumu, parents, and alumni.

Lipe has an extensive background in Hawaiian culture-based education and more than two decades of leadership within the UH system, serving in various roles including: director of Hawai'i Papa o ke Ao Native Hawaiian Place of Learning Advancement Office; director of the Institute for Hawaiian Language Research and Translation;

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Billy Pieper - Courtesy Photo

Kapālama, Pieper was a standout athlete in both football and baseball and won a football scholarship to UCLA. After earning his BA, he played minor league baseball for a couple of years, then enrolled at UH Mānoa earning an MBA.

Pieper serves as board chair for Hawai'i Community Lending and RiseHI Collective. He also serves on the boards of 'Iolani Palace, Positive Coaching Alliance, and

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and director of the Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Campus Center.

Her own educational journey began at Pūnana Leo o Hono-lulu. From there she attended Ke Kula Kaiapuni o Waiau before enrolling at KSK. After graduating, Lipe attended UH Mānoa earning a BA in Hawaiian studies and later a Ph.D. in educational administration. She also holds a master's degree in counseling psychology from Chaminade University. She begins her new role on June 15.

Award-Winning Film From 'Ōiwi Producer Lucero



Kealohi Lee Lucero - Courtesy Photo

Paper Bag Plan, an independent film from Blue Sun Pictures produced by Executive Producer Ke'alohe Lee Lucero, and written and directed by her husband, Anthony Lucero, is now streaming internationally.

The film has won 17 awards on the film festival circuit and was screened at Consolidated Theatres at Ward in September 2025. The poignant and moving drama tells the story of a terminally ill father who teaches his wheelchair-bound adult son to bag groceries in preparation for a life of independence once he is gone.

Lucero grew up in Ka'a'awa on O'ahu, graduated from Kamehameha Schools Kapālama and went on to UH Mānoa earning

bachelor's and master's degrees in communication. While attending school she interned at *Hawai'i Public Television* and eventually become the station's youngest director.

After college, she moved to the continent to pursue a career in the film industry, starting as an assistant editor on *Baywatch Hawai'i* and eventually working her way up to co-executive producer of *America's Got Talent*.

Paper Bag Plan can be viewed on Amazon Prime, YouTube, Google Play, and iTunes.

McClellan Named 2026 Communicator of the Year

Makana McClellan, director of communications for Gov. Josh Green since 2022, has been named the 2026 Commu-



Makana McClellan - Courtesy Photo

nications. tor of the Year by the National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC). She is the first person from Hawai'i to receive this honor.

NAGC advances excellence in government communications across federal, state, county, local, military and tribal governments, and recognizes leaders who demonstrate innovation, professionalism and exceptional service in public sector commu-

nications.

McClellan leads external communications for the governor's office, coordinating with public information officers across every department in the executive branch. Under her leadership, a more unified statewide communications network has been established, improving coordination and consistency across agencies.

Prior to working for the governor, McClellan held positions at Shriners Children's Hospital and The Queen's Health Systems.

A graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama, she has a BA in journalism from Hawai'i Pacific University and an MBA from Chaminade. She served on the state Board of Education for four years, was recognized in 2025 with a President's Leadership Award from PRSA Hawai'i,

Race Honors Late Waterman Kalā Kukea



More than 400 paddlers gathered on April 25 to take part in Hui Nalu Canoe Club's annual pre-season race, the Kalā Kukea Ironman Challenge at Maunalua Bay, O'ahu. Kukea — a champion paddler and surfer — was an inspirational paddler and co-head coach for Hui Nalu. Kukea graduated from West Point and served two tours in the Vietnam war. When he resigned from the Army in 1970 he had earned two Bronze Stars, the Air Medal, the Combat Infantryman Badge, and a Purple Heart. He returned home and after two years of graduate study in ocean engineering at UH Mānoa he joined the Honolulu Fire Department. In 1996, he passed away unexpectedly while training with his son, Nalu. Kukea was just 52 years old. Every year since his passing, Hui Nalu has kept his memory alive with a celebration of wa'a and athleticism. This year's Ironman Challenge included 11 keiki crews, 37 short course crews and 24 long course crews — and during the short course, every Hui Nalu canoe was in the water. Pictured here are paddlers from Hui Nalu's women's 50+ crew. - Photo: Brad Styron

and received a Women Who Mean Business award from *Pacific Business News* in 2020.

Feds Reverse NH Education Cuts - For Now

Following a request by Sen. Brian Schatz in early May, U.S. DOE Secretary Linda McMahon has agreed to keep Native Hawaiian educational programs fully funded for at least another year.

Some \$46 million in federal money that Schatz, a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, previously secured in Congress is guaranteed to continue funding more than 60 early childhood education sites across Hawai'i, along with home visiting programs for keiki under 5, workforce development for parents, and Hawaiian language immersion programs. These programs serve more than 3,000 families.

"This is good news for Hawai'i," said Schatz. "This money helps thousands of young kids develop learning skills and gives Native Hawaiian families more affordable child care options."

The looming threat of federal funding cuts put a number of Native Hawaiian programs at risk — including the popular Tūtū and Me program operated by non-profit Partners in Development Foundation (PIDF). In April the organization announced the closure of 17 of its 25 sites.

In a formal statement in response to the May 7 announcement, PIDF CEO Shawn Kana'iaupuni expressed gratitude to Schatz but cautioned, "we still do not know how much funding will ultimately be released, when funds would become available, or whether PIDF will receive the support necessary to sustain all current programs, staffing, and sites. ■"

OHA Trustees Visit Maui and Kaua'i



During the month of May, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Board of Trustees and select staff traveled to the islands of Maui and Kaua'i for the organization's first two annual island community meetings of 2026. While on Maui during the week of May 4, trustees traveled upcountry to the Waiohuli Community Center on Hawaiian Homes Land in Kula, and also visited the Maui Arts & Cultural Center (MACC) in Kahului - described as the artistic and educational heart of the community. In the top photo, MACC President and CEO Art Vento provided OHA with a personalized tour of the center. During the week of May 11, trustees traveled to Kaua'i. There, they had the opportunity to visit the Pe'e Kaua'i Farm Site on the west side of the island managed by nonprofit Kumano i ke Ala which serves as a community space for cultural education and kalo farming. They also visited the Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF) at Barking Sands, where they were met by Kaulana Mossman, PMRF community planning liaison officer, and a small hui of PMRF staff. In the bottom photo, Kaua'i and Ni'ihau Trustee Dan Ahuna spoke briefly to the group about Native Hawaiian concerns relative to the military's land stewardship and questions around whether military bases make Hawai'i more - or less - safe. - Photos: Nelson Gaspar



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Commercial Aquarium Fish Extraction Puts Hawai'i's Reefs and Community Practices at Risk

Hawai'i's constitution is clear: the state has a duty to protect and conserve natural resources for present and future generations. For communities across Hawai'i, nearshore reefs are not merely ecological assets – they sustain food security, Native Hawaiian customary and subsistence practices, recreation, and cultural traditions passed down through generations. When reef systems decline, these public benefits decline with them.

Today, Hawai'i's reefs face mounting cumulative pressures from climate change, land-based pollution, and fishing pressure. Addressing reef degradation requires comprehensive action. The legislature has already demonstrated leadership through initiatives such as cesspool conversion and restrictions on harmful sunscreen chemicals. Fisheries policy must be part of that broader conservation strategy.

Herbivorous reef fish play an essential role in maintaining reef resilience. Species such as lau'ipala (yellow tang) and kole (surgeonfish), heavily targeted by the commercial aquarium industry, help control invasive algae growth and create the ecological conditions coral reefs need to survive and recover. As herbivore populations decline, reef resilience weakens.

A 2023 peer-reviewed synthesis of statewide reef monitoring data by Department of Aquatic Resources (DAR) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) scientists found that in many moku – including the Hilo coast, leeward Maui, and all of O'ahu – more than 44% of surveyed reefs already have herbivore biomass below levels associated with healthy reef ecosystems.

In West Hawai'i, specifically, DAR monitoring has shown some reefs lost up to 50% of coral cover during the 2015 and 2019 bleaching events, leaving little ecological margin for additional extraction pressures, particularly on key herbivorous species.

These realities are directly relevant to proposals that would continue or expand commercial aquarium fish collection. While recent legislation failed to enact



Kaiali'i Kahele

CHAIR
Trustee,
Hawai'i Island

a long-overdue statewide prohibition, DAR is now considering proposals that could allow seven applicants to harvest up to 200,000 reef fish annually.

This would impose concentrated ecological harm for narrow private profit, while the broader public bears the long-term cost through diminished reef resilience, weakened food systems, and reduced cultural and recreational access.

Fishing for food, subsistence, recreation, and customary practice remains a vital part

of local life in Hawai'i. Allowing a small number of specialized commercial operators to extract public reef resources primarily to supply the international aquarium trade is fundamentally misaligned with Native Hawaiian values of stewardship, reciprocity, and mālama 'āina.

The commodification of reef species purely for export and profit stands in direct opposition to cultural practices rooted in sustainability and intergenerational responsibility.

Commercial aquarium fishers argue that restrictions threaten their livelihoods, but the industry has been largely shut down since 2017. Reopening or expanding this practice would introduce renewed pressure on already stressed ecosystems for limited public benefit. The Hawai'i Supreme Court's prior rulings addressed procedural compliance, not ecological sustainability.

Lawmakers will again have the opportunity to pursue a permanent statewide prohibition next legislative session, including on Hawai'i Island, where extraction may soon resume. Upholding Hawai'i's constitutional public trust obligations requires taking the long view: protecting reef ecosystems so Native Hawaiian rights, customary practices, and community wellbeing remain viable for future generations.

At its core, this is a question of priorities: whether Hawai'i will protect a narrow set of commercial interests or safeguard the reef systems and community practices that sustain our culture, food security, and way of life. ■

PART III: Serving the Lāhui - Investing in Our Future

In Parts I and II of this series, I shared reflections guided by the wisdom of our kūpuna and the values they instilled in us about service, humility, and our shared kuleana to the lāhui.

As we think about the kind of Hawai'i we hope to leave for our children and grandchildren, those lessons continue to guide the work that matters profoundly, like strengthening housing stability, growing and protecting our trust fund and assets, investing in education, and supporting the next generation of our lāhui.

One of the greatest challenges facing Native Hawaiian families today is housing. Too many of our people are being priced out of the communities where generations before them were raised, forcing families to leave Hawai'i in search of affordable living elsewhere.

For Native Hawaiians, this is deeply personal because Hawai'i is more than just a place to live. The 'āina is our culture, traditions, practices, and identity as a people.

Housing programs initiated by the state, like kauhale communities, have provided much needed immediate relief, dignity, and hope for individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity.

OHA must continue creating long-term pathways toward stability and homeownership for our Kānaka. Expanding affordable housing opportunities, supporting key partnerships, and advocating for responsible development are critical to helping Native Hawaiian families remain here at home. Supporting and growing housing opportunities must remain a priority if we want future generations to live, work, and raise their families in Hawai'i.

Investing in our future also means protecting the resources that will sustain our lāhui for generations to come. The Native Hawaiian Trust Fund assets are nearing \$1 billion dollars, and protecting those assets has required discipline, careful planning, and long-term thinking. We strengthened investment policies, diversified asset classes, adapted to changing markets, and remained focused on long-term stability.



Keoni Souza

VICE CHAIR
Trustee,
At-Large

This work is about more than numbers. It is about creating opportunities for future generations, acquiring income-producing assets, and preserving legacy lands and cultural sites that keep our connection to our lands.

Protecting our financial resources must also create direct benefits for our communities. Investments in housing, small business support, workforce development, and cultural preservation strengthen our lāhui and create opportunities

for future generations. We have a responsibility not only to protect what we inherited, but to leave something stronger for those who follow us.

Education remains equally important, especially as many Hawaiian-focused charter schools continue facing uncertainty from federal funding cuts and ongoing financial challenges. These schools help preserve the pillars of our strategic plan, Mana i Maui Ola, which are 'ohana, mo'omeheu, and 'āina, while creating learning environments where Native Hawaiian students feel connected, supported, and proud of who they are.

Supporting our youth must also extend beyond the classroom. I strongly believe youth sports and mentorship programs build confidence, discipline, teamwork, and healthy relationships for our keiki. Coaches, mentors, and community programs often become extended 'ohana, providing guidance and positive role models that stay with our children throughout their lives. These investments strengthen both families and communities.

As I reflect on the future ahead, I continue to believe deeply in the strength, resilience, and spirit of our lāhui. For me, this work has always been personal. It is about ensuring our children and grandchildren can live here in Hawai'i, stay connected to their culture, and feel proud of where they come from.

I remain immensely grateful for the opportunity to serve our community and will continue doing my best to help build a stronger future for our lāhui for generations to come. Mahalo. ■

Kaua'i, PMRF, and the Road Ahead

Last month, I had the opportunity to visit the Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF) during the OHA trustees' annual meetings on Kaua'i. For many in Hawai'i, PMRF is a familiar name, yet few fully understand what the facility is, the role it serves, and why conversations surrounding its future are becoming increasingly important for our state.

Located on Kaua'i's west side near Barking Sands, PMRF is different from most military facilities in Hawai'i. It is not a large troop base or harbor operation. Instead, PMRF is a specialized testing and tracking facility used for missile defense and other military research in the Pacific.

Often described as the world's largest instrumented multi-environment range, PMRF occupies a unique position within America's defense infrastructure. Hawai'i's geographic isolation and expansive access to the Pacific Ocean make the facility especially valuable for testing and tracking capabilities that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere.

PMRF is approaching a major turning point. Current leases and easements covering more than 8,000 acres on Kaua'i are set to expire between 2027 and 2030, and federal agencies are seeking long-term extensions. Public discussions are already underway. Last year, a draft environmental impact statement was released, followed by meetings on Kaua'i where residents shared differing views about the facility's future.

Supporters of PMRF point to its role in national security and its importance to Kaua'i's economy. The facility is one of the island's largest employers and provides jobs for many local residents. For some, it also helps diversify Kaua'i's economy beyond tourism.

At the same time, the lease discussions have renewed broader conversations about military land use in Hawai'i. Some community members and Native Hawaiian organizations have raised concerns about environmental impacts, water use, cultural access, and the future of public trust lands. Others have stressed that Native Hawaiian communities must have a meaningful role in decisions involving these lands.



Keli'i Akina, Ph.D.

Trustee,
At-Large

What makes PMRF different from many other military land issues in Hawai'i is that the debate is less about live-fire training and more about land use, stewardship, access, and the relationship between Hawai'i and the federal government. Much of the land tied to PMRF serves as buffer space and support infrastructure rather than active testing areas.

Still, decisions about the facility's future carry broader implications for Kaua'i and

Hawai'i, touching on economic opportunity, cultural stewardship, and the state's role in an increasingly important Pacific region. In the coming years, state leaders, federal agencies, Native Hawaiian organizations, and local communities will all help shape those decisions. I particularly look forward to how OHA will perform its unique constitutional role in this matter.

Regardless of where one stands on these issues, Native Hawaiians and all Hawai'i residents deserve a clear understanding of what PMRF is, why it matters, and why these upcoming decisions will have lasting implications for Kaua'i and our state as a whole. ■



Trustee Akina and Commanding Officer of the Pacific Missile Range Facility, Capt. Robert A. Prince. - Courtesy Photo

**BURIAL NOTICE:
HONUA‘ULA, MAUI**

All persons having information concerning two unmarked burials on TMK: (2) 2-1-008:099 in Pāpa‘anui Ahupua‘a, Honua‘ula District, Island of Maui, are requested to contact Kim Mooney, ASM Affiliates, at (808) 294-0735, kmooney@asmaffiliates.com, or 149 Ma‘a St, Suite 100, Kahului, HI 96732, or Leinoa Kong, DLNR-SHPD Burial Sites Program at (808) 652-1510 or Leinoa.Kong@hawaii.gov.

Appropriate treatment of the remains will occur in accordance with HRS, Chapter 6E, respective to these burial sites. The landowner intends to preserve both burials in place, following the preparation of Burial Treatment Plans in consultation with any identified descendants and with the approval of the Maui-Lanai Island Burial Council. All interested parties should respond within thirty 30 days of this notice and provide information to DLNR-SHPD adequately demonstrating lineal descent from these specific Native Hawaiian remains, or cultural descent from ancestors once residing or buried in the same ahupua‘a or moku.

**BURIAL NOTICE:
LAHAINA, MAUI**

Two burial sites containing human skeletal remains (State Inventory of Historic Places #s 50-50-03-10069 and -10070) were identified by Cultural Surveys Hawai‘i, Inc. during an archaeological inventory survey for the 764, 766, & 700 Front St. Project within Paunau Ahupua‘a, Lahaina District, Maui, TMK: (2) 4-6-009:009. Per Hawai‘i Revised Statutes §6E-43 and Hawai‘i Administrative Rules (HAR) §13-300, these are considered previously identified burial sites. Based on the context, the burials are historic and post-date 1878. The project area is located within LCA 8452:4.1 to Analea Keohokālole, LCA 303:1 to Kuakamauna, E., and LCA 327:2 to Kaauwai, Z. The project proponent is Miyaki Family Limited Liability Partnership, c/o Jay Miyaki, 600 Queen St., Unit C-4, Honolulu, HI 96813, Tel: (808) 522-1042. The decision to preserve in place or relocate shall be made by the Maui/Lāna‘i Islands Burial Council in consultation with

the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) and any recognized lineal and/or cultural descendants (HAR §13-300-33). Appropriate treatment shall occur in accordance with HAR §13-300-38. All persons having knowledge of these human remains are requested to contact Leinoa Kong, SHPD Burial Sites Specialist, at 130 Mahalani St., Wailuku, HI 96793, Tel: (808) 652-1510, Email: Leinoa.Kong@hawaii.gov. Interested parties shall respond within 30 days of this notice and file descendant claim forms and/or provide information to SHPD adequately demonstrating descent from the burials or ancestors buried in the same ahupua‘a.

**CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: KAIĀULU O NĀPILI
WORKFORCE HOUSING
PROJECT, MAILEPAI
AHUPUA‘A, KĀ‘ANAPALI**

On behalf of Ikaika Ohana, SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) is preparing a Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA) for the proposed Kaiāulu o Nāpili Workforce Housing Project. The proposed project will be located on approximately 14.99 acres in the ahupua‘a of Mailepai and a small portion of ‘Alaeloa in Kā‘anapali Moku on Maui, TMK (2) 4-3-001:096 (por.). The proposed development is intended to provide affordable housing in West Maui and includes a mix of single-family homes, multi-family apartments, and senior housing units. Related improvements such as a community center, laundry room, internal roadways, utilities, and landscaping will be provided. The project will also involve the installation of underground utility infrastructure. As part of the CIA process, SWCA is seeking consultation with individuals and organizations knowledgeable about the project area’s past and present cultural uses, including cultural traditions, gathering practices, and any concerns regarding potential effects of the project on cultural practices in the vicinity. This input will help inform the assessment and ensure that traditional and customary practices are considered during the environmental review process. Please contact SWCA at hawaii@culturalconsultation@swca.com or (808) 437-8974. Mahalo for your kōkua.

**CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND KA PA‘AKAI
ANALYSIS FOR THE PROPOSED
KAIMINANI WORKFORCE
HOUSING PROJECT**

Pacific Legacy, Inc., on behalf of Kaimana Environmental Solutions, LLC, is conducting a Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA) and Ka Pa‘akai Analysis for the Proposed Kaiminani Workforce Housing Project, ‘O‘oma 1 Ahupua‘a, North Kona District, Island of Hawai‘i [TMK: (3) 7-3-010:056 and (3) 7-3-010:061 (por.)]. The County of Hawai‘i Office of Housing and Community Development is proposing to develop workforce rental housing, which would include single-family and multi-family rental housing units on 275 acres. Pacific Legacy, Inc. seeks to consult with individuals and organizations who possess knowledge regarding:

- Cultural associations, mo‘olelo, or legendary accounts associated with ‘O‘oma Ahupua‘a.
- Past and present land use or traditional gathering practices within and near the project area.
- Cultural resources which may be impacted by the proposed project, including traditional resource gathering sites, traditional access trails, wahi pana, and/or burials.
- Any other cultural concerns related to traditional Hawaiian or other cultural practices within or near the proposed project area.
- Referrals to other knowledgeable individuals who may be willing to share their cultural knowledge of the proposed project area and wider ‘O‘oma Ahupua‘a.

Those interested in participating are invited to contact Makanani Bell at 808-263-4800 or bell@pacificlegacy.com.

**KA PA‘AKAI ANALYSIS FOR
MAHI PONO PHOTO-VOLTAIC
SOLAR FARM, PŪLEHUNUI**

Cultural Surveys Hawai‘i (CSH), on behalf of Mahi Pono, LLC, is conducting a Ka Pa‘akai Analysis for the proposed Mahi

Pono Photo-Voltaic Solar Farm Project, Pūlehunui, Wailuku, Maui (TMK: (2) 3-8-004:001-0002 por.). Mahi Pono, LLC is proposing to install an 8-Megawatt (MW) Photovoltaic (PV) solar farm and related improvements on TMK: (2) 3-8-004:001-0002 (por.). Parcel 001 is approximately 3,422 acres in size while the boundaries of the project area on portion -0002 total approximately 29.3-acres. The project will likely involve ground-altering activities to install footings and improvements for the solar array. CSH seeks your knowledge, insight, and input on the following topics:

- Your knowledge of traditional cultural practices within the proposed project area and Pūlehunui Ahupua‘a
- The different natural resources associated with your specific cultural practice
- Referrals to other kūpuna, kama‘āina, and traditional cultural practitioners knowledgeable about the proposed project area and Pūlehunui Ahupua‘a
- Your comments or thoughts on the potential impacts the proposed project may have on cultural sites, practices, and resources within the proposed project area and Pūlehunui Ahupua‘a

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact CSH Cultural Researcher, Chantellee Spencer by email at cspencer@culturalsurveys.com no later than August 5, 2026.

**KA PA‘AKAI ANALYSIS: MAHI
PONO HECO INTERCONNECT
SUBSTATION PROJECT**

Cultural Surveys Hawai‘i (CSH), at the request of Muneikiyo Hiraga, on behalf of Mahi Pono, LLC, is conducting a Ka Pa‘akai Analysis for the Mahi Pono HECO Interconnect Substation Project, Wailuku Ahupua‘a, Wailuku District, TMK (2) 3-8-006:001 por. Mahi Pono, LLC is proposing to relocate an electrical substation and related improvements on an approximately 1.7-acre site in Central Maui which is a portion of a larger parcel identified as TMK: (2) 3-8-006:001. The substation needs to be relocated prior to the expira-

PUBLIC NOTICES

Continued from page 33

tion of the existing Sugar Mill substation easement agreement. The proposed replacement substation will be used by Mahi Pono to access the HECO grid infrastructure for their farming operations. Project related ground disturbance will include the installation of footings and improvements for the substation components. CSH seeks your knowledge, insight, and input on the following topics:

- Your knowledge of traditional cultural practices within the proposed project area and Wailuku Ahupua‘a
- The different natural resources associated with your specific cultural practice
- Referrals to other kūpuna, kama‘āina, and traditional cultural practitioners knowledgeable about the proposed project area and Wailuku Ahupua‘a
- Your comments or thoughts on the potential impacts the proposed project may have on cultural sites, practices, and resources within the proposed project area and Wailuku Ahupua‘a

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact CSH Cultural Researcher, Kellen Tanaka by email at ktanaka@culturalsurveys.com or Chantellee Spencer at cspencer@culturalsurveys.com. ■



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- SEARCH**

AIPIA/KAHANANUI - Descendants of Joseph Kelii Aipia and Meleana Penikala Kahananui of Kalaoa, Kona, Hawai‘i. Family Reunion on July 18, 2026, at Kualoa Beach Park, O‘ahu. Contact: Nanikehau Keama (808) 594-6289.

AKAU - Descendants of Sen Kau Ching Akeni/Kamakahemali‘ili‘i Awa Kepe‘a are having a family reunion in Waimea, Hawai‘i on June 26-28, 2026. Calling all descendants of their three children (1) William Paul Mahinauli Akeni Akau/Roseline Kealohapauole Kalaluhi and William Paul Mahinauli Akeni Akau/Lydia Awaa Kahookano (2) Pekina Akeni/Goo Kim Seu (3) Apikai (Apitai) Akeni/Kahana Maluwaikoo. For more info and to register visit: akaumahanu.org/2026reunion email: huiohanookau@gmail.com or call: 808-444-5756.

KA‘AUHAUKANE - Na Lālā O Ana Lumaukahili‘owahinekapu Ka‘auhaukane will celebrate our ‘Ohana Reunion - Potluck Lunch on Sunday, August 9, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Bellows Air Force Station, Picnic Pavilion 5-A. Deadline to register, Sunday, July 12, 2026. To ensure base access, please contact your family representative: Peter Machado 808-282-3732 (Kapiko and Quinn); Linda Ho 808-239-8081 (Iseke); Louie Peterson 808-216-9331 (Isaacs and Iseke); Colleen Tam Loo 808-729-8662 or Puanani Orton 808-381-3510 (McKee).

KELEPOLO - Calling the descendants of Maika‘aloa and Annie (Kumulau) Kelepolo of Kainaliu, Kona, Hawai‘i and their seven keiki: Albert, Peter, Josephine, William, Joseph, Isabella, and Lillian. We are planning an ‘ohana reunion for July 17-19, 2026, in Kona, Hawai‘i. Contact Monico Galieto (grandson of William Kelepolo) at kelepoloohana@gmail.com or call (808) 936-5682. When emailing, provide your name, phone number, mailing/email addresses. and how you’re related, I will send an information packet.

KANIALAMA - ‘Auhea ‘oukou e nā mamo a Kanialama? Calling on the direct descendants of Kinikahikoainoa and Pooui Pahane, along with Kaianui and Nakahili, parents of Kanialama and Kaohuaino Kaianui, respectively. This includes ka ‘ohana Long, Kahanu, Gooman, and the descendants of Kelupaka Kaianui and Pila Kauahiokona. Join us at our biennial reunion for mele, mo‘olelo and mo‘oku‘auhau... and of course, le‘ale‘a! For more information, email: pukanaokanialama26@gmail.com E ola ka hā loa o ka ‘ohana!

KUPIHEA - ‘Ohana of Solomon N. Kupihea and M. Hattie Kuapahi Kupihea: Join us on Kaua‘i July 12-19, 2026! Daily planned activities to strengthen bonds and learn faces. Evening potluck dinners for genealogy and talk story. Visit our website for more information. <https://bit.ly/Kupihea-Kuapahi-reunion-2026>. Email: kupihea.reunion@gmail.com

LOVELL - Reunion Announcement. The descendants of Joseph Lovell a me Mele Holokahiki will hold a family reunion on Kaua‘i, July 12–16, 2028. We are specifically seeking descendants of Loika, John, William, Daniel, and Kini Lovell to assist with the planning and organization of this gathering. Your kōkua is greatly appreciated as we bring our ‘ohana together. Please contact Kellie at kelliiepupu@gmail.com or Makalapua at kaawa@hawaii.edu for more information and to get involved.

MAR - Descendants of Yuen Mar and Annie Moi Lau - Join us for our ‘ohana gathering on Sat., June 27, 2026, at ‘Āina Moana Park (Magic Island), in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. For more information, email Aina at: jsimkings77@icloud.com. Please provide your name, contact info and your ‘ohana relationship.

PIO - Descendants of Kepio and Keoahu of Kaupō, Maui, are having a family reunion on Maui, Labor Day weekend, Sept. 4-6, 2026, at Pukalani Community Center. Their six children used the surnames Kepio or Pio: Sampson Kahaleuahi (Anadasia Kealoha); Victoria Nakoaelua (Kahaleauki); Maria Malaeta (Keahi/Adams, Sam Akahi Sr.); Samuel Kaukani (Mele Kakaio, Rebecca Malulu); Ipoaloha (Kalanani Kekiwi); and Joseph Kaleohano (Elizabeth Nakula, Minnie Aloiau). Contact: Ka‘apuni Peters-Wong 808-375-4321; Toni Kowalski-Dacquel 808-436-1845; Valda Baisa Andaya 808-572-9245; Ululani Opiana Glass 808-446-9309; Kapiolani Adams 808-778-6383; or email pioohana@gmail.com. ■

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e Kuleana
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AINA REALTOR - KAUA'I DHHL LOT - 4336 Haku Aina Road, Anahola - 4 bedroom, 3 bath Fixer upper, 10,000 sqft lot - Leasehold - Call Jordan Aina (Realtor) for details - 808-276-0880 - Coldwell Banker Realty. I service Homestead on all islands. I also have buyers ready on each island.

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HOMES WITH ALOHA-Kaumana/ Hilo- Single level 3bed/ 2.5 baths. Built 2009 Lot size 11,900. \$380,000 This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303

HOMES WITH ALOHA- Keaukaha/ Hilo- Single level 5 bedrooms/2 baths on 21,155 sq ft lot. \$450,000 This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303

HOMES WITH ALOHA-Waimanalo Single level 3 bedrooms/1 baths \$380,000 Major repairs needed. Lot size 7,525 sq. ft. This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303 .

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