



1. Keiki playing in Kaunani loko 2. Stewards planting kī (ti leaf) 3. View of Kaunani loko from Kalanianaʻole Avenue side

Kaunani A Perpetual Conservation Easement

Protecting a Place of Abundance

In 2021, Hui Ho'oleimaluō, local 501(c)(3), Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo Public Charter School (Ka 'Umeke) and Hawai'i Land Trust (HILT) partnered for the permanent protection of Kaunani: A Perpetual Conservation Easement along the Keaukaha coastline in Hilo, Hawai'i, includes freshwater springs, anchialine ponds, and traditional fishponds including Wai'ōlena Loko I'a (Fishpond). Each pond traditionally had a function - fish production, drinking water, or bathing. Keaukaha is a prominent cultural landscape that many Native Hawaiians call home. The Keaukaha coastline is known for its many freshwater springs that are fed by groundwater from Mauna Kea that percolates at the coast. As such, the water in the loko at Kaunani is traditionally known as waikai (brackish water). Hawaiians of old in Keaukaha enhanced the natural springs to create loko i'a as an efficient use of waikai, facilitating unique brackish ecosystems that nurtured juvenile fish, other marine creatures, limu, and seabirds. The present day Keaukaha community is reviving these practices. The dynamic Kaunani Loko I'a property provides a much needed physical learning space for intensive observational studies on natural and climate phenomena (e.g. changes in freshwater input, increased storm effects, sea level rise). Research on climate change and coastal loko i'a provides unique insights because of the complexity of these integrated aquaculture farming systems connecting entire watershed ecosystems.



Land Protection Strategy

Fee ownership by Hui Ho'oleimaluō 501(c)(3) with proposed Conservation Easement co-held by Hawai'i Land Trust and the County of Hawai'i

Conservation Values

Community protection, restoration and stewardship of anchialine and spring fed ponds; preservation of ancient aquaculture system; outdoor education; agricultural land

Land Features

Loko wai (fresh water ponds); Fresh water springs; Waikai (brackish water) native habitat and ecosystem



Keiki fishing in loko i'a

Kaumau Loko i'a

Ecosystem Protection

Keaukaha is facing tremendous development pressure that threatens the ecosystem and Keaukaha's way of life. Current regulations allow eight houses to be built on the Kaumau property. The local nonprofit Hui Ho'oleimaluō recently acquired the property and hopes to forever safeguard Kaumau with a perpetual conservation easement. The conservation easement will prohibit subdivision, limit development to a community structure, and require educational access to benefit all current and future generations. A recent survey done by community members and fishermen identified a variety of native species inhabiting the loko wai including 'ōpae, 'o'opu, 'anae, and 'āholehole. The anchialine pools host a special aquatic ecosystem for some of Hawai'i's rarest species such as 'ōpae'ula and pinao'ula.

Community Vision

Local families, schools and community groups will have peace of mind that these irreplaceable loko i'a will be protected in perpetuity. The next generation will reconnect with these lands and be empowered to learn from and care for them, having direct positive impacts on the unique ecosystem and native species including 'ōpae'ula, 'o'opu, 'anae, 'āholehole, and pinao'ula. The lands will serve as an outdoor classroom of STEAM skill-building, and place-based learning for Hui Ho'oleimaluō and the schools that they welcome such as Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo. With the land protected by the conservation easement, Hui Ho'oleimaluō will be able to turn its full attention to loko i'a restoration, food production and security, education, and knowledge sharing of the area's rich cultural history.

Get Involved!

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[Hui Ho'oleimaluō](#) is a Hawai'i 501c3 nonprofit focusing on loko i'a restoration in the ahupua'a of Waiākea, Hawai'i Island that provides opportunities for STEAM skill building, place based learning, and community engagement through the maintenance and management of loko i'a ecosystems.

[Hawai'i Land Trust](#) is a Hawai'i 501c3 nonprofit and nationally accredited land trust that protects and stewards the lands

