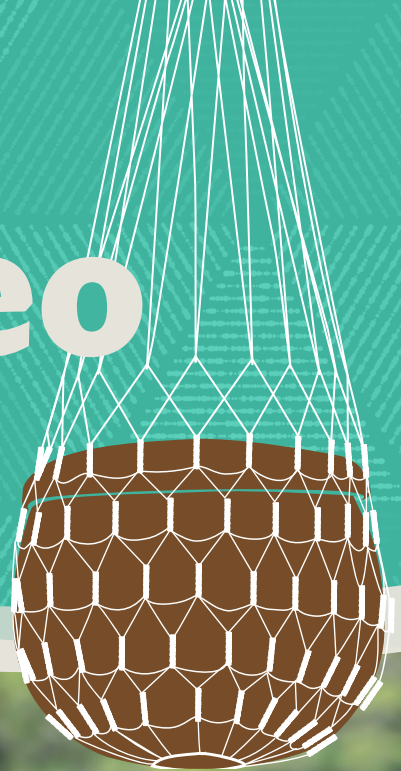


‘Umeke Kā‘eo

A well-filled calabash, a well-filled mind.

HAWAI‘I LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER | VOLUME 13, NUMBER 1 | SPRING 2024



**PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITY
FOR CONSERVATION WINS
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HAWAI‘I LAND TRUST



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'Umeke Kā'eo is the newsletter of Hawai'i Land Trust, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization committed to land conservation in Hawai'i.

As a Hawai'i organization, we encourage our entire community to learn more about the Hawaiian language. Should you come across a Hawaiian word or term you don't understand in our newsletter, please visit wehewehe.org or email info@hilt.org for more information.

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Cover Photo: Magnolia Hartman, a student at Seabury Hall, participated in a recent volunteer day at Nu'u Refuge and helped babysit a goat that is being raised by a local rancher.

FROM THE CEO

Aloha e ka 'ohana HILT,

In last year's spring newsletter, I had the privilege of introducing myself as the new President and CEO of HILT. Over the last year, I've experienced a whirlwind of excitement, enrichment, connection, exhaustion, and gratitude. Today, I couldn't feel more privileged to serve our community daily at an outstanding organization. I've especially enjoyed the opportunity to meet and build new relationships with so many of you. Mahalo nui for such a warm welcome into the HILT 'ohana.

I am pleased to share that HILT continues to steadily grow its impact and resilience, thanks to the generosity of so many individuals and organizations. As a result, we have made tremendous progress over the last year in all areas of our work and are well positioned for new and exciting future projects.

With your help, in December, we successfully closed our largest fee purchase to date - 642 acres at Mahukona, creating HILT's eighth community preserve. We continue to seek a little over \$1M to reach our \$20M Ola Mahukona capital campaign goal. If you are interested in supporting this project, please visit hilt.org to donate or sign up for a community workday or hike.

In 2023, we were also able to close two fee and easement transactions. HILT's eight community preserves and 52 conservation easements cover 22,553 acres! Among other accomplishments, we also hired six new staff and 41 interns, hosted 17,308 visits in HILT's educational and community programs, constructed hundreds of feet of fishpond wall at Kapoho and a new traditional hale at Maunawila, and planted nearly one thousand native and rare plants. We anticipate these results will continue and grow in 2024.

HILT also continues to support those impacted by the Maui fires through temporary employment and green job training opportunities, with support from Hawai'i Community Foundation's Maui Strong Fund and KUPU. Through this program, interested Maui residents can join our team of enthusiastic stewards on landscape-scale 'āina restoration projects. Please visit hilt.org/careers for more information.

All this impactful growth and progress would not be possible without HILT's 'ohana of incredible supporters. Thank you for believing in our vision and mission and trusting our organization to fulfill this immense kuleana of service to our 'āina and community.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

'Olu Campbell
President & Chief Executive Officer



Partnering with Community for Conservation Wins

Over the past several decades, residents of coastal communities have become increasingly aware of the important role that wetlands play in capturing sediment, mitigating floods, and providing critical habitat for threatened and endangered species. Several years ago, a community-led effort in Kula Kai (the coastal area of south east Maui, often referred to as Kīhei) was begun by the Save the Wetlands Hui. In early 2020 Hawai'i Land Trust staff began assisting Save the Wetlands Hui in their restoration efforts. As described by Robin Knox, this partnership serves both the people and threatened habitats of this coastal community in south Maui.



Save the Wetlands Hui (the Hui) was formed in 2019 by residents who were concerned about the disappearance of South Maui's last remaining wetlands. Wetlands are crucial ecosystems that provide habitat for a diverse range of plant and animal species, store flood waters, protect ocean water quality, support cultural and recreational activities, and significantly enhance resilience against coastal flooding and the effects of climate change, sequestering carbon up to 55 times faster than tropical rainforests.

Ae'o, a native waterbird, thrive in wetland habitats. Here four ae'o forage at Lā'ie wetland.



Despite their importance, wetlands are increasingly threatened by development and pollution. Since 1970, about 35% of the world’s wetlands have been lost — disappearing about three times faster than forests. In Kula Kai (the makai part of Kula Moku), on the leeward coast of Maui island over 50% of the wetlands were lost to development between 1965 and 2003, and losses have continued to date.

The Hui believes that protection and restoration of the remaining wetlands can provide climate resilience benefits including nature-based solutions for the increasingly severe flooding that has been occurring in North Kīhei. Hawai’i Land Trust supported the efforts of the Hui by providing restoration guidance, space for a native plant nursery, and serving as fiscal sponsor of County of Maui grants from 2020 to 2023. With this support, the Hui embarked upon a mission to save the wetlands and build climate resilience on the pillars of culture, science, and community.

Aloha ‘āina is the principle that guides the Hui and reaffirms the importance of nohona Hawai’i: our relationship with the place we call home. Cultural Advisor, Trinette Furtado, reminds us of our kuleana to honor, listen to, and follow the mana’o and ‘ike of Akua, our ‘aumakua, and our kūpuna. Our restoration site was named for Lā’ielohelohe, a chiefess, the wife of Pi’ilani, and mother of Kihawahine, mo’o guardian of Maui.

Through Kilo Mahina events, the Hui learned to kilo, or observe, examine, or forecast. Science, kilo, mo’olelo, and ‘ike are blended in a holistic way to observe and kōkua.

The Hui’s science work was led by Project Manager and Environmental Scientist, Robin Knox. Geospatial analysis of data identified 44 landscape features that included streams, wetlands, and fishponds. An inventory of the South Maui wetland TMK parcels and ownership was created to facilitate conservation and restoration efforts.



Top: Trinette Furtado at sunset at the wetlands. Above: Trench at Lā’ie Wetlands with layer markers.

Dr. Scott Fisher of HILT conducted a paleo environmental investigation of the sediment record at Lā'ie Mauka Wetland that revealed between eight and 12 significant storms or tsunamis which left a substantive signature on the landscape over 4,300 years. At least four are tsunamis, and there is a notable increasing frequency of evidence interpreted as storm events.

Through soil studies a significant layer of recent sediment deposits coming from the upper watersheds was observed that impairs the functions of the wetland to mitigate floods, protect ocean water quality, and provide waterbird habitat. The Hui's vision includes restoration of these wetland functions.

The Hui's observations identified a dynamic hydrologic regime that ranges seasonally from drought to flooding, with surface and groundwater levels influenced by precipitation in the upper watershed, tidal cycles, and sea level. Water quality data identified estuaries, freshwater springs, and hypersaline groundwater in areas with salt deposits at the surface. At the beginning of restoration work at Lā'ie Mauka, native species composition was less than 5% and species diversity was low with only three native species present. Dozens of restoration workdays have resulted in 100% increase in native species diversity and transformation of the active restoration area from almost 100% invasive plants to 95% native plant cover.

The Hui teamed with the non-profit, Learning Endeavors, to provide a professional development wetlands workshop for 14 elementary and secondary educators, and conducted wetland field trips for more than 500 students.

Calendars and student activity books were developed that teach about wetlands in 'ōlelo Hawai'i. Through social media and a website with interactive maps and videos, the Hui's education and outreach efforts have elevated the community's understanding of the value of wetlands.



Education and outreach to decision-makers about the location, status, value, and functions of wetlands culminated in passage of a precedent-setting Wetland Restoration and Conservation Ordinance which will establish a zoning overlay map protecting all Maui County Wetlands from development. Going forward, the Hui will continue our kilo, science, and educational efforts, working with our partners, the community, and decisionmakers to further refine our understanding of and care for the wetlands of Maui County.

Above: A student taking notes during a field trip to Lā'ie Wetlands. Below: Native plant cover at Kīhei Wetlands.



HILT Happenings



Protect

Island Harvest team, Hawai'i Island.

Hawai'i Land Trust was created by communities around Hawai'i out of a passionate love of natural spaces. Today, HILT prioritizes protecting wahi pana, or cultural landscapes, coastlines, and lands that produce food for Hawai'i's people.

Hawai'i Island: Celebrating Forever Protection at Mahukona and Advancing Agricultural Projects in Kohala

Mahalo to each and every hand that came together to ensure the permanent protection of the Mahukona Navigation & Ecological Complex, which was completed on December 11, 2023. We planted an 'ulu tree for abundance and kahuna kī honoring the protection of Mahukona. You can find more details about the completion of the project in our 2023 Annual Report Protect Highlights on page 19.

Our team has been diligently working on two agricultural projects in Kohala. We are eagerly anticipating the completion of the permanent protection of the 28-acre Island Harvest project in North Kohala this summer. This property is a family-owned and locally-rooted organic agricultural farm, specializing in macadamia nuts, 'ulu trees, and citrus. HILT has submitted an NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program application to raise public funds to help purchase a conservation easement, aiming to protect lo'i lands stewarded by the Kealoha family, a generational family of Kohala.

Kaua'i and Moloka'i: Exploring Unique Opportunities

HILT's Protect team continues to explore unique opportunities for our next land protection project on Kaua'i and Moloka'i, focusing on protecting coastlines, wahi kūpuna, and lands that grow healthy food for the local community.

Maui: Preserving Coastal Lands and Cultural Heritage

In November 2023, Nā Mamo Aloha 'Āina o Honokōhau, a Honokōhau-based nonprofit organization, in partnership with HILT and the County of Maui, completed the purchase and permanent protection of 1.447 acres of prime coastal lands on Honokōhau Bay in Kā'anapali, Maui. Nā Mamo plans to restore the land back to 'āina momona through culture-based education, growing healthy food, and furthering connection within the ahupua'a. In October 2023, in partnership with Ke Ao Hāli'i, County and State partners, together we successfully protected over eight acres of wahi kupuna, Hawaiian cultural landscapes, in Hāna, Maui, adding to the landscape level protection effort of two contiguous miles of coastal lands from Waioka Pond to Hāmoa. With ownership and stewardship by Ke Ao Hāli'i and a conservation easement held by HILT and Maui County, we look forward to these eight acres serving as a cultural stewardship, food forest, and educational hub for the community.

Honokōhau Bay



O‘ahu: Collaborating for Landscape-level Conservation

Together with the Trust for Public Land, the City and County of Honolulu, and State partners, we are working together to purchase and protect the cultural and traditional agricultural parcels of Pālāwai and Makali‘i in Maunawili, Kailua, O‘ahu. Ownership and stewardship efforts of the 116.5-acre Pālāwai parcel will be taken on by community nonprofit Ho‘okua‘āina, and the 59-acre Makali‘i parcel will be owned and stewarded by community nonprofit Kauluakalana, with conservation easements held by HILT and the City and County of Honolulu. The goal for revitalizing these lands is to

return them to lo‘i kalo, establish ‘āina-based education programs, restore native forest and habitat, and support stream and spring health. Makali‘i and Pālāwai are part of a landscape-level conservation effort by Hui Maunawili-Kawainui and the Kailua community to protect over 1,084 acres in Maunawili, including Maunawili Forest and the Queen’s Retreat, which were at risk of sale and development. As we proceed with the due diligence process, we are expecting to complete the project at the end of 2025.

A view of Maunawili Valley looking toward Olomana. The Makali‘i and Pālāwai parcels are at the base of Olomana adjacent to the existing Royal Hawaiian Golf Club.





▶▶▶ Steward

Stewardship is a very important part of our work at the Hawai'i Land Trust. While most often this involves removing invasive species and replacing them with indigenous or endemic plants, our work also involves gaining a better understanding of the threats our special places face and implementing strategies to overcome them.

Koa seeds from Kūkūau Community Forest gathered for propagation.

Hawai'i: Nurturing Resilience and Fostering Renewal

Kūkūau Community Forest

In our ongoing effort to bolster forest resiliency at Kūkūau, Ulumauahi Keali'ikanaka'oleohaililani, HILT's dedicated Kūkūau 'Āina Steward & Educator, has been diligently identifying natural, knowledge-based, and financial resources to support our goals. Over the past year, Ulu has been fortunate to collaborate with a lowland wet forest working group. This collective, composed of like-minded 'āina stewards and academics, is committed to preserving our remaining lowland wet forests.



Left: Volunteers at the inaugural volunteer day at Mahukona plant wiliwili trees, clear weeds, and establish protective stone rings. Right: Volunteers from Hōkuāla Kaua'i planting naupaka at Kāhili Beach Preserve.

One of the group's objectives has been to compile a comprehensive list of indigenous, Polynesian introduced, and fruiting plants. These plants, including familiar species such as niu, hau, mango, 'ulu, 'a'ali'i, kāwa'u, and 'awa, will complement our native forest restoration efforts in the lower half of the Kūkūau Forest.

Mahukona Navigation & Ecological Complex

On February 18th, HILT hosted its inaugural volunteer day at Mahukona. Fourteen individuals joined forces to plant 25 wiliwili trees, clear weeds, and establish protective stone rings around plants in the māla'ai, or food garden. Over recent months, ongoing site restoration led by HILT's Mahukona 'Āina Steward & Educator, Keone Emeliano, has involved clearing invasive plants around established 'ilima, 'uhaloa, and pā'ū o Hi'iaka. With support from the Omidyar Fund of the Hawai'i Community Foundation and Mauna Kea Resort, we are poised to restore functionality to the wells at Mahukona. This restoration work will aid in mitigating potential wildfire threats and provide essential irrigation for newly planted areas.

Kaua'i: Restoring Kāhili's Coastal Ecosystem

Kāhili Beach Preserve

Ann Eu, HILT's Kaua'i 'Āina Steward & Educator, extends her gratitude to the Kaua'i community for their steadfast support of Kāhili Beach. Last fall, Hōkuāla mobilized a substantial group to supplement our ongoing volunteer efforts, resulting in the removal of invasive Christmas berry and ironwood trees. This clearance has allowed the native 'aki'aki grass, which has resurged on the dunes, to thrive. Additionally, ground covers such as pōhinahina and 'ahu'awa are finding renewed habitats on the sand dunes. The restoration endeavors undertaken by our HILT team and volunteers have garnered positive feedback from both local regular visitors and newcomers alike. We sincerely appreciate the growing number of people who contribute to the care and upkeep of the Preserve. We kindly request that dog owners keep their dogs leashed at all times and ensure to clean up after them.



Left: A section of the kuleana ditch system that feeds the southern 'auwai at Waihe'e Refuge, which HILT and its community partners are working to maintain flow in the 'auwai system. Right: Volunteers at Nu'u Refuge finish planting a kukui sapling, part of the native forested bioshield.

Maui: Restoring Waterways and Sacred Landscapes

Waihe'e Coastal Dunes & Wetlands Refuge

As we transition from Ke Ala Polohiwa a Kanaloa to Piko o Wākea (winter solstice to spring equinox), our stewards at Waihe'e Refuge have made significant strides in our restoration efforts. Thanks to support from the County of Maui and a Coastal Resiliency for Underserved Communities grant from NOAA, we have commenced the restoration of waterways to eventually replenish water to Kapoho wetland. In the ahupua'a of Waihe'e, two 'auwai systems – southern and northern – exist. Led by Kia'i Collier, HILT's Maui 'Āina Steward, our focus lies on enhancing the southern 'auwai, collaborating with our up-river neighbors. Tasks include the removal of invasive plant species, sediment removal from waterways, and repairing leakages. While our work on the waterways is in the early stages, we have observed consistent water flow reaching lower reaches of Waihe'e River. Currently, our efforts are directed towards clearing invasive plants and improving accessibility to Waihe'e River from our property, as a precursor to commencing restoration work on the northern waterway in June.

Nu'u Refuge

Volunteers at Nu'u continue to be invaluable in our efforts to restore this wahi pana. On February 3rd, over 60 volunteers of all ages joined HILT staff to remove invasive species and plant 55 indigenous trees and shrubs, including hala, 'iliahi alo'e (sandalwood), and alahe'e. Furthermore, on February 25th, 25 students and parents from Seabury Hall middle and high school assisted in planting 30 kukui and alahe'e as part of our reforestation and bioshield project. We are deeply appreciative of the tremendous support, witnessing how much can be achieved in a relatively short time frame.

Preservation of Nu'u's history remains paramount. Through our Fund A Need program at the Buy Back the Beach Lū'au, generous donors enabled us to undertake a study of the ki'i pōhaku at Nu'u. Dr. Rachel Hoerman, an expert on rock art, will conduct this documentation work, providing a preservation plan for these culturally significant artifacts. We extend special gratitude to Dr. Andrew Walmisley and Mr. Kawika Gregoire for their invaluable insights, knowledge, and generosity of time. They have scoured newspapers from the 19th and 20th centuries (both English and 'ōlelo Hawai'i) and have contributed greatly to our awareness of the history of Nu'u.

O‘ahu: Looking Toward Maunawila Heiau’s Legacy

Maunawila Heiau Complex

2024 has brought positive developments to Maunawila Heiau. We extend heartfelt appreciation to volunteers from near and far, including the University of Hawai‘i Law School, for their contributions to our stewardship efforts, both on the land and in front of a computer. We eagerly anticipate hosting groups from Amazon and Southwest Airlines, who will engage in stewardship projects while learning about this sacred site. Over recent months, Mamo Leota, our Maunawila ‘Āina Steward & Educator, and Olivia Wallace, Maunawila Administrative Coordinator, have been diligently working to establish sustainable management solutions and plans for the future of Maunawila.

Sadly, the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) has been introduced to Maunawila Heiau Complex and neighboring properties, posing a threat to coconut palms, loulu, kalo, and hala. We remain committed to addressing this incursion through ongoing invasive brush clearance in the coming months.



Above: Students from University of Hawai‘i Law School volunteering at Maunawila Heiau Complex. Below: Volunteer group from Amazon, including board member Joey Aquino, at Maunawila Heiau Complex on October 7, 2023.





▶▶▶ Connect

Connection is at the core of all of our work at Hawai'i Land Trust. Our connection work includes our 'āina-based educational programs, Talk Story on the Land hiking series, volunteer days, and many more activities that connect people to 'āina.

Kōlea lauli'i (*Myrsine sandwicense*) found in the Kūkūau Community Forest.

Hawai'i Island: Connecting Communities to 'Āina

Kūkūau Community Forest

Over the last several months, Ulumauahi Keali'ikanaka'oleohaililani, Kūkūau 'Āina Steward & Educator, has been focused on enhancing access to the Kūkūau Community Forest. With support from the Hawai'i Tourism Authority and Change Happens Foundation, efforts are underway to establish an access road from South Wilder Road, with completion anticipated by the end of summer. While bringing the classroom to the forest remains a challenge, this spring,

the forest will come to the classroom through school visits. Students will engage in hands-on activities focused on building forest resiliency, including seed preparation, and plant and animal identification. Keep an eye out for upcoming workshops and volunteer days announced in our monthly e-blasts.

Mahukona Navigation & Ecological Complex

HILT's Mahukona 'Āina Steward & Educator, Keone Emeliano, has been actively developing relationships with local schools to establish an 'āina-based education program at Mahukona, HILT's newest community preserve on Hawai'i Island. Recent initiatives include engaging students from Kohala High School's Na'au 'Ōiwi program, where students spent five months harvesting invasive sisal stalks from Mahukona to create custom paddles using epoxy, carbon, and kevlar. Elementary-age students from the Kohala Unupa'a: Mauka to Makai Watchers and Caretakers program have also been participating in 'āina-based lessons at Mahukona, contributing to the preservation and restoration efforts of the area.

Mahalo to Nā Kālai Wa'a for inviting HILT staff members to join them while at the Ho'ūlu Lāhainā Unity Gathering in January. We appreciate their efforts to support the Maui

community, while also creating an opportunity to spend time with HILT staff. The groundwork of the organizations becoming familiar with each other is necessary for the success of the restoration and preservation of Mahukona.



Above: Kohala High School students creating paddles out of invasive sisal with direction from woodworker Richard Benton. Below: Canoe paddles made out of invasive sisal found at Mahukona Navigation & Ecological Complex.





Kaua'i: Inspiring Environmental Stewardship

Kāhili Beach Preserve

Kāhili has seen an increase in school participation in 'āina education programs in recent months. Kapule Torio, Kāhili Steward & Educator, is actively building partnerships with six different schools to expand outdoor classroom opportunities. Lessons at Kāhili include ahupua'a mapping, sand dune restoration, and discussions on environmental and biological impacts. Partnerships with organizations like Waipā Foundation, Surfrider Foundation, and DLNR's Division of Aquatic Resources continue to strengthen educational initiatives at the Preserve.



Maui: Fostering Environmental Literacy

Waihe'e Coastal Dunes & Wetlands Refuge

Despite the challenges faced by the Maui community in the aftermath of the August wildfires, 'āina-based education remains vital for youth development. We witness the benefits of these outdoor learning opportunities in heartfelt moments: a young child excitedly observing butterflies, a fourth-grade student sharing the colors of a lobster shell with friends, middle school students exploring the geography and weather systems of the Pacific Ocean that sustain Nā Wai 'Ehā, and high school students carefully selecting pōhaku to aid in the restoration of the Kapoho loko i'a kalo. These experiences profoundly impact students' understanding and appreciation of the environment.

We extend a special mahalo to the Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation for inviting us to join their 'EkoLu cohort. Their support, alongside contributions from the Makana Aloha Foundation, the Saunders Family Charitable Fund, and others, enhances our partnership with Waihe'e Elementary School and bolsters all our 'āina-based education programs.

Above: Students at Kāhili Beach Preserve starting their day of work. Left: Kula Elementary student showing off a lobster shell before returning it to the beach.

Nu'u Refuge

Nu'u Refuge has had the privilege of hosting visits from Montessori of Maui, Carden Academy, and King Kekaulike High School this year. Despite logistical challenges, including transportation to Nu'u's remote location, students have embraced opportunities to learn about native plants, engage in conservation efforts, and explore the area's rich cultural history. The profound impact of these experiences is evident in students' deeper connection to the land and each other. A King Kekaulike Kaiapuni Kumu summed it up perfectly with her description of her students' time at Nu'u, "They felt closer to the 'āina, closer to each other, and will take the memories and experience with them for the rest of their life."

O'ahu: Cultivating Cultural Awareness

Maunawila Heiau Complex

The educational program at Maunawila Heiau Complex continues to thrive, thanks to strong partnerships with local schools and organizations. Recent highlights include the completion of a new traditional hale, providing students with a sheltered space for learning and cultural exploration. Through collaborative efforts, students are immersed in Hawaiian history, anthropology, and sustainability, fostering a deeper understanding and connection to their environment.



Above: Montessori School Students carry plants through Nu'u Refuge to plant them in the bioshield. Below: Kumano I Ke Ala, Maunawila Kūkulu Hale Interns, and Maunawila staff at the hale blessing ceremony at Maunawila Heiau Complex.



HAWAI‘I LAND TRUST

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



2023 Highlights & Accomplishments

In 2023, HILT grew its staff by six, protected 655 acres on Hawai'i Island and Maui, advanced 10 land conservation projects toward permanent protection in the next two years, and connected thousands of students, residents, and visitors with the land by welcoming everyone and providing 'āina-based education. We are thrilled by the building momentum that will ensure the

protection and community stewardship of even more of Hawai'i's coastlines, Hawaiian cultural landscapes, and lands that grow food for Hawai'i's people.

HILT measures its success in advancing its mission work through a variety of metrics. Here are some highlights achieved in 2023:

52 
Conservation
EASEMENTS

22,553 Acres
PROTECTED


26,000+ 
VISITORS
at HILT Preserves

6,119 
COMMUNITY
Service Hours

8 Hawai'i Land Trust
Community
PRESERVES 

5,118 
Student
VISITS

PROTECT

(Conservation Purchases and Easements):

- Total places protected following HILT's Strategic Land Protection Priorities: **3**
- Total acreage protected in 2023: **655**
- Partnered with the Hāna community group Ke Ao Hāli'i to protect **8.6** acres of coastal ranchland of great cultural significance at Hāmoa, Hāna Coast, Maui
- Returned **1.4** acres of coastal land in Honokōhau, Kā'anapali, Maui to community hands in partnership with Nā Mamo 'Āina Aloha o Honokōhau and Maui County
- In partnership with generational Kohala families, Nā Kālai Wa'a, Hawai'i County, State, and Federal partners, and hundreds of supporters permanently protected 642 acres of coastal and pastureland in North Kohala, Hawaii Island known as Mahukona creating HILT's 8th community preserve **Mahukona Navigation & Ecological Complex**, to be protected and stewarded for the benefit of the community forever
- Advanced the protection of **3** local farms that grow healthy food for our communities on Hawai'i Island
- Significantly advanced **9** protection projects to close in 2024 through 2025
- Increased capacity to own and steward land in **8** communities

Protect Highlight: Mahukona Navigation & Ecological Complex

After more than three years of effort, on December 11 of 2023, HILT completed the purchase and permanent protection of Mahukona Navigation & Ecological Complex on Hawai'i Island's Kohala coastline. This transformative project, which represents a significant milestone in the creation of Hawai'i Land Trust's 8th community preserve and holds the promise of permanently safeguarding 175 culturally significant sites, providing sanctuary for dozens of threatened, endangered, and rare native plant and animal species, all while preserving a cherished landscape for the Kohala community. For decades, this land had been earmarked for development, a prospect that faced strong opposition from the Kohala community. However, in 2019, a turning point was reached when efforts by former HILT board member, Bill Swank, and Auntie Patti Ann Solomon, lineal descendant of Mahukona, resulted in the current landowners signing a purchase agreement with HILT. This marked a long-awaited glimmer of hope, validating the years of relentless community efforts.

Mahukona holds a profound historical legacy as the traditional training ground for navigators, a legacy that endures through the efforts of Nā Kālai Wa'a, a Native Hawaiian nonprofit organization. Nā Kālai Wa'a is dedicated to preserving cultural values and customs by teaching and practicing non-instrument navigation and open ocean voyaging. Alongside these teachings, they serve as caretakers for an array of traditional vessels, including Makali'i, a 54-foot double-hulled voyaging canoe. They are also stewards of Ko'a Heiau Holomoana, a navigational heiau (a place of worship) dating back more than a millennium at Mahukona. The expansive 642-acre Mahukona property spans six historic ahupua'a (land divisions), from north to south - Kapa'a Nui, Kou, Kamano, Mahukona, Hihiu, and Kaoma. Bordered by Lapakahi State Historical Park and Kapa'a Beach Park, the protection of Mahukona will contribute to a collective four miles of contiguously conserved coastline.

This extensive cultural landscape will continue to serve as a space for Hawaiian cultural practices and provide habitat for native plants and animals, including the precious 'iliahi alo'e (*Santalum ellipticum*), the endangered, yellow-faced bee (*Hylaeus assimulans*), and a diverse range of marine life and corals offshore. The public harbor, clear coastal waters, and scenic coastal trail are cherished recreational resources for the Kohala community, enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

STEWARD

(Caring for HILT's Preserves, and Conservation Easement Annual Monitoring):

- **3,617** acres stewarded at HILT community preserves across the state
- **990** native and rare plants planted at HILT's preserves
- **1,686** volunteers gave 6,119 hours of stewardship to HILT preserves
- Hosted **144** volunteer days at Mahukona Navigation & Ecological Complex, Kāhili Beach Preserve, Waihe'e Refuge, Nu'u Refuge, and Maunawila Heiau Complex
- Restored **300+** linear feet of Kapoho Loko Kalo I'a kuapā
- Provided annual monitoring for **50** Conservation Easements per national standards
- Developed **2,000** square meters of native forested bio-shield at Nu'u Refuge
- Trained **6** alaka'i in the art of uhaulumu pohaku (Hawaiian dry stack masonry) in the Ka Poholima program at Waihe'e Refuge

Steward Highlight: Nu'u Native Bioshield

In the early morning hours of July 18th, 1891, Nu'u, Kaupō resident, Mr. William Kalaowali, awoke to the screams and yells of his neighbors. As he stepped out of his front door he was astonished to see ocean water rushing inland, carrying people's personal items from around their home and causing tremendous fear throughout Nu'u village. As Mr. Kalaowali wrote in a brief article in the Hawaiian language newspaper *Ka Leo o Ka Lāhui*, perhaps most frightening, the sediment carried by this ocean wave covered the Pili o Kāne spring in the nearby Pūpuka pond, forcing the residents to trek to the spring at Waiū, about a mile away, to bring water for themselves and their animals.

All coasts in Hawai'i are subject to marine inundation, either from storms or tsunamis. Nu'u, however, has experienced two local tsunamis in the past five hundred years, generated by submarine landslides in the 'Alenuihāhā channel. The previous event was truly massive, reaching over 250 meters inland to heights over 8 meters, with waves traveling over 5.5 meters/second. As one of the most important wetlands in Hawai'i, the Nu'u (Pūpuka) pond is particularly vulnerable to tsunamis, considering its close proximity to the ocean and its history of tsunami inundation (besides the big event and the 1891 event described above, the 1946 Aleutian Island tsunami caused the abandonment of Nu'u village).

Recent devastating tsunamis around the world, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean and the 2011 Tōhoku-Okī, have generated a lot of research into the effectiveness of forested bioshields as a means of protecting sensitive ecosystems from the effects of high energy marine inundation events (which include both storms and tsunamis). Paleoenvironmental research conducted at Nu'u has identified about 17 indigenous, endemic and Polynesian introduced trees and shrubs that are ideal for inclusion in such a forested bioshield. These especially include trees such as hala, which are known to both capture sediment and slow down wave velocity; and hao and olopua, whose hard wood will reflect the energy of the wave as it arrives onshore.

With support from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWC) Small Grants program, HILT staff and volunteers began the process of establishing a forested bioshield around the Pūpuka pond in November of 2022. Of course, in an area as dry as Nu'u, planting the trees, shrubs, and grasses is only the first step. Throughout the ho'oilo (wet season) volunteers and staff worked tirelessly weeding around the bioshield and caring for these; with the arrival of the kauwela (summer), these same volunteers watered these trees every week. Today, the bioshield consists of over 400 trees and shrubs, and over 350 grasses and our dedicated volunteers have collectively logged thousands of hours. Much work still remains as we hope to expand this bioshield to ensure greater protection to the Pūpuka pond. Watching the dedication of these volunteers recalls the 'ōlelo no'eau: 'A'ohe hana nui ke alu 'ia (no task is too great when done together by all).

CONNECT

(‘Āina Engagement and Education):

- Led **39 Talk Story on the Land Hikes** across the islands, sharing the importance of mālama ‘āina with over 300 participants
- Taught **5,118** students in aina-based education on HILT preserves
- Provided **30** high school and college internships in natural and cultural resource management and land protection
- Welcomed **26,000+** visitors to our preserves across Hawai‘i
- Hosted **1,910** campers at HILT preserves
- **16** ‘āina and kai-based cultural practices perpetuated on HILT’s preserves
- Provided **1** after school youth education programs at Maunawila Heiau Complex
- Partnered with UH Maui College to deliver the **Ahupua‘a Stewards Leadership Program**
- Strengthened **14** community partnerships expanding HILT’s reach with mālama ‘āina partners

Connect Highlight: Maunawila ‘Ōpio Update

Hawai‘i Land Trust has hosted a paid summer internship program at Maunawila Heiau Complex in Hau‘ula, O‘ahu since 2017. Over the years we’ve welcomed a number of inspiring and motivated students in the program. We keep in touch with them and are so proud of how far they’ve come!



Makani Walker, 2022

Makani is currently double majoring in Hawaiian Studies and Psychology at UH-Hilo, pursuing a pre-med track with a focus on psychiatry.

“My time as a Maunawila Summer ‘Ōpio instilled in me a profound appreciation for the beauty of our culture. It taught me the value of teamwork and working hard with like-minded kānaka. These invaluable lessons have not only guided my academic and professional journey but have also fueled my passion for promoting mental health awareness within our lāhui.”



Moanahiwalani Walker, 2020 and 2022

Moana is attending BYUH and majoring in Hawaiian Language and Marine Biology.

“Maunawila has reinforced my understanding of the significance of immersing myself in hands-on learning, especially when exploring the history of culturally significant sites like Maunawila Heiau. Through this experience, I’ve come to appreciate the importance of getting my hands dirty – quite literally – as I uncover the layers of history and cultural heritage tied to the land.”



Morgan Plunkett, 2019

Morgan received a Bachelor’s of Business Administration in Business Management and International Business and a Masters of Human Resource Management from UH Mānoa Shidler College of Business. She is currently in her second year at William S. Richardson School of Law. She also works as the Grant Administrator for Mai ‘Ō A ‘Ō, a Title III grant supporting Native Hawaiian education at all levels.

“Stewarding the land, doing tours, and making implements like ‘ō‘ō and kaula with the ‘Ōpio helped me to realize how much I value education – preparing keiki from my community for future success. On the Mai ‘Ō A ‘Ō grant I oversee 10-15 graduate assistants pursuing teaching and high level research at the University of Hawai‘i. Upon graduating from law school, I hope to continue my work supporting Native Hawaiian education by advocating for improved programs and policies at the state and federal level.”



Uakea Silva 2017–2019 and 2023

Uakea is currently kumu of Papa 5-6 at Ke Kula Kaiapuni o Hau‘ula.

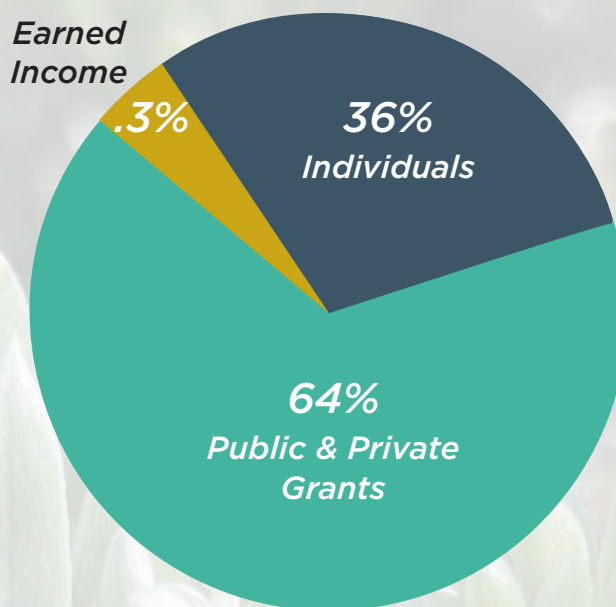
“Working on the land has strengthened my connection to both the ‘āina and kūpuna. An ‘ōlelo no‘eau that I couldn’t help connecting to was “Ho‘okahi ka ‘ilau like ana”. Wield the paddles together, work together. During the summers I worked at Maunawila, I built a relationship with the land, my ‘Ōpio, and my directors, and learned many new skills and traditional practices. I am looking forward to taking the things I’ve learned and passing them on to my haumana in hopes that one day they can carry it on to the next generation.”

Financial Summary

Combined statement of activities for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2023

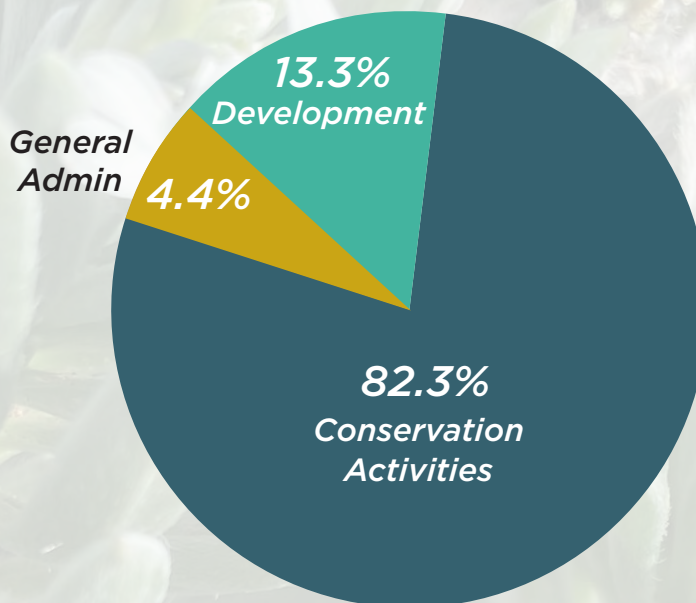
In 2023, our income exceeded expenses, and we raised \$3,221,464 for operations and stewardship, enabling HILT to protect and steward over 22,553 acres of land across the state. HILT's efficiency is further demonstrated by the fact that 82 cents for every dollar raised is used directly to advance our conservation mission. The financial results depicted here are from HILT's unaudited December 31, 2023, consolidated financial statements.

Revenue by Source Total Revenue \$3,221,464



Total Programmatic Efficiency

Total Expenses: \$2,406,209
Summary Program Expenses: \$1,980,172



2023 Featured Supporters

NŌPILI MONTHLY GIVING CLUB

The nōpili is a freshwater goby known to climb waterfalls by clinging to the wet stones. The unwavering determination of the nōpili has become synonymous for showing steadfast love through small, persistent acts. We equate that with the dedication of donors who make recurring gifts to HILT. These nōpili empower HILT to take a more proactive role in protecting critical lands across the state.

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W. David Connell	Laurel Hilburn	Isabella Miki	Jessica Vanlandingham
		Steven Mizusawa*	<i>* New in 2023</i>

PLANNED GIVING

The 'Āina Ho'oilina Society is a committed group of loyal supporters who have included HILT in their estate planning. Ho'oilina can mean legacy, therefore the people who make plans to ensure HILT's work carries on after their passing are leaving a legacy that will benefit the 'āina, and Hawai'i's people, for generations to come.

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Mary Charles	Frances O. Jackson		<i>* New in 2023</i>
Sonya H. Davis & Joseph R. DeFazio	Stephen Kieffer		

OLA MAHUKONA

Recognizing those individuals, foundations, companies, and public entities who supported HILT's efforts to purchase and permanently protect Mahukona Navigation & Ecological Complex, Kohala, Hawai'i in 2021. This 642-acre coastal parcel is an historic training ground for traditional Hawaiian navigators. The lands include dozens of documented cultural sites including Ko'a Heiau Holomoana, an ancient site of worship revered by navigators from all over the Pacific. Mahukona's clear night skies, free from light pollution, allow for star study, and the combination of its calm bay and rough deep ocean waters create the ideal environment to train young navigators. Additionally, a variety of native plants, birds, and sea life can be found on its pristine shoreline.

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