

# KAHO‘OLAWE

KO HEMA LAMALAMA | Newsletter of the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission | Spring 2024



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Welcome to *Ko Hema Lamalama*, the newsletter of the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission. Uncle Harry Mitchell interpreted this name as **the southern beacon**, which served as a source of light to weary travelers voyaging beyond the pillars of Kahiki. Let *Ko Hema Lamalama* aid us in sharing a source of light from Kaho‘olawe and the restoration of Hawaiian culture across Hawai‘i nei. *This issue is made possible by a grant from Hawai‘i Tourism Authority’s Kūkulu Ola program.*



# FROM THE DIRECTOR



Executive Director  
Michael K. Nāho'opī'i

On the morning of May 7, 1994, I was a young, Navy Lieutenant and Officer-in-Charge of the Kaho'olawe Project. After six-months of meeting, negotiations and planning, the Navy was going to return the island of Kaho'olawe back to the State of Hawai'i. A week earlier, myself and then KIRC Executive Director Keoni Fairbanks hiked to the back of Wailupe Valley ('Āina Haina Valley) to harvest a large `awa (Piper methysticum) plant that was uprooted from a landslide a few days earlier. After hiking to the back of the valley, climbing up a couple of water falls and a few cliffs, we found this massive `awa plant with its root ball exposed from the landslide. It had roots that were over thirty feet long and after cutting off the top of the plant and harvesting the root ball, it overfilled the army duffle we were carrying. We had harvested this plant as the Navy's ho`okupu for the turnover ceremony at Paluea Beach. I took the root ball home and cleaned the dirt from between the rhizomes and removing debris that the rootlets had grown around.

On the morning of the turnover ceremony, there were hundreds of people on Paluea Beach dressed in either aloha attire, traditional Hawaiian dress of malo and kihei and three Navy officers in dress white uniforms. Myself, my bosses and Kaho'olawe project officer Captain Benn and Admiral Retz, Commander Naval Base. Admiral Retz and Navy Undersecretary Cassidy stood on the stage to sign the transfer documents with KIRC Chairperson Dr. Emmett Aluli and Governor John Waihee. While for some reason, Admiral Retz agreed to Emmett's request that I personally present the Navy's ho`okupu. While dressed in my Navy white uniform, I got into the middle of an outrigger canoe manned by six PKO members in malo, with the large `awa root ball. They paddled me out a fair distance from shore where I was to place the `awa into the ocean to make an offering to Kanaloa. After placing the `awa in the water they paddled me back to shore. I later heard from people on the beach that a very large honu or sea turtle had popped up behind the canoe, grabbed the `awa and pulled it underwater. A sign that Kanaloa accepted our offering and marked the start of the next 30 years I will spend on Kaho'olawe.

## 30 Year Anniversary of the Deed Turnover of Kaho'olawe from the U.S. Navy Back to the State of Hawai'i

May 7, 2024 marked the 30 year anniversary of the deed turnover of Kaho'olawe from the U.S. Navy back to the State of Hawai'i. In response to the Pearl Harbor attack on Oahu, the U.S. declared martial law and the U.S. Navy took control of Kaho'olawe on December 8, 1941. For decades, Kaho'olawe was under the U.S Navy control until a grassroots movement of activists called "Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana" (PKO) filed and won a lawsuit against the U.S Navy between the years 1976 to 1980. As a result of PKO litigations, President George W. H. Bush orders a stop to the bombing on Kaho'olawe in 1990.

On Saturday May 7, 1994, Kaal Leong of the Big Island blew a conch shell 100 times to signal the start of the Kaho'olawe deed transferring ceremony held at Palauea Beach on Maui's south shore. During the La Hoihoi Mokupuni o Kaho'olawe Kohemalamalama O Kanaoia (return of Kaho'olawe ceremony), a hoku was presented to Keoni Fairbanks. Rear Admiral William A. Retz and Dr. Noa Emmett Aluli signed the deed transferring the title on Uncle Harry Mitchell's kitchen table.

*Left photo: Kaal Leong blows a conch shell, middle photo: Ho`okupu being presented to Keoni Fairbanks, right photo: Navy Rear Admiral William Retz (left), Navy Under Secretary Cassidy, Gov. John Waihee and KIRC Chairperson Dr. Noa Emmett*





# ANNIVERSARIES

## 20 Year Anniversary of the End of the Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Navy Clearance Project

April 9, 2024 marked the 20 year anniversary of the end of the UXO Navy clearance project. Following the 1980 consent decree order that was reached in the Aluli et al. v. Brown civil suit, the U.S. Navy agreed to clear surface ordnance from 10,000 acres. Then in 1994, Senator Daniel K. Inouye sponsored Title X of the Dept. of Defense Appropriations Act that tasked the U.S Navy with a \$400 million, 10 year ordnance removal project to clear unexploded ordnance.

The clearance project was at the time the largest UXO removal contract in the U.S. The clearance focused primarily on surface clearance efforts with some limited subsurface clearance in areas planned for future use (e.g. base camp, roads, and historic areas). After the 10 year project was completed in 2004, 75% of the island's surface, roughly 21,600 acres was cleared of UXO's (10% was cleared to a depth of 4 feet). The remainder of Kaho`olawe island remains uncleared and unsafe including two nautical miles out from shore.



*Right to left photos: EOD technicians scanning for UXO's, crew uncovering a UXO, UXO safety briefing given to the clearance project crew, Parsons-UXB cleanup crew.*



*"When I became the Historic Preservation Quality Control Manager for the Parsons-UXB clearance project in 2002, I had no idea the impact it would have on me.*

*Working on Kaho`olawe provided me with an experience of working for a cause greater than myself. I felt part of a team that was trying to accomplish something bigger and more important...much of that being related to clearance of the land, preservation of the island's history, and a feeling of ohana.*

*It's very rare in a career to have the opportunity to be part of such a large team effort where there was such unity, purpose, and goal. I thoroughly enjoyed my daily interactions with all of the KIRC island staff. I know I made a difference in that job that I can feel proud of to this day because I understand the longer term results of my participation.*

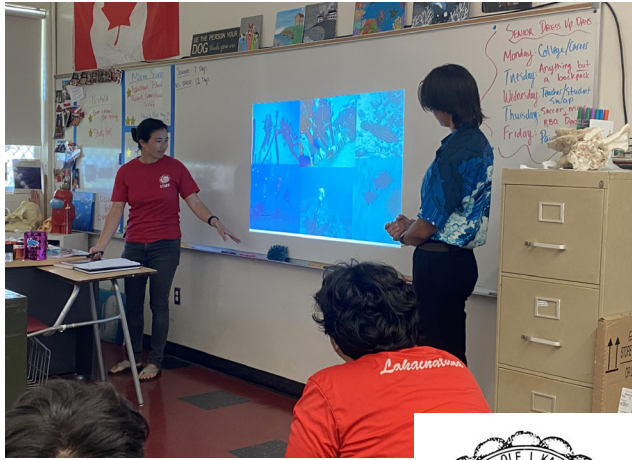
*This job was the only one in my career that gave me a feeling that I was helping make an immediate and long lasting difference associated with a cause bigger than most. I tell my wife to this day, this was the best job in my career as an archaeologist."*

*-John Dockall, PhD, RPA  
Senior Archeologist*





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



## KIRC Speaks to Lahainaluna Marine Science Classes

On May 13, KIRC's Ocean Resource Specialist's Christina Wine and Caroline Sabharwal gave presentations to the Lahainaluna Junior and Senior marine science classes. Teacher Ms. Jackie Ellis saw how important it was for her students to hear from individuals currently working in conservation today on how the land connects to the ocean. The students were able to use what they learned from the KIRC's presentations and apply it to their "Human Impact on the Environment" project.

KIRC's Public Information Specialist Ashley Razo taught the students about the uncontrolled grazing of cattle and goats and the deforestation that led afterwards. The students learned about the KIRC's initiatives to restore Kaho'olawe's land and sea by native planting along the coastline and in the hardpan to slow down erosion. Christina spoke about soil sediment traps KIRC places in the ocean near Kaho'olawe's coastline that catches soil debris. Caroline spoke and shared photos of aerial surveys and endangered faunal monitoring the KIRC conducts such as monitoring tagged monk seals. Christina and Caroline also taught the students about the KIRC's marine debris cleanup and removal process.

The Junior and Senior students also got to hear first hand and asked Christina and Caroline questions on how they ended up working in conservation and their education paths leading to their careers.



## KIRC Speaks at Maui Mauka Conservation Awareness Training

On April 15, KIRC's Restoration Manager Paul Higashino spoke at the Maui Mauka Conservation Awareness Training as the guest speaker. Maui Mauka consists of conservation professionals from the East Maui Watershed Partnership, Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project, and the Maui Invasive Species Committee. Maui Mauka offers trainings to educate tourism professionals on how to communicate information to Maui visitors about the species and environments of Hawai'i.

Paul was honored as the guest speaker and spoke to the attendees regarding the history of Kaho'olawe and the KIRC's restoration efforts. Paul spoke on the invasive alien plant removal and native and Polynesian introduced outplanting the KIRC's restoration team is conducting in 2024.

Staff from Polynesian Adventure Tours, Kehanu Gardens, Hike Maui and Merwin Conservancy gained a better understanding of the importance of sustainable tourism and conservation efforts.





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## KIRC Speaks to the 4-H Youth Development Program

KIRC's Ocean Program Manager Dean Tokishi gave a presentation on "Kaho'olawe's Past, Present and Future" to Maui County 4-H Youth Development Program. The program is part of the University of Hawaii - Mānoa Extension Service, serving youth ages 5-19 on the islands of Maui, Lana'i and Moloka'i. The program supports youth in their development of essential life skills.

Dean spoke on Kaho'olawe's history including the history of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO), George Helm, and Kimo Mitchell who fought to end the bombing on Kaho'olawe. Dean shared the current challenges restoring the vegetation on Kaho'olawe including erosion due to heavy rainfall and wind. It is estimated that Kaho'olawe loses 1.9 million tons of soil per year. Logistics also plays a big part in getting to island as well as the unexploded ordnance (UXO's) that are still present on Kaho'olawe.

Although Kaho'olawe has its challenges, Dean was happy to share the success of native planting in the coastal regions on Kaho'olawe including at Honokanai'a. The Ocean program has been able to plant over 23,000 native plants!



## KIRC Speaks at Pacific Whale Foundation

Dean Tokishi, KIRC's Ocean Program Manager gave a presentation to the Pacific Whale Foundation organization on May 24. The Pacific Whale Foundation (PWF) is based out of Maui. The PWF conducts research, education, and conservation outreach programs to provide ocean and marine life protection.

Over the years, the PWF has supported the KIRC with providing transportation to Kaho'olawe to fulfill grant deliverables in restoring the Kamōhio watershed when the KIRC's vessel, `Ōhua has been down due to mechanical issues.

Dean gave a presentation on Kaho'olawe's history including the uncontrolled grazing starting in 1793, to the male prison colony that was established at Kaulana on Kaho'olawe from 1829 to 1853. PWF learned about the bombing period from 1941 to 1990 on Kaho'olawe, the Hawaiian Renaissance, and the fight to end the bombing led by the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana. Dean highlighted key points on the KIRC's current projects led by the Ocean and Restoration Programs that PWF can speak with the community about on charters such as donations that can be made to the KIRC to continue all restoration efforts.



# PROGRAM UPDATES

## OCEAN PROGRAM

KIRC's ocean program and its volunteers have been busy this spring planting and repairing the beat up roads leading to the Kaho'olawe's restoration sites.

The KIRC's ocean program's current project is a coastal wetland enhancement in Honokanai'a. In 2022, the KIRC was awarded \$355,531 in funding from the U.S Fish and Wildlife Services - National Coastal Wetlands Conservation program to work in the 2.69-acre seasonal ephemeral wetland in Honokanai'a. The current 2-year project includes physical removal of alien invasive species, reintroduction of 20,000 native drought-tolerant seedlings, and improvement to the road that borders the wetland to reduce sedimentation and increase water flow into the wetland.

Volunteers from Ka Ipu Kukui (middle left) are seen laying gravel bags and shoveling to flatten the gravel on the Kuamo'o road. Volunteers from Trilogy Excursions (top left) are seen utilizing the Emery survey method to monitor the effects of the 'aki'aki growth upon the beach slope profile while Dean Tokishi, KIRC's ocean program manager records the data. Trilogy volunteers are shown below planting 1,000 native 'aki'aki grass along the coastline at Honokanai'a.

The ocean program planted 3,000 native 'aki'aki grass at Honokanai'a in the months of April to June. This brings the total number of native plants reintroduced by the KIRC's ocean program since 2022 to over 23,000!







## RESTORATION PROGRAM

KIRC's restoration program's focus this spring was continuing removal of invasive alien species at both Keanakeiki and Lua 'O Keāliālalo with the help of volunteers from Maui Public Art Corps (MPAC). Buffelgrass clumps were dug up (shown above). MPAC volunteers used chainsaws to cut kiawe down (shown bottom right) and the stumps were treated with herbicide to reduce re-sprouting. Guinea grass was also cut back in three 20x20 meter planting pots in Lua 'O Keāliālalo.

Volunteers also assisted Paul Higashino, manager of the restoration team in collecting of pili grass seed and ma'o seeds. These will be used for future restoration efforts on Kaho'olawe and to assist re-vegetation of fire damaged areas on Maui.

The KIRC's restoration team is happy to report that native makihi (Cressa), has expanded into the Keanakeiki area where kiawe was removed by volunteers. Lyman Abbott, a Natural Resource Specialist on the restoration team established a transect to monitor the re-growth of native makihi (Cressa). This transect will measure the increase and spread of makihi after the removal of kiawe. The restoration team will continue to observe the growth and success rates of natives like the wiliwili tree (shown above) and the native 'ohai (middle right).





# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

*Maui Public Art Corps*

*Hui Mo`olelo*

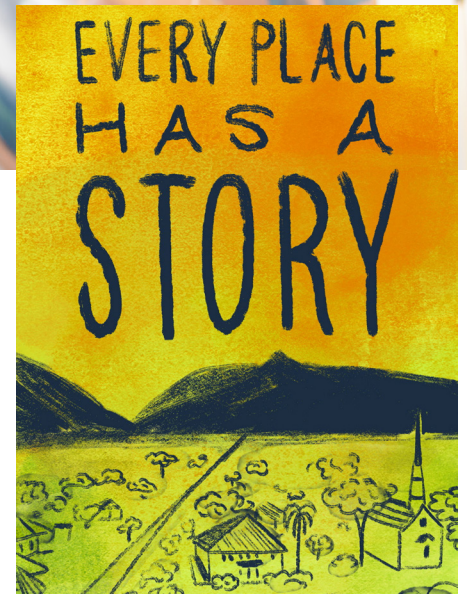


Kaho'olawe is featured prominently on the home page of Maui Public Art Corps (MPAC) which will tap you into a new series of community-based projects connecting people, place and story through the development of public art, original music, contemporary dance, animation and storytelling inspired by the Island Reserve.

Established in 2020, the nonprofit organization MPAC was developed from a 2018 County of Maui pilot project initially intended as construction mitigation amidst Wailuku's recently completed Capital Improvement Projects. The pilot was designed to tell authentic, local stories through murals, pop-up performances, installations and more — each carefully co-developed with community members and rooted in a unique passage from Mary Kawena Pukui's 'Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings. Entitled SMALL TOWN \* BIG ART (named for the Wailuku Town motto: Small Town, Big Heart), the Wailuku-centered initiative remains a collaborative effort of the County of Maui and Hale Hō'ike'ike at the Bailey House/ Maui Historical Society, which through the inception of Maui Public Art Corps, is now scaling countywide.

With the organization founded by former KIRC staff member Kelly McHugh-White, a growing collection of Kaho'olawe-inspired artworks have been developed that celebrate its distinctive history, culture and sense of place.

In 2021, KIRC Ocean Resources Specialist Dean Tokishi participated in Maui Public Art Corps' 3-part storytelling workshop under artist Leilehua Yuen. Since that time, two animated film shorts have been created by Brooklyn-based artist Richard O'Connor and his team of filmmakers at Ace & Son Moving Picture Co. that feature Dean's stories; one in which Dean interviews Uncle Skippy Hau ([vimeo.com/692057252](https://vimeo.com/692057252)), a retiree of the State of Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources, and another with Coach John McCandless ([vimeo.com/773898280](https://vimeo.com/773898280)) of Hawaiian Canoe Club. Dean most recently recorded a talk-story with his fourth grade Kahului Elementary School teacher, Joyce Kawahara, which will become part of Maui Public Art Corps' upcoming request for artist proposals. Artists from all over the world will be invited to submit proposals that bring these "Hui Mo'olelo" audio recordings to life as a work of public art following a period of community engagement that actively integrates feedback from additional Kaho'olawe resources into the design.



*Edwin Ushio paints a mural dedicated to the story of Lopaka White and Kepā Maly*



# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

KIRC Executive Director Mike Nāho`opi`i's Hui Mo'olelo recording also became an animated film short, which premiered at the 'Iao Theater film festival in December 2022 and joined a yearlong exhibit at the University of Hawai'i Maui College Pā'ina Market. Entitled "Waves," ([mauipublicart.org/waves](http://mauipublicart.org/waves)) the artwork was rooted in 'ōlelo no`eau #237: 'Au i ke kai me he manu ala (Cross the sea as a bird), selected by Russian-Ukrainian artist Taisiya Zaretskaya in collaboration with Sissy Lake-Farm of Hale Hō'ike'ike at the Bailey House/ Maui Historical Society.

KIRC Reserve Operations Manager Lopaka White's Hui Mo'olelo sessions have featured Kepā Maly of Kumu Pono Associates, Water-woman Aunty Sally Ann Delos Reyes of Lahaina, Kumu Sissy Lake-Farm, and Hawaiian Canoe Club's Jeanette Nalani Kaauamo of Wailuanui – all available at [mauipublicart.org/hui-moolelo](http://mauipublicart.org/hui-moolelo). Most recently, Lopaka's talk-story with Aunty Sally Ann was presented as a work of contemporary dance and original, looped live music during the Arts & Resilience event on the Great Lawn of University of Hawai'i-Maui College.

Performed by Maui's Adaptations Dance Theater and Hāna-grown musician Stephen Henderson, music and choreography were inspired by Aunty Sally's memories of Kaho'olawe. Within Stephen's music, you are able to hear her reference a meeting in the ocean to save Kaho'olawe, with excerpts including "You can't just bomb an island", "You going put us in jail!? You going shoot us!?" and "If I going die today, then it's a good cause." (Listen at [mauipublicart.org/sallyann](http://mauipublicart.org/sallyann)). Following the event, many audience members took to the microphone to share stories of Kaho'olawe and resilience.

To date, 9 Kaho'olawe stories have been recorded yielding 4 animated films, 3 pop-up performances, and 1 mural by a total of 18 professional artists. Through its current Hawai'i Tourism Authority Kūkulu Ola grant, Maui Public Art Corps aims to continue to develop professional artwork in collaboration with community members that celebrates Kaho'olawe history, culture, and sense of place. Contact [kelly@mauipublicart.org](mailto:kelly@mauipublicart.org) to get involved.

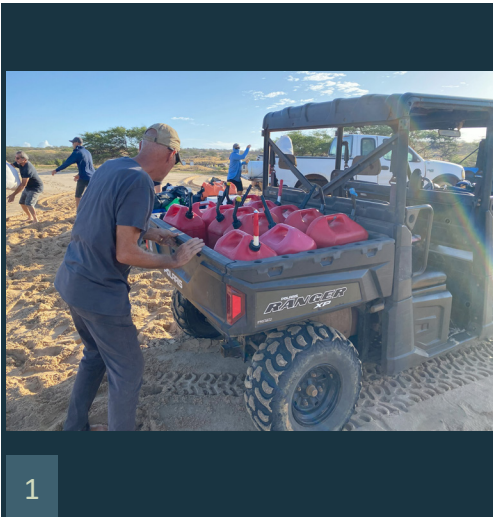


Above are Kaho'olawe story tellers: MPAC's Kelly McHugh-White and KIRC Executive Director Mike Nāho`opi`i, KIRC's Lopaka White and Aunty Sally Ann, KIRC's Dean Tokishi and Coach John McCandles, Kevin Gavagan and Kukui Gavagan. Bottom: Stephen Henderson and Adaptations Dance Theatre bring Aunty Sally Ann's Kaho'olawe stories alive through live music and contemporary dance, Tanama Colibri performs with the students of 'Iao Intermediate School who helped to write her lyrics, Anthony Pfuke's pop-up performance featuring original songs inspired by Kaho'olawe.





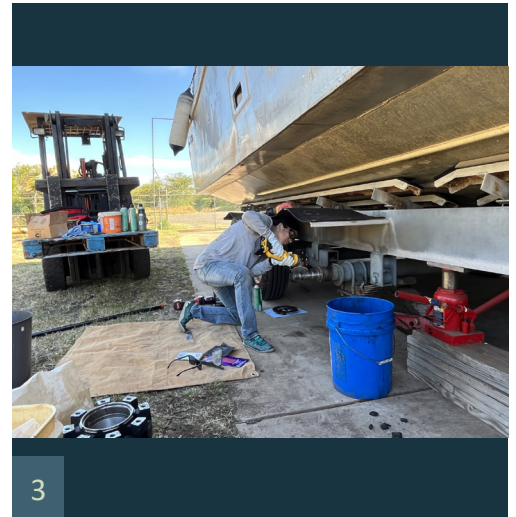
# OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS



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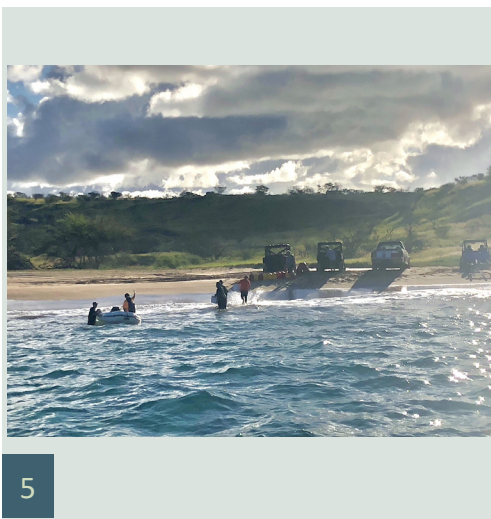
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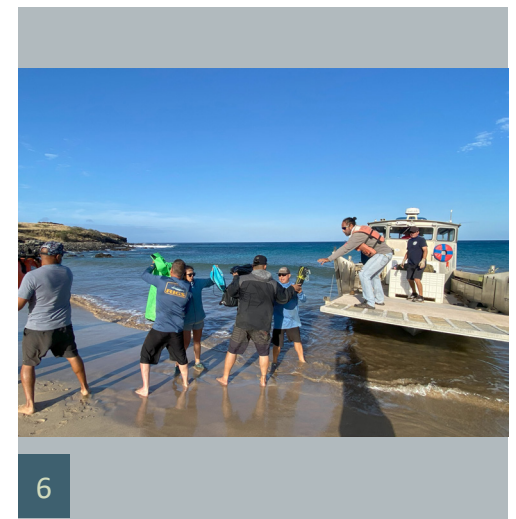
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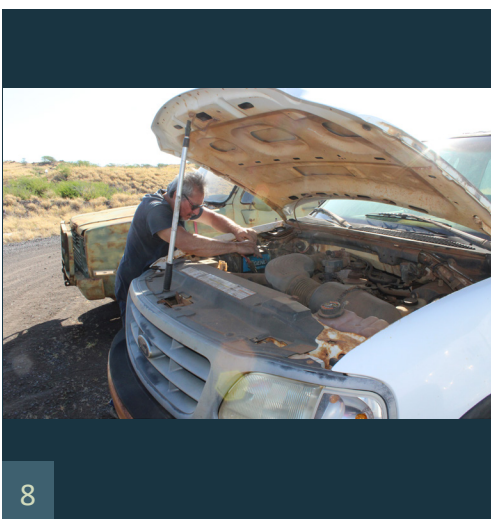
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1) Dawson crew Bruce Froemsdorf loading diesel for base camp on Honokanai`a beach 2) KIRC staff loading the 'Ōhua at Honokanai`a 3) KIRC's Christina Wine conducting trailer maintenance 4) Maui Public Art Corps en route to Ka-ho`olawe 5) KIRC Staff and Dawson crew offloading diesel at Honokanai`a 6) Triology volunteer Gabriel Garcia, Dawson crew Peter Akoni & Calif Peat along with KIRC staff Lopaka White unloading bags 7) KIRC staff Lopaka White, Christina Wine and Grant Thompson bringing the 'Ōhua on the trailer 8) Mechanic Johny Moniz fixing a truck battery 9) Bruce Froemsdorf driving gravel to offload to repair the Kuamo'o road



**Aloha Kaho‘olawe** is a campaign to support Kaho‘olawe restoration and access. Through this initiative, we invite participation via membership donations, partnerships and legislative support. By building consensus that there is value in the historical, cultural, ecological and community building resources shared through Kaho‘olawe, we aim to share this special place now and for generations to come.

**Individual donations are critical to our efforts to protect, restore and preserve the ocean and land of this important cultural reserve.**

If you have been impacted by Kaho‘olawe — as a volunteer, friend, teacher, student, researcher or other community or family member, we invite you to join today.

**GIVING LEVELS & BENEFITS:**

Benefits Include	Patron	Benefactor	Sustainer
KIRC Logo Tee <i>(while supplies last)</i>	✓	✓	
KIRC Logo Sticker <i>(while supplies last)</i>	✓	✓	✓
Subscription to Ko Hema Lamalama	✓	✓	✓
e-News Enrollment	✓	✓	✓

**MAHALO TO ALL OF OUR CURRENT MEMBERS!**

**PATRONS (\$500 & up)**

- |                  |                      |                             |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Alan Jennings    | Joan Pedro           | John McCandless             |
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- |                  |                     |                  |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------|
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| Angela Velazquez |                     |                  |

**Send this completed form with your donation to:  
811 Kolu Street, Suite 201 | Wailuku, HI 96793.**

*Checks may be made payable to Kaho‘olawe Rehabilitation Trust Fund. You can also give online at [kahoolawe.hawaii.gov/donations.shtml](http://kahoolawe.hawaii.gov/donations.shtml).*

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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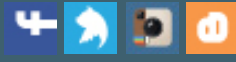
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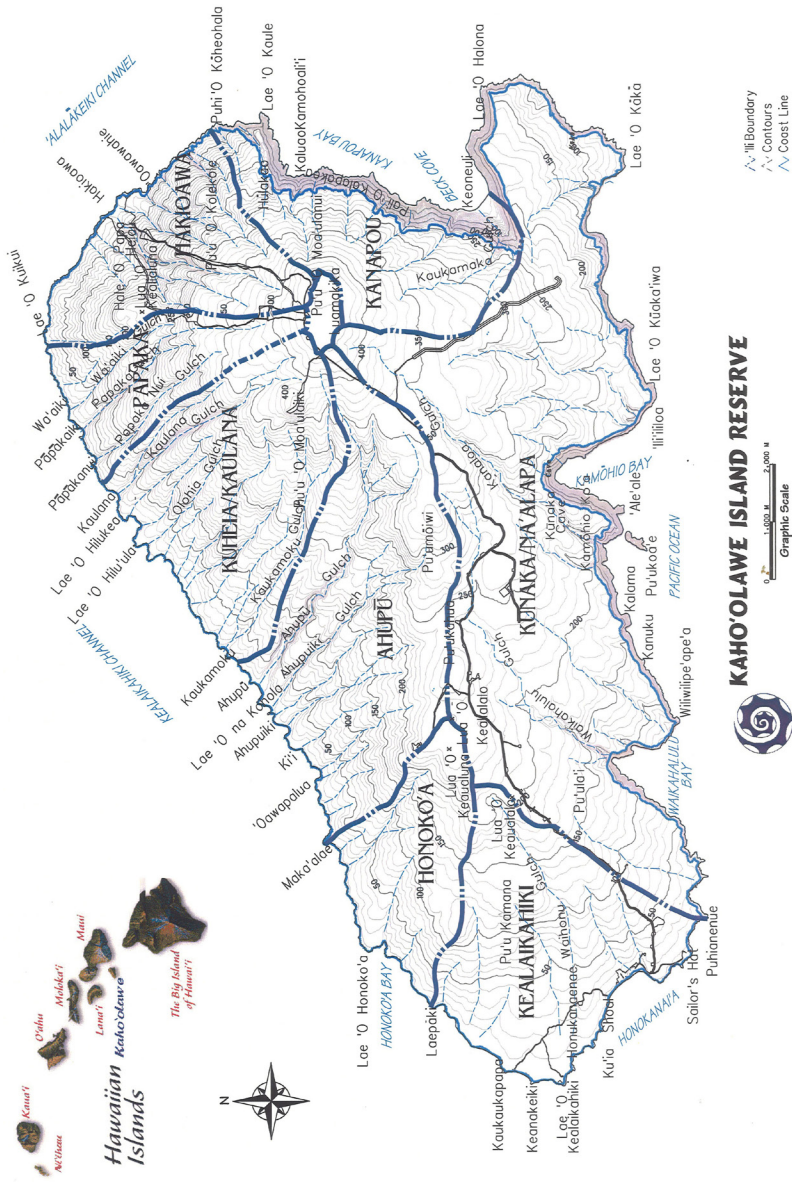
Cover photo: Trilogy volunteer Gabriel planting 'aki'aki at Honokanai'a

## ABOUT THE KIRC

The Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) was established by the Hawai'i State Legislature in 1994 to manage the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve while held in trust for a future Native Hawaiian sovereign entity. The KIRC has pledged to provide for the meaningful and safe use of Kaho'olawe for the purpose of the traditional and cultural practices of the native Hawaiian people and to undertake the restoration of the island and its waters. Its mission is to implement the vision for Kaho'olawe Island in which the *kino* (body) of Kaho'olawe is restored and *nā po'e o Hawai'i* (the people of Hawai'i) care for the land. The organization is managed by a seven-member Commission and a committed staff specializing in five core programs: Ocean, Restoration, Culture, Operations and Administration.

## COMMISSIONERS

- Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana: Michelle Miki'ala Pescaia** (Interpretive Park Ranger, Kalaupapa National Historic Park)
  - Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana: Faith Kahale Saito** (Native Hawaiian Counselor, Huliili Ke Kukui Hawaiian Center, University College, Honolulu Community College)
  - Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana: 'Ānela Evans** ('Ike Hawai'i Faculty, Punahou School)
  - County of Maui: Saumalu Mataaafa** (Deputy Director, Department of Housing and Human Concerns, County of Maui)
  - Department of Land & Natural Resources: Dawn N.S. Chang** (Chairperson, Department of Land & Natural Resources)
  - Native Hawaiian Organization: Benton Keali'i Pang** (President, O'ahu Council, Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs)
  - Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA): Justin Keoni Souza** (Trustee, OHA)
- Michael K. Nāho'opi'i, KIRC Executive Director



**KAHO'OLAWE ISLAND RESERVE**