Welcome to Ko Hema Lamalama, the newsletter of the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve. Uncle Harry Mitchell interpreted this name as the southern beacon, which served as a source of light to weary travelers who voyaged beyond the pillars of Kahiki. Let Ko Hema Lamalama aid us in sharing a source of light from the island of Kahoʻolawe and the restoration of Hawaiian culture across Hawaiʻi nei.

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This issue is made possible by supporters like you. Mahalo for helping us share Kahoʻolawe. (Infrared photo by Steve Tagupa)
MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

At the start of the 2017 legislative session, the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve Commission submitted its KIRC Financial Self-Sufficiency and Sustainability Plan as a guideline to help us gain long-term financial security. After meeting with many of our legislative leaders this session, we were successful in convincing them of the need to make an investment to Kahoʻolawe’s future as an investment for all of Hawaiʻi.

In the Plan, we sought an initial investment by the State to establish a baseline requirement for KIRC staffing and a commitment to build our future KIRC Operations and Education Center at Kihei. With this investment, we are able to secure a permanent workforce to restore and actively manage the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve, as well as build the key infrastructure that will generate sustainable funding for the Island's long-term restoration—thereby establishing the permanent, public gateway to Kahoʻolawe.

On behalf of the Commissioners and Staff of the KIRC, I would like to acknowledge the constant support and efforts made by Representative Ryan Yamane, Chairperson of the House Committee on Water and Land for introducing and supporting numerous bills and legislation that sought to fund the KIRC’s future restoration of Kahoʻolawe. We also want to acknowledge and send our most heartfelt appreciation to Representative Sylvia Luke and Senator Jill Tokuda for believing in the restoration of Kahoʻolawe by securing funds for the KIRC in the Hawaiʻi State budget. Lastly, we want to acknowledge the continuing support of our district representatives, Senator J. Kalani English (Kahoʻolawe), Representative Lynn DeCoite (Kahoʻolawe) and Representative Kaniela Ing (Kihei). We will not let any of you down.

— Michael K. Nāho'opi'i, KIRC Executive Director

KIRC Financial Self-Sufficiency and Sustainability Plan

Our logo represents the curled tentacle of the he'e (octopus), one of the kino lau (body forms) of the god Kanaloa, and the curled shoot of the hapu‘u fern, symbolizing kūkula, or the beginning of a life force.

The Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) serves to implement the vision for Kahoʻolawe:

OUR VISION:

The kino (physical manifestation) of Kanaloa is restored. Forests and shrublands of native plants and other biota clothe its slopes and valleys. Proistine ocean waters and healthy reef ecosystems are the foundation that supports and surrounds the island.

Nā poʻe o Hawaiʻi (the people of Hawaiʻi) care for the land in a manner, which recognizes the island and ocean of Kanaloa as a living spiritual entity. Kanaloa is a puʻuhonua and wai'pio (a place of refuge, a sacred place) where native Hawaiian cultural practices flourish.

The piko of Kanaloa (the navel, the center) is the crossroads of past and future generations from which the native Hawaiian lifestyle is spread throughout the islands.

Executive Director Mike Nāho‘opi‘i at a 2017 Legislative Session hearing with fellow Kaho‘olawe supporter Sam ‘Ohu Gon. Sam also serves as a Steering Committee member of the Kaho‘olawe Island Seabird Restoration Project, which you can read more about on page 3. See page 10 for details on receiving a logo t-shirt as an added benefit of membership!

Hawaiian Paddle Sports staff recently volunteered on Island, paddling to and from Kaho‘olawe with native plants for our Kealakahiki coastal restoration project. Mahalo, crew, for being part of our Kanu Wa’a (Kanu: to plant; wa’a: canoe) program and for planting 500 new natives! Through this program, experienced crews offer plants and a $25 access fee per person while we guide, teach and supervise.

Our Ocean staff recently offered a 3-hour public workshop at the Maui Ocean Center. Designed for college students, professional development and those interested in sharpening their knowledge base in the field, the 2-part workshop included rapid ‘ōpūhi assessment and fish anatomy and identification, with scavenger hunt and “Fish Family Fued” activities.

This Earth Day, KIRC staffers Jennifer Vander Veur & Kelly McHugh joined the Swim for Science ocean themed extension of the national Smithsonian Institution’s Earth Optimism Summit and March for Science. Held at the Kahului Herbivore Fisheries Management Area, guests joined in discussing areas of environmental concern and conservation success in the community and globally.

KIRC staff Lopaka White, Carmela Noneza and Grant Thompson aboard Makani Olu in Kāne‘ohe bay during a recent professional development training designed for each of Alu Like’s 7 service providers of a Native Hawaiian Career & Technical Education Program grant.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

GET INVOLVED:

Donate Volunteer Speaking Engagement Kīhei Site Field Trip Library Online Tools + App

No Hua O Kanaloa days at our Kihei site provide hands-on opportunities to connect with the le‘ina through active restoration and learning on Maui. Here, Hui Kāpehe interns work the kalo while others tend to the native plany nursery. Visit us at Kahoolawe.hawaii.gov/volunteer.html for upcoming dates. Photo: Kelly McHugh

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KIRC’s Jamie Bruch and Maui Ocean Center’s Elsy Ditzel at Malama Maui Day this spring. The KIRC has been working more closely with the Ocean Center as we continually examine our sustainability, management, monitoring and restoration practices within the Reserve. Partnerships like these allow us to share Kaho‘olawe resources with new audiences that want to learn more about the ocean.
In December 2015, the Kaho‘olawe ‘Ope‘ape‘a Working Group was formed with partners from USGS/PIERC, KIRC, Island Conservation and Maui Nui Seabird Recovery Project — each a partner of the Kaho‘olawe Island Seabird Restoration Project.

From this collaboration, a standardized method was developed to survey the presence or absence of Hawaiian Hoary Bats on Kaho‘olawe by installing bat detectors across the island in varying habitats. An endangered species, the ‘Ope‘ape‘a (Lasiurus cinereus semotus) poses many biological questions that need clarification, e.g. are they on island? If so, how do they utilize the island habitat?

After one year of data collection, preliminary analysis has confirmed the presence of ‘Ope‘ape‘a — with interesting discoveries unique to Kaho‘olawe:

- From the data recorders, the presence of the Hawaiian bats occur only seasonally.
- The first bat detection occurred in June 2016 and detections stayed low until late summer where detectors reached a peak detection rate of 26% probability across the island. Furthermore, all 8 of the bat detectors recorded bats in all habitats across the island.
- After September and into December, the detections dropped off until in January the detections ceased altogether.

In addition to this data, the time of night the bats were recorded revealed another interesting find: the bats were not recorded until 2-3 hours after sunset and only until 3-4 hours before sunrise. This information suggests that the ‘Ope‘ape‘a migrate to Kaho‘olawe and return “home” on a nightly basis, but doesn’t rule out the possibility of a small resident population. The first year of data shows bats being most active from late summer into winter with the peak detection rate in September.

It is important to note while this is only one year worth of data; this is just the preliminary analysis. However, this answers our initial questions: the entire island of Kaho‘olawe is an important habitat presumably for the insect food resources that this uniquely Hawaiian endangered species feeds on. The ‘Ope‘ape‘a might even be coming over for copulation and breeding. It is hoped that funding can be continued in order to learn more about the ‘Ope‘ape‘a of Kaho‘olawe. The Hawaiian Bat is threatened by loss of habitat, deforestation and mortality due to wind turbines and predators. Future reforestation projects on Kaho‘olawe may enhance the habitat and range of this species.

QUESTIONS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is the density of ‘Ope‘ape‘a during the peak times?
2. Is there a habitat type that could sustain a permanent population on Kaho‘olawe?
3. How are the wind farms on Maui affecting the seasonal and nightly migrations to Kaho‘olawe?

CRISIS CONTROL: A KIRC COLLABORATION

Earlier this Spring, the KIRC engaged in a two-day effort with responders from the Hawaiian islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. U.S. Coast Guard, Maui Ocean Safety and the West Maui response team in a critical rescue of an entangled subadult humpback whale. With each group of responders authorized under NOAA’s Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, the team cut the 40-ton animal free from large gauge cable deeply embedded in the whale’s mouth. Several tour operations including: Ocean Odyssey (Pacific Whale Foundation), Quicksilver, Redline, Bluewater Rafting, and Maui Diamond-I monitored the animal prior to the response team’s arrival.

Ed Lyman, the Large Whale Entanglement Response Coordinator for the sanctuary, emphasized the importance of working together, trying to free a 40-ton animal out in the open ocean is not an easy task and can be quite dangerous. Having the on-water community report and help us find these animals, and trained and well-equipped responders free them, is critical to not only saving these magnificent animals from life threatening entanglements, but keeping people safe and gaining information to reduce the threat in the future. KIRC is an important part of the team and has helped in all aspects of large whale response.

On the second day’s effort, it was noted from the animal’s movement patterns that a significant amount of gear must be trailing. The gear was successfully grabbed and an estimated 780 feet of 5/8” coaxial communications cable was successfully removed from the animal, representing all gear except what could not be pulled from the whale’s mouth. Overall the animal was in good condition, being only slightly emaciated and having chafe wounds on the leading edges of its fluke (tail), as well as, the cable embedded at the corners of its mouth.

Grant Thompson, KIRC Operations staffer and a trained responder with the Hawaiian Islands Large Whale Entanglement Response Network noted, “With the removal of gear, the chances of the whale’s survival have been greatly improved.”

KIRC and the sanctuary work together in a number of other ways as well. While the ‘Ōhu‘a (the KIRC’s ocean vessel) was down for repairs, the sanctuary’s vessel helped transport vital supplies, volunteers and staff to and from the Island. KIRC has allowed the sanctuary to haul that same vessel out at the KIRC yard for repairs and temporary storage.

The collaborative efforts of KIRC and the sanctuary are a prime example of how two agencies with similar missions can work together. Each works to protect Hawaii’s indigenous species, and their habitat, and to preserve Hawaiian culture.

Mariners are asked to keep a sharp lookout for this and other whales in distress, but not to approach closely or attempt to assist them. Only trained and well-equipped responders that are authorized under NOAA Fisheries’ Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program are permitted to assist whales and other marine mammals. If you sight any marine mammal in distress, maintain 100 yards distance and call NOAA: (888) 256-9840.

FACTS: The Hawaiian name ‘Ope‘ape‘a, is inspired by the Hawaiian hoary bat’s image in flight, which is attributed to the resemblance of canoe sail and the bottom half of the much-celebrated taro leaf (kalo). The term “hualy” refers to their tan, reddish-brown, and silvery coats that appear frosted over. The ‘Ope‘ape‘a is our state mammal.
KAHOʻOLAWE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Before each seedling, spare tire, clean linen or volunteer even touches Kahoʻolawe, they must first cross the ‘Alālākeiki Channel by boat—a journey often one to three-plus hours depending on a wide variety of factors, with weather as chief. Nature has challenged us these last few years, causing work trip cancellations, and supply delays, damage to our ‘Ohi‘a landing vessel and an influx of marine debris to tackle. Here, we talk with one of our boat captains, Lopaka White, to begin to gain a better understanding of how Kahoʻolawe is impacted by climate changes and how the team must continually adapt to sustain our efforts to heal the Reserve.

Throughout your 15 years working on Kahoʻolawe, what significant weather or climate changes have you noticed?

Beyond expected seasonal changes and the subtle differences in the patterns themselves, which are in general, frequent trade winds with intermittent periods of south swell, and the occasional hurricane watch or tropical storm during the summer months; and periods of variable or kona winds followed by or usually associated with large surf as cold fronts passing from west to east usher in strong cool northerly winds behind the cold front during Hawaii’s winter months. Some years had more surf or strong trade winds than others, but it was generally within the “normal” range as far as patterns are concerned.

I do remember 2009 and 2010. It seemed like every boat run we did was during strong northerly winds making for very rough, long rides in the ‘Alālākeiki channel. There was an occasional nice day, but even those days would be considered rough compared to other years. This seemed to be a trend for about a year or so until it went back to a more “normal” pattern. (2010 and 2011 were considered a moderate La Nina cycle according to NOAA data).

In the summer of 2013, Tropical Storm Flossie (July 29th) slammed South Point of Hawaii island and brought us a lot of rain, and an incredible lightning storm in Kauhulu (my locale at the time of the storm). This storm seemed to snap Kahoʻolawe right out of a dry spell, leaving it pretty green for the summer time.

Our most recent El Nino event (2015/2016) was considered to be a “very strong” event as in 32/83 and 97/98. This brought us abnormally still, glassy, calm conditions in the channel and surrounding coastal waters; while an abnormal amount of storm activity was occurring in the central pacific. (2015 was a record year for storm activity in Hawaiian waters).

We had to pay very close attention to the weather advisories and storm tracks that NOAA, NWS, and other officials were tracking for us. Hurricane season (June through November) will almost certainly bring a couple of watches and perhaps a warning, but, one thing I have learned from other experienced Hawaiian water seafarers is that if the trade winds are blowing, it will generally sheer the storm in half by the time it arrives in the vicinity of Hawaiian waters. The high pressure (North Pacific Anti-Cyclone) system that typically sits to our northeast shifts occasionally; typically monthly or cycle. In the winter time when the jet stream is shifted, it dampens the trade winds and allows for winter storms to be pushed closer to Hawaiian waters, resulting in unstable atmospheric conditions. During this particular year (2015) there seemed to be an outright absence of trade winds, 75%- 85% of the time, during the summer, which is very odd. Add in noticeably warmer water temperatures and there is so much more fuel for a storm to feed off of with no shear from the trade winds to help break the storm down. (Remember, hurricanes feed off of unstable atmospheric conditions and warm water).

So, we make shifts to our schedule and prepare the boat for weather, regardless of how the channel looks. In addition to what the experts are reporting, you have to make your own, local observations in order to not endanger anyone or anything. A lack of trade winds, noticeably warmer water temperatures to the touch, coral bleaching at local spots, swell patterns hitting the winter spots in the middle of summer – all of this gives clues as to how conditions will be for our tasks on the water. If something is not within the “normal” range of the cycle for the given time of the year, it can throw off your judgment which in turn can hinder our ability to plan operations ahead of time and in a safe manner.

Post El Nino events, the water becomes notably cooler, but that doesn’t tell me that the trend is necessarily changing. What is normal? Can we expect these exceptionally warm years more often than not? Is that also increasing the chances of experiencing severe natural disasters such as an earthquake that can generate a large tsunami. If this hits someplace experiencing a large swell at the same time with strong onshore winds, a very high tide and a doleuge of rain, it can be catastrophic. We have to be more prepared. For the crew, safety is everything. He ali‘i ka ‘āina he kauwa ke kanaka (The land is a chief, the people humble servants).

Q: How can we apply these lessons to Kahoʻolawe?

If climate change means more storm activity, which means more swell energy and more flooding, which means more erosion – then that also increases the chances of experiencing severe natural disasters such as an earthquake that can generate a large tsunami. This hit someplace experiencing a large swell at the same time with strong onshore winds, a very high tide and a doleuge of rain, it can be catastrophic. We have to be more prepared. For the crew, safety is everything. He ali‘i ka ‘āina he kauwa ke kanaka (The land is a chief, the people humble servants).

A jet stream is a very cold, fast-moving wind found high in the atmosphere. Jet streams are so fast and powerful that airplanes have difficulty flying against them. Pilot’s either fly with the jet stream or above it; they do not attempt to fly against it. If climate change means more storm activity, which means more swell energy and more flooding, which means more erosion – then that also increases the chances of experiencing severe natural disasters such as an earthquake that can generate a large tsunami. If this hits someplace experiencing a large swell at the same time with strong onshore winds, a very high tide and a doleuge of rain, it can be catastrophic. We have to be more prepared. For the crew, safety is everything. He ali‘i ka ‘āina he kauwa ke kanaka (The land is a chief, the people humble servants).

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Another lesson: Last year organizers of the Eddie (surf contest) turned to Stormsurf, a surf forecasting tool, to predict prevailing conditions. When the swell wasn’t as big/ powerful as anticipated, it was admitted that they overestimated it. It was later mentioned that the only thing that’s true about a weather forecast is a “hind-cast;” everything else is just an educated guess. This taught me that your observations on the ocean can tell you more than sitting behind a desk reading weather data from inside.
Earlier this year, we introduced the Kahoʻolawe Island Guide mobile app, created with KOA IT’s Bryan Berkowitz and under the advisement of Lānaʻi Culture and Heritage Center Director Kepā Māly. Among its features, the Guide offers oral history excerpts from the perspective of key military, archaeology and cultural representatives. KIRC Commissioner Hōkūlani Holt helped us document the development of the rain koʻa (shrines) built on Island 20 years ago. Following is an overview of the koʻa; download the free mobile phone application for Hōkūlani’s story.

There are currently four rain koʻa associated with Kahoʻolawe. Three rain koʻa were built on Kahoʻolawe and one on Maui in an effort to call back the rains of its past. All of the koʻa were built simultaneously on Maui and Kahoʻolawe.

The koʻa on Maui was built on Puʻu Mahoe, which is in ‘Ulupalakua on the southern slope of Haleakalā. The function of this koʻa is to gather both the Nāulu wind and rain in ‘Ulupalakua on the southern slope of Haleakalā. The function of this koʻa is to gather both the Nāulu wind and rain in ‘Ulupalakua on the southern slope of Haleakalā.

The second koʻa (Lehua) is located directly across from Ipu a Kane (2007) Mount of Puʻu O Moaʻula Nui rain koʻa, Ipu a Kane (2007) over from Maui.

The other koʻa were built on Kahoʻolawe on the rim of Luamakika. One is on the northeastern side of Luamakika near Puʻu O Moaʻula Nui and faces the ‘Ulupalakua rain koʻa, Ipu a Kane. The function of this koʻa is to receive the rain that is sent over from Maui.

The koʻa there are a physical manifestation of our acknowledgement of a cultural way of making a connection to the first necessary steps in healing an island. The mental manifestation comes from our conscious efforts in reflecting positive thoughts to the healing of Kahoʻolawe. The spiritual manifestation takes place when the proper ceremonies and rituals occur on the koʻa.

Combine all koʻa and you achieve balance. This balance helps those who are trying to heal also become the ones healed in the process.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW

In 2013, intern Eddie Wine joined the KIRC through a unique collaboration with EPLU Hawaii’s Youth Conservation Corps. Over the course of two years, Eddie engaged in sequential, cumulative training in restoration, ocean and operations, and has continued to visit and offer a helping hand when we’re in need of volunteer support.

After completing his internship at the KIRC, Eddie completed a rigorous 28-day UXO (unexploded ordnance) training program with UXO Global in Colorado, focusing on military ordinance in relation to area remediation, public safety and site management issues associated with a UXO cleanup. Once certified as a UXO Tech-1, he joined a team in Adak, Alaska assisting UXO Tech-2’s remove ordinance, mortars and rocket grenades — a position he was offered as a result of working on Kahoʻolawe. “Working at KIRC gave me perspective on a lot of things,” he remarks, “no one lives on Kahoʻolawe, yet it’s an important place to educate people on what the islands can look like without destruction and development.”

Q: Where do you see Kahoʻolawe ten years from now?

“I can see a school on Kahoʻolawe in ten years from now. I think about that. That is the way to bring back our own islands.”

Q: What lessons have you learned from Kahoʻolawe?

“The main thing to learn from Kahoʻolawe is that all the work you do to make a plant grow is way easier to do back at home. Also, there are so few people that used to live out there but still so much archaeological evidence. You should think about why you don’t see that more when you’re back on your own islands. Evidence from our past is scarce. Why? People don’t think about that. That evidence shows people that they should value their own island more.

“Kahoʻolawe is not a magical place; there was way more activity on Maui or Oahu, and people disregarded it because they feel like they can just cause whatever damage they cause. Everything is sacred on Kahoʻolawe, but your home island is just as sacred. Try treating it that way.

“On Kahoʻolawe, you see exactly how much you produce and how much waste accumulates in one tiny week, because you take everything back with you that you use. Then you can see what you’re missing out on by not bringing shade to the slopes of Haleakalā and the Naulu cloud bank which starts at Ulupalakua and travels across the channel to Puʻu O Māau-noa. We need to bring back hula traditions to Ulupalakua to Makena and the Lilinoe (moist rain) to the top of Kahoʻolawe, like it did when I was a little girl. This is truly a testament to the Native Hawaiian moʻolelo of Malama ‘Aina no Ma Uka i Ma Kai. Had the restoration work not continued over the years, this resource of water would not be available to Kahoʻolawe. Restoration work on Kahoʻolawe has taken hold.”

— Kaʻōnohi Lee legislative testimony

CURRENT CLEARANCE MAP

Aloha Kahoʻolawe

Launched in 2015, Aloha Kahoʻolawe is a campaign to help fund Kahoʻolawe 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 Kahoʻolawe, 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 Kahoʻolawe — as a volunteer, friend, teacher, student, researcher or other community or family member, invite you to join today.

GIVING LEVELS & BENEFITS:

Benefits Include

KIRC Logo Gift (see fees below) 🌈 🌈 🌈
Seabird Restoration Sticker 🌈 🌈
Subscription to Ko Hema Lamalama 🌈 🌈 🌈
e-News Enrollment 🌈
Mahalo! 🌈 🌈 🌈

“Main thing to learn from Kahoʻolawe is that all the work you do to make a plant grow is way easier to do back at home. Also, there are so few people that used to live out there but still so much archaeological evidence. You should think about why you don’t see that more when you’re back on your own islands. Evidence from our past is scarce. Why? People don’t think about that. That evidence shows people that they should value their own island more.

“Kahoʻolawe is not a magical place; there was way more activity on Maui or Oahu, and people disregarded it because they feel like they can just cause whatever damage they cause. Everything is sacred on Kahoʻolawe, but your home island is just as sacred. Try treating it that way.

“On Kahoʻolawe, you see exactly how much you produce and how much waste accumulates in one tiny week, because you take everything back with you that you use. Then you can see what you’re missing out on by not bringing shade to the slopes of Haleakalā and the Naulu cloud bank which starts at Ulupalakua and travels across the channel to Pu’u O Māau-noa. We need to bring back hula traditions to Ulupalakua to Makena and the Lilinoe (moist rain) to the top of Kahoʻolawe, like it did when I was a little girl. This is truly a testament to the Native Hawaiian moʻolelo of Malama ‘Aina no Ma Uka i Ma Kai. Had the restoration work not continued over the years, this resource of water would not be available to Kahoʻolawe. Restoration work on Kahoʻolawe has taken hold.”

— Kaʻōnohi Lee legislative testimony

A special MAHALO to Steve Frayer of Sunny Solutions Inc. for fixing our staff solar hot water shower and to all that so graciously gave to the Marco Kali Kai Fund for Kahoʻolawe. Mahalo to the following for your recent donation:

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ABOUT THE KIRC

The Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) was established by the Hawai‘i State Legislature in 1993 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 5 core programs: Ocean, Restoration, Culture, Operations and Administration.

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