



Keāliālalo Wetlands Restoration Project (Maui County Sustainability)

BACKGROUND

Kaho‘olawe’s wetland ecosystems provide important ecological, cultural, and environmental benefits but have been impacted by invasive plant species, erosion, and reduced water retention. Lua O Keāliālalo wetland has been identified as an area with significant potential for wetland restoration and habitat improvement. The proposed project will restore approximately 20 acres by removing invasive vegetation and reestablishing native and wetland-adapted plant species. These efforts will improve soil stability, groundwater retention, erosion control, biodiversity, and habitat for native and migratory birds.

PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

- Restore the ecological integrity of wetland habitat through invasive plant removal and 6,450 native outplantings.
- Enhance biodiversity and support native and migratory birds by improving habitat quality and viability.
- Improve the overall hydrological function of the wetland system, including increased water availability and enhanced natural filtration capacity.
- Empower community engagement, education, and stewardship by utilizing local volunteers and community groups for restoration work.
- Build ecological and cultural resilience by establishing a self-sustaining plant community using restoration efforts aligned with traditional Hawaiian values.
- Incorporate ‘ike kūpuna (ancestral knowledge) and kilo (observational practices) to guide restoration methods and seasonal planting cycles.

AWARD AMOUNT

\$113,051 with a \$68,317 KIRC match for a total project budget amount of \$181,368 for one year.

FUNDER

County of Maui, Department of Environmental Management

FINANCIAL UPDATE

<u>SPENT</u>	<u>BILLED</u>	<u>RECEIVED</u>
\$9,969.59	\$0.00	\$0.00

PROJECT UPDATE AND HIGHLIGHTS

In March, over 28 inches of rain fell in a 1-week period. Typical annual rainfall is usually 20 inches. The wetland area in Kealialalo was filled to a depth of 4.5 feet. The standing water extended 40 meters beyond its normal boundary. Pockets of water persisted until mid-July.

During this period, ‘Alae Ke‘oke‘o (Fulicia americanau alai) and Ae‘o (Himantopus mexicanus knudseni) appeared at Lua ‘O Keāliālalo, both new island records for Kaho‘olawe. There was one ‘Alae Ke‘oke‘o and two Ae‘o. In March and April, the Ae‘o pair showed aggressive territorial behavior, indicating they were nesting. Staff and volunteers curtailed work at Lua ‘O Keāliālalo in April and May. In June, 3 additional Ae‘o were observed with the adult pair. They were nesting under the mao bush in the middle of the wetlands. As of August, the five Ae‘o had departed Lua ‘O Keāliālalo.

Triops longicuadatus (dinosaur shrimp) hatched in Kealialalo. First noticed in 2011, the dinosaur shrimp eggs hatch after heavy rains. After hatching, they can live 90 to 120 days. They were also present in the Keanakeiki, Kaukaukapapa, and Honokanai‘a wetlands.

On July 16, 2026, the KIRC staff formally requested a time extension through June 30th 2027, and a budget amendment to the category of supplies, decreasing from \$31,540 to \$31,280 (-\$260), and to the category of equipment and travel, increasing from \$81,511 to \$81,771 (+\$260).



Alae Ke‘oke‘o



Ae‘o



Triops longicaudatus