

‘U MEKE KĀ‘EO

A well-filled calabash, a well-filled mind



MA‘O Organic Farms in Wai‘anae, O‘ahu. Photo Credit: Rawley Riccio



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'Umeke Kā'eo is the newsletter of Hawaiian Islands 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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Letter from the Chief Executive Officer

Laura H. E. Kaakua



Aloha HILT 'Ohana,

I hope this newsletter serves to connect and uplift us all in these trying times. Our world is changing by the hour but our resolve to protect and steward the lands that sustain Hawai'i is unwavering. We responded immediately to the news of Coronavirus as it hit our shores by instituting a work-from-home policy, and cancelling our school group visits, Talk Story on the Land events, volunteer days, and camping at all of our public preserves. These actions were necessary, and the right thing to do, but we eagerly look forward to the day that we will welcome students and families back to participate in these

programs. As of the writing of this letter, our public preserves remain open for hiking, walks, and ocean activities for individuals and immediate household members only. Gatherings are prohibited and CDC social distancing guidelines must be strictly followed. We have heard from residents of communities surrounding our preserves that they are thankful to have safe, open spaces to take a walk, let the keiki burn off energy, swim, fish, or sit alone in the shade. It is apparent how important our preserves are to the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health of our communities.

With this in mind, our land protection team and I are making the most of our time at home by advancing the funding applications and legal documentation needed to protect other threatened places that are a vital part of Hawai'i's past and future. By the time this newsletter reaches you, we will have completed the protection of 27 acres at Mokae overlooking Hāmoa Beach on the Hāna Coast of Maui. We are advancing efforts to protect Mahukona on the Kohala Coast of Hawai'i Island, Waikalua Fishpond in Kāne'ohe, O'ahu, and farmlands on O'ahu, Maui, and Hawai'i Island. These are lands that hold our history, keep us fed and healthy, and shape our shared kama'āina identity and value system. During the COVID-19 pandemic, HILT staff are continuing our vital work to protect and steward places throughout our islands that nurture our communities with clean air, water and food.

The growing COVID-19 presence in Hawai'i is bringing us closer to a Hawaiian way of thinking and value system as precautions require everyone to be more community-minded. We are asked to think, not about our own personal convenience, but about the health of the most susceptible in our communities – those with compromised immune systems, and our kupuna. The health of our communities and the health of our 'āina are co-dependent.

I pray the curve is flattened quickly, and that we continue to look out for one another and the 'āina as an islands-wide community.

Aloha 'āina.

Aloha kekahi i kekahi.

Laura H. E. Kaakua

Kuahaua

Shae Kamaka'ala Joins HILT to Lead Land Protection Efforts Statewide



Hawaiian Islands Land Trust continues to make strides toward growing capacity to meet land protection demands with the hiring of the newest member of the HILT 'ohana. Shaelene Kamaka'ala joined HILT in February, and has hit the ground running with a variety of land protection projects in the pipeline. Funding from the USDA NRCS program helped to make Shae's hire possible.

Shae was born and raised in the ahupua'a of Punalu'u and Kahana, Ko'olauloa, O'ahu and now calls Keaukaha, Hilo, Hawai'i her second home. Shae graduated from Kamehameha Schools and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of San Diego.

Shae also earned a Juris Doctorate Degree with certificates in Native Hawaiian Rights and Environmental Law from the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai'i. Shae was a First Nations' Futures Program Fellow in 2016-2017, where she attended Stanford's Woods' Institute for the Environment.

Prior to joining HILT, Shae served as a Deputy Attorney with Hawai'i County's Office of the Corporation Counsel and Law Clerk and Bailiff for the Honorable Judge Henry T. Nakamoto in the Third Circuit Court in Hilo, Hawai'i. Shae also spent time with the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR); the University of Hawai'i William S. Richardson School of Law's Ka Huli Ao and Hui 'Āina Momona Program; Townscape Inc.; and The Nature Conservancy where she specialized in the fields of administrative law and natural resource management planning. In these capacities, Shae worked on projects statewide in partnership with communities, the private sector, and government to inform solutions for Hawai'i's public trust and cultural resources.

Shae brings a wealth of knowledge to her position as Director of 'Āina Protection with HILT and has already begun making progress on a number of potential land protection projects including: Mapulehu, Moloka'i; Māhukona, and Niuli'i, Hawai'i Island; and the Hāna Coast, Maui. Please join us in welcoming Shae to the 'ohana!



Shae Kamaka'ala (pictured far right) at Keopuka with La Crivello, Cultural Liaison with Hokulia's Parks and Cultural Sites Association and Coordinator of the Ala Kahakai Trail Association, and students of Ke Kula o Ehunuiakaimalino.



'Ili'ili'opae Heiau, Mapulehu, Molokai



Kuahaua

21-Acre Farm in Wai'anae, O'ahu Protected in Perpetuity

On December 26, 2019 MA'O Organic Farms closed escrow on 21 acres of farm land at Palikea in Wai'anae, O'ahu, that is permanently protected by an agricultural easement held by Hawaiian Islands Land Trust.

THE PROJECT, WHICH WAS FACILITATED BY THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND, BRINGS THE TOTAL ACREAGE OWNED BY THE ORGANIZATION TO 281 ACRES, MAKING IT ONE OF THE LARGEST ORGANIC FARMS IN HAWAI'I. THE STATE LEGACY LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM AND THE FREEMAN FOUNDATION PROVIDED PURCHASE FUNDS, AND THE JOSEPH & VERA LONG FOUNDATION PROVIDED HAWAIIAN ISLANDS LAND TRUST WITH A CONSERVATION EASEMENT STEWARDSHIP ENDOWMENT. TPL LICENSED THE LAND TO MA'O STARTING IN 2018 WHILE WAITING FOR THE PROJECT TO CLOSE, SO THE FARM COULD INITIATE LAND PREPARATION AND PRODUCTION IMMEDIATELY. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OVER 30 YEARS, THE PARCEL IS ABUNDANT WITH FOOD INCLUDING ULU, KALO, CITRUS, AND VEGGIES.





Above: MA'O Organic Farms in Wai'anae, O'ahu. Photo Credit: Rawley Riccio

Opposite page: Rebekah Walker and Makana Reilly joined Board Member McD Philpotts and Island Council Member Onaona Thoane to celebrate the protection of more 'āina alongside the Wai'anae community.

MA'O's approach to food production is grounded in the empowerment of local youth, as new leadership is imperative to the future of both the sustainable food movement and the broader community. As a nonprofit, MA'O Organic Farms has been serving the youth of Wai'anae, since 2001, through a series of educational programs, including an on-farm to college two-year internship that provides a stipend and full tuition support for students at the University of Hawai'i Leeward Community College, UH West O'ahu or UH Mānoa. HILT's own intern, Rawley Riccio is a product of this program.

The organization has graduated over 100 interns with Associate of Arts degrees and 25 with their Bachelor of Art degrees to date; several graduates of the program currently manage the organic farm and youth training program, which supplies over 2 tons of fresh organic produce a week to farmer's markets, grocery and natural foods stores and locavore restaurants on O'ahu.

On January 25th MA'O Organic Farms held a gathering of partners to celebrate the farm expansion. HILT's own Rebekah Walker and Makana Reilly joined Board Member McD Philpotts and Island Council Member Onaona Thoane to celebrate the protection of more 'āina alongside the Wai'anae community.

Currents

HILT Happenings

HAWAI‘I

The Land Trust’s work on Hawai‘i Island has ramped up with the addition of Shae Kamaka‘ala of Keaukaha as Director of ‘Āina Protection. HILT is working to protect numerous places on the island:

- 2,780 acres of restored ‘iliahi (sandalwood) forest in Kealakekua in partnership with Royal Hawaiian Sandalwood Farm, the State Department of Land and Natural Resources, and Hawai‘i County. The restored forest has brought the clouds and rains back.
- 640 acres at Mahukona along the Kohala Coast in partnership with the Kohala community, Nā Kalai Wa‘a, a nonprofit which sails the voyaging canoe Makali‘i and cares for ancient navigational sites on the land, and other Kohala nonprofits.
- 1,646 acres of koa and ‘ōhi‘a forest in Hilo that could present a traditional community forest model where Hawaiian cultural practitioners of the area are empowered to lead in forest management, cultivating reciprocal relationships with the forest.

Please consider emailing a letter of support for any of the above efforts to shae@hilt.org.

At the end of 2019, HILT’s CEO Laura Kaakua partnered with The Kohala Center and NRCS to host a workshop for farmers on agricultural conservation easements. Diverse farmers attended from young farmers looking to find an affordable agricultural parcel, to seasoned growers of tomatoes, cattle, and diversified crops. Agricultural conservation easements allow private landowners to restrict their land to farming or ranching forever in exchange for funds that can support their operations. With Shae in place, there is much to come on Hawai‘i Island!

Mahukona, Hawai‘i Island



HILT’s Kaua‘i Island Pāina at Princeville Ranch

KAUA‘I

The past few months have been full of activity and celebration on the island of Kaua‘i. On the first Sunday of each month HILT hosts a community workday at the Kāhili Beach Preserve. Our dedicated volunteers have hauled away over 800 pounds of beach debris and invasive plants in just the first three months of the year! These workdays are a great way for the community to connect to ‘āina. Due to COVID-19 our First Sunday Volunteer Days have been canceled, but we are looking forward to engaging with our community as soon as it is safe to do so. We are working diligently to identify the right person to serve as HILT’s Kāhili Beach Preserve Educator & Steward to further engage with the community.



A group of enthusiastic volunteers at Kāhili Beach for a First Sunday Volunteer Day.

In December we hosted our Kaua‘i Island Pāina, sharing a gorgeous evening with over 100 of HILT’s generous supporters under a Kaloakukahi moon at Princeville Ranch. We danced and swayed to the wonderful Waipā Serenaders and our bellies were delighted by Chef Erin Keller of The Local Kaua‘i. Mahalo to Kōloa Rum Company and Hawai‘i Life Real Estate Brokers for their support in making a festive and successful evening. As always, we continue to humbly give thanks to our supporters for creating such enjoyable energy for us all to share in.



Maui Island Council members visit farms in Waikapū, Maui

MAUI

On the afternoon of February 28th HILT’s Maui Island Council met in Waikapū to visit several farms located on 870 acres of land that will soon be permanently protected by HILT via an agricultural easement donated by Mike Atherton. We first visited Bob King’s sunflower farm which has become a popular roadside attraction for visitors when the flowers are in bloom. Bob is also CEO of Pacific Biodiesel. Bob described their farming practices, and how his sunflower production is contributing to both the production of Biodiesel and the reduction of carbon dioxide (biodiesel burns about 75% cleaner than regular diesel, and, perhaps more importantly, is a renewable resource). Next, the Island Council visited Bobby Pahia’s farm next door. Bobby works for Nā Hoaloha ‘Ekolu, and the farm produces food specifically for the company’s restaurants, including The Old Lāhainā Lū‘au. If you’ve been a guest of HILT’s Buy Back the Beach benefit lū‘au, much of the food served at the event came from his farm. Bobby pointed out that he grows his taro and other crops organically, and described his commitment to regenerating the soil and improving the health of the land.

The farm visit wrapped up with a visit to ‘Ulu Brothers Farm, owned and operated in partnership with Jeff Shaffer and HILT’s Chief Conservation Officer, Scott Fisher. The Island Council looked at ‘Ulu Brother’s Farm’s efforts to grow organic breadfruit, taro, and Hawaiian varieties of banana. All three farmers stressed the need to heal the land by improving the soil, and noted that the impending conservation easement would ensure the likelihood of their farms remaining in cultivation for generations to come.



A young Maunawila Menehune sharing her newly learned sewing skills.

O‘AHU

Through our work to mālama the Maunawila Heiau Complex in Hau‘ula, we have found many artifacts and mea kūpuna on the property. We have collected them according to our preservation plan, and have become stewards of these items. The Maunawila Menehune, young students participating in our aina-based education program, learn from the collection and also become stewards, helping to mālama these items by caring for, and sharing about, them when we take them to community events.

In January, the Menehune participated in a community event to sort sediment from the Kamehameha Highway Road Repair project in Hau‘ula facilitated by archaeologist Rosanna Thurman of Oceanic Archaeological Science and Educational Services (OASES) and the principal investigator for Honua Consulting. We found a volcanic glass artifact, pipipi shells, wana remnants, charcoal, land snails, crab shell pieces and so much more. These activities support the Menehune in their learning about science and history, their home, and potential career paths.

Engaging with the kupuna of our community is a highlight of our work. The Maunawila Menehune were very fortunate to have Kapua Fonoimoana of Punalu‘u Valley come and visit us. As the keiki gave Aunty Kapua a tour of the Maunawila Heiau Complex she stopped along the way to point out plants that were used for traditional medicine. We learned the importance of respecting these plants in their growth cycles. Healing plants will grow where they want to grow and we need to take care of them in their locations. Mahalo Aunty Kapua. We continue work to protect Waikalua Fishpond in Kāne‘ohe in partnership with Pacific American Foundation. Please consider sending a letter of support to rebekah@hilt.org.



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HAWAIIAN ISLANDS LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER VOLUME 10 • NUMBER 1 SPRING 2020

We all have a kuleana TO OUR COMMUNITIES AND KUPUNA TO DO OUR PART IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19. SOCIAL DISTANCING, AND SELF-QUARANTINING IF YOU OR SOMEONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD IS ILL, IS VITAL.

Hawaiian Islands Land Trust has kept our public preserves open to provide safe spaces for our communities to get outside. Visit Waihe'e Coastal Dunes & Wetlands, Nu'u Preserve on Maui, Kāhili Beach Preserve on Kaua'i, or Maunawila Heiau Complex on O'ahu to take a walk, get in a surf session, go fishing, or just read a book in the shade. Please remember to be respectful of others while doing so. Offer a friendly shaka while keeping your distance, and take your rubbish out with you. Aloha 'āina. Mālama kino. Aloha kekahi i kekahi.



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