

For Immediate Release

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Gallery supports Kohala watershed restoration

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—November 29, 2011—In appreciation for the Kohala Watershed Partnership’s (KWP) efforts in re-establishing the native forest *mauka* of Pelekane Bay, Gunner and Elli Mench of Harbor Gallery in Kawaihae recently donated \$5,000 to the partnership.

In 2009, the Menchs decided to support a local organization that was contributing to the betterment of native forests, since most of the woodwork in their gallery is made from native woods of Hawai‘i Island. Since then, they have donated to KWP nearly \$16,000 or 10 percent of the proceeds from wood shows they hold twice a year at the gallery. The contributions go to help plant more trees in restoration areas that have been fenced and cleared of feral goats through KWP’s watershed projects on Kohala Mountain.

“Just as we feel that we have a responsibility to help support over 150 of our local artists,” Mench said, “we feel a responsibility as well to direct some of our resources where we can promote a positive impact to our immediate environment for the benefit and enjoyment of our precious natural and cultural resources.”

As a member of the Kawaihae Local Resource Council, Mench has been involved in discussions with the Army Corps of Engineers and others regarding the cleanup and restoration of Pelekane Bay. One of the Corps’ conditions to participating in the bay’s restoration is for the siltation from runoff to be eliminated from the watershed.

“KWP is doing just that,” Mench said. “It might take another 10 or 20 years for the native vegetation to become totally established and the siltation to be remedied, but we are convinced that supporting this effort will result in a dramatic and positive change to Pelekane Bay and the entire watershed in our lifetime.”

Melora Purell, KWP coordinator, says she is inspired by the Menchs because “they understand the connections between what we are doing to conserve the watershed in the uplands and the positive impacts on the coastal environments downslope. There have been so many times I share KWP’s work to conserve our forested watershed with members of the community --- most people sympathize, some pass on the message, a good number invest their time as volunteers, but Gunner and Elli stand out amongst the few who have responded with a financial commitment to support our work.”

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KWP is a voluntary coalition of private landowners and State land managers who joined together in 2003 to work across property boundaries to manage the forested watershed of Kohala Mountain and protect it from threats. In 2009, KWP received \$2.69 million in federal funds through a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) coastal restoration grant to improve the condition of the Pelekane Bay watershed on the leeward coast of Kohala Mountain. See <http://kohalawatershed.org>. KWP works in partnership with The Kohala Center, a Hawai'i Island-based nonprofit dedicated to environmental research and education that support a sustainable future for our island and the world. See www.kohalacenter.org.

As co-author of a book on water pollution and environmental studies in 1970 while at prep school, Mench has always been in tune with protecting the environment and conserving resources. In the gallery, the Menchs have switched over to LED lighting throughout and have decreased electrical usage to less than half of what it was a year ago. See <http://www.harborgallery.biz/>.

“Every business owner should try to do something to contribute to enhancing our environment and help us to sustain the resources we will need to survive here for the long term. We are trying to do our part! Conservation is the key,” Mench said.

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[KaneaaPlanting photo caption]

Kohala Watershed Partnership community volunteers Brooks Rownd and Laura Frailey plant *ohe mauka*, an endemic tree, in the Kanea'a Biodiversity Preserve on the slopes of Kohala Mountain.

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