

For Immediate Release

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Waipuni Kahalu‘u Web site offers innovative approach to water issues *Online decision support tool brings together scientific information based on Hawaiian knowledge*

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—July 24, 2013—A new Web site that teaches users about the natural processes that contribute to the fresh water supply in the Kahalu‘u region on Hawai‘i Island is now online and available to the public.

The Web site, Waipuni Kahalu‘u, represents a unique collaboration between the Edith Kana‘ole Foundation, the Watershed Professionals Network, the Redlands Institute, and The Kohala Center. The project was funded by a grant from the Coastal and Ocean Climate Applications Program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Program Office. The Web site is accessible online at <http://www.spatial.redlands.edu/waipunikahaluu>.

The purpose of Waipuni Kahalu‘u is to develop a new way to bring Hawaiian knowledge forward in decision-making processes, and to foster informed communities that are better prepared to participate in local land-use and conservation initiatives. Focusing on the Kahalu‘u *ahupua‘a* (mountain-to-sea land division), the site educates users about where local fresh water comes from and how it is affected by ecological disruptions, the current health of the local landscape, the consequences and cumulative effects of contemporary land management practices, and how those practices could be modified to improve and maintain ecosystem health.

The dynamic and interactive site allows users to explore a virtual model of the Kahalu‘u watershed, presenting it as a system of water exchanges among climate, weather, vegetation, and land use. The site also demonstrates how changes in climate and land use may affect essential fresh water systems, and provides a rich atlas and other resources that explore the culture, history, language and ecosystem of Hawai‘i through Native Hawaiian landscape concepts and Western science environmental models. An interactive map section can assist local land managers to make informed decisions about the impact of land use changes on groundwater.

“Waipuni Kahalu‘u integrates a Hawaiian perspective of environmental kinship with modern-day ecological vernacular and technology,” said Kekuhi Keali‘ikanaka‘ole Haililani, Executive

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Director of the Edith Kanaka‘ole Foundation. “It takes a rigid scientific tool like geographic information system (GIS) software to a whole new level, by incorporating land and weather points of view to augment what is typically a purely human point of view.”

The project partners plan to extend and enhance Waipuni Kahalu‘u over the next several years, and welcome user input. Please let us know what you think about it and how it might be improved. Users are encouraged to send their feedback via email to waipuni@kohalacenter.org.

About The Kohala Center

The Kohala Center (<http://www.kohalacenter.org>) is an independent, community-based center for research, education, and conservation. The center was established in direct response to the request of island residents to create greater educational and employment opportunities by enhancing—and celebrating—Hawai‘i’s spectacular natural and cultural landscapes.