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PROJECT CLEAN-UP

Habitats getting help

Projects in Maunalua and Pelekane bays will receive \$6.1 million in federal funding

[By Kaylee Noborikawa](#)

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Projects to restore Maunalua and Pelekane bays will receive \$6.1 million as part of the federal economic stimulus package, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced yesterday.

 Federal Money to Help Clean Local Waters



Economic stimulus money is coming to Hawaii to help our reefs by removing invasive algae from Maunalua Bay.

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The funds will help restore marine and coastal habitats while providing 88 jobs in the state.

The two projects were part of 50 national restoration projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

"Funding for these two Hawaii projects is an important part of a national effort to leverage economic recovery dollars to restore coastal and marine habitats and, at the same time, generate and protect jobs for thousands of people," said U.S. Rep. Neil Abercrombie.

The Kohala Center on the Big Island will receive \$2.7 million to restore 1,460 acres in Pelekane Bay, said NOAA. The Pelekane Bay Watershed Restoration project is scheduled to start Aug. 1 after decades of planning.

Project coordinator Melora Purell said 15 full-time jobs over 18 months were created. The field work includes planting 100,000 native plants along two major streams to reduce erosion and building a fence to keep feral goats out of the watershed, said Purell in a telephone interview.

The Maunalua Bay Reef Restoration project, coordinated by the Nature Conservancy and Malama Maunalua, will receive \$3.4 million to remove 22 acres of invasive algae from the bay.

Suzanne Case, executive director of the Nature Conservancy in Hawaii, said the funding will open up 73 new jobs, including 60 full-time invasive algae removal positions, for 14 months.

"This money will be passed directly to our community, putting people to work to restore a vital marine resource for Hawaii. Our residents need jobs, and our reefs need a break from the alien algae that are smothering them," said Case, who hopes to start the hiring process by the end of the summer.

Avrainvillea amadelpha, or leather mudweed, covers 54 acres in Maunalua Bay, according to a recent survey by state biologists. The algae traps sediment in the bay and smothers coral, eventually killing the reef.

Volunteers have worked for three years to restore the bay and have removed more than 25 tons of leather mudweed thus far, said Kimo Franklin, invasive algae coordinator for Malama Maunalua.


Franklin and volunteers conducted bimonthly pulls in the Paiko area, where a quarter acre has been cleared in about a year. The conservancy said scientists have found this effective in bringing back native species.

Thirty volunteers showed up at yesterday's pull, which removed 4,745 pounds of algae. A resident pulled 959 pounds of invasive algae on Monday, which contributed to the final count.

"This bay is close to dying. It's at a real tipping point," said Jennifer Taylor, a Malama Maunalua volunteer who has worked on the project for more than two years and lives along the bay. "It looks beautiful till you're out there paddling and you look underneath. This bay's a treasure and we haven't been good to it."

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