



## LEAFLET November 2007 Front Page

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### Food in a Post-Peak Oil World

**Photo:** Aerial view of Hamakua Springs hydroponic vegetable farm.

*"Many years from now, this Food Summit will be pointed to as the point when things started to change for Hawai'i. And you folks at The Kohala Center were at the apex of the change."* – Richard Ha, Hamakua Springs Country Farms

If you missed the Hawai'i Island Food Summit in October, no worries. You can view all of the speakers online at [www.kohalacenter.org/foodmedia](http://www.kohalacenter.org/foodmedia). Summit participants discussed ecological farming practices, alternative energy, marketing Island-grown foods, raising public awareness about the value of buying local products, and changing our own behavior when we make food choices. The consensus among participants was that this was the start of something big on the island. After a long departure from sustainable agricultural practices, we are recognizing that Hawai'i could once feed itself and can do so again. We are mobilizing for greater food self-sufficiency. Richard Ha, founder of Kea`au Bananas (now [Hamakua Springs Country Farms](#)), sat on one of the panels at the Summit, where he shared his philosophy for the future of agriculture in Hawai'i:



*"Food was cheap in the past because oil was cheap. Five years ago, oil was \$30/barrel, but now it's \$90/barrel. Now that oil is becoming more and more expensive, food is also going to become much more expensive. For me, the situation is not complicated at all. We need to use an alternate form of energy to help us grow food! The wind, the waves, the water – they are all free here in Hawai'i. It's the oil that is expensive. With alternate energy, we should be able to continue growing food – and maybe local food can be grown cheaper than food that is shipped here from far away."*

Read "[Moving Forward by Looking Backward](#)" to learn more about Richard Ha and Hamakua Springs Country Farms.

### From Fire to Food



**Photo:** Some local delicacies cooking in an imu. Photo courtesy of Amy Greenwell Garden.

The Amy Greenwell Ethnobotanical Garden is hosting a Hawaiian *Imu* Workshop on Saturday, November 10, followed by a lu`au feast. Learn to prepare an *imu* (underground oven), select the right rocks, make the fire, prepare traditional Hawaiian dishes, and cook these dishes in the imu. Participants will prepare kalua pig, laulau, lomi salmon, kalua turkey, haupia, and other mouthwatering Hawaiian recipes. These are valuable skills to know and pass along to others. Tuition is \$125, or \$100 for Bishop Museum members, and includes four passes to the lu`au after class. To register, please call the Garden at 808-323-3318 or email

[agg@bishopmuseum.org](mailto:agg@bishopmuseum.org).

## A Bridge to the Past

**Photo:** Stepping stones along the 175-mile long Ala Kahakai Trail corridor. Photo courtesy of <http://www.nps.gov/alka/>.

*"Together, we must determine which things are sacred and must be kept that way, and which things may be opened up to the public for development."* – Flo Frank, planning consultant for the Ala Kahakai NHT



The **Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail (NHT)** encompasses a network of historic trails connecting North Kohala in the north to Puna in the south. The National Park Service has recently completed the **Draft Comprehensive Management Plan** for the Ala Kahakai NHT, which lays out various alternatives for managing this important resource. The community is invited to attend one of six public meetings to provide input on the draft plan. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet Aric Arakaki, Superintendent of the Ala Kahakai NHT, to learn more about current NHT initiatives on the Island, and to voice their opinion on the future of the Ala Kahakai. Public meetings will be held at the following locations and times:

- Kona Outdoor Circle (Kailua-Kona) on Monday, November 5, 2007, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Yano Hall (Captain Cook) on Tuesday, November 6, 2007, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Pahala Community Hall (Pahala) on Wednesday, November 7, 2007, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Tutu's House (Waimea) on Thursday, November 8, 2007, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Moku Papapa Discovery Center (Hilo) on Friday, November 9, 2007, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Kohala Intergenerational Center (Kapa`au) on Saturday, November 10, 2007, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

## A Day in the Forest



**Photo:** KWP volunteer Julia Azares attacks the invasive banana poka vine. Photo by Melora Purell.

*"The Kohala Watershed Partnership has stewardship over 65,000 acres of Kohala Mountain. In addition to the conservation work we are doing on partnership lands, we are giving members of the community the opportunity to learn first-hand about how invasive species threaten the integrity of the native forest and how that can lead to degradation of the Kohala Mountain watershed."* – Melora Purell, Coordinator for the Kohala Watershed Partnership

Weeds like banana poka and ginger currently occupy and are spreading through the *mauka* (upcountry) portions of the Kohala Forest, where they can choke out native plants. The Kohala Watershed Partnership (KWP), a coalition of concerned landowners, is fighting back in an effort to conserve the forests and water sources of Kohala Mountain. Earlier this year KWP hired conservation biologist Melora Purell as Coordinator for this project. Melora is now seeking volunteers from the community to participate in once-a-month work days to help control the spread of invasive weeds into the native forest.

**Photo:** Purple Clermontia flowers growing in the Kilohana Stream Unit exclosure. Photo by Melora Purell.



Volunteers spend the day in some of the most pristine areas of the Kohala Forest. On September 22 volunteers cleared a half mile of Waiakamali Gulch of banana poka, freeing the ancient trees from these noxious vines. After the work, some of the group hiked to Eke Ridge, in the cloud forests of the leeward slope of the Mountain. On October 27 volunteers pulled banana poka and ginger from the Kilohana Stream Unit, ten fenced acres of wet forest on the west flank of the Mountain. They spent the afternoon exploring the near-weedless side of the exclosure, where they photographed Clermontia flowers like the one pictured above. The community is invited to join the upcoming work party on Saturday, November 18. For an unforgettable day doing good for the environment and experiencing some of the uncommon landscapes of Kohala Mountain, contact Melora at [melora@purells.net](mailto:melora@purells.net) or via phone at 333-0976.

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Learn more about the [Kohala Watershed Partnership](#).

## Honoring Our Youth



**Photo:** WHYFC students met with Mayor Harry Kim, who came to Hualalai Academy on June 1, 2007 to congratulate the group after the passage of a smoking ban at Kahalu`u Beach Park. Photo by Donna Goodale.

Fifteen-year old Amber Datta and her friends on the West Hawai'i Youth Fisheries Council (WHYFC) have much to celebrate. As a result of their work over the past three years, smoking is now prohibited at Kahalu`u Beach Park, one of the community's favorite snorkeling and surfing beaches. [Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve](#) on O`ahu was the first beach park in the State of Hawai`i to ban smoking. In

January 2007 Kahalu`u Beach Park became the first beach park on Hawai`i Island to follow suit. WHYFC won the *Hui Laulima* Youth Group Award in recognition of their advocacy in support of banning smoking at Kahalu`u Beach Park, and Amber was selected as Youth Advocate of the Year by the Statewide Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai`i for her individual contributions to this effort.

The smoking ban has resulted in a cleaner environment both for beachgoers and for the creatures which inhabit the Bay, since toxic chemicals from cigarette butts had been leaching into the beach and the Bay, negatively impacting marine life. Read [the behind-the-scenes story](#), as told by Amber Datta and her former science teacher Donna Goodale.

## Count the Birds

Cornell Lab of Ornithology's [Project FeederWatch](#) is seeking new participants to help count birds. Cornell scientists are investigating changes in seasonal behavior in birds, to determine if these changes are related to global climate change.

Volunteer FeederWatchers count the birds at their feeders each week and send their information to the Cornell Lab. Cornell maintains the world's largest database on feeder-bird populations, with nearly 40,000 people submitting observations over the past twenty years. Participants have already helped document unusual bird sightings, winter movements, and shifting ranges of some bird species over the past 20 years. Data collected since 1987 reveals hummingbirds turning up much farther north than usual in the winter and warblers staying longer in northern climates during the winter months. Cornell scientists will be studying these trends further over the next few years, to determine if changes in bird behavior are due to warming temperatures.

The 21st season of Project FeederWatch runs from November 10, 2007 through April 4, 2008. Birders of all ages and skill levels are welcome to participate. Learn more and register at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw>, or call the Project FeederWatch toll-free at (800) 843-2473.

[Back Page](#)

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# LEAFLET November 2007

## Back Page

### Moving Forward by Looking Backward

**Perspective and Photos by Richard Ha**  
**Based on an Informal Interview with Linda Copman**



**Photo:** Alia Stream crossing at the *mauka* (upland) boundary of Hamakua Springs Farm.

*"In old Hawai`i, the ahupua`a was a land division that stretched from the uplands to the sea, and it contained the resources necessary to support its human population – from fish and salt to fertile land for farming and, high up, wood for building, and much more. Our "New Ahupua`a" uses old knowledge along with modern technology to make the best use of our own land system and resources. We will move forward by looking backward." – Richard Ha*

Richard Ha has been farming since the mid-1970s. Three generations of his family work on his farm, [Hamakua Springs Country Farms](#), in Pepe`ekee. Richard's mother, Florence Ha, is involved, along with Richard and his wife June, plus their daughter Tracy and her husband Kimo. "I like to joke that everyone has one vote and I have three quarters of a vote," he says. Richard thanks his mother for teaching him by doing, rather than by talking, and he credits his father for teaching him to take a long-term view: "Dad taught us how to be survivors by planning for the future. And, he would always say, 'Not no can. Can!!'"

Richard maintains an extensive blog on the Hamakua Springs website, filled with information about his farm, his personal recollections from the early days of planting bananas with an o`o bar in the pahoehoe lava near Pahoa Town, and visions for the future. Click on the links throughout this story to read about [how Richard got started in farming](#) and other topics.

**Photo:** Richard Ha with a sampling of Hamakua Springs produce.

The issue of food security has been creeping into Richard's consciousness more and more during the past few years, as the price of oil has risen from \$30 to \$90 per barrel. This 15% per year price increase, combined with the prospect of China's surging demand for fossil fuels, prompted Richard to diversify his production from bananas to include [hydroponic vegetables](#) about four years ago.





**Photo:** Red and green hydroponic lettuce.

Richard believes that hydroponic farming has the potential to feed more people per unit of land than organic farming does. Hydroponic farming techniques utilize soil-less culture, instead of dirt, to grow plants. This method of farming allows Richard to address food safety issues, by closely monitoring the irrigation and spray water he uses. Because soil is not used as a growing medium, he does not have to treat for soil-borne pests. He does not use tractors to till the soil, thus avoiding some petroleum costs. He covers the ground with a

plastic mulch to prevent weeds from growing, thus avoiding weed control costs. Richard adheres to the principles of organic farming, and, as with organic farming, pesticides are used very sparingly, if at all.

**Photo:** Close-up view of a hydroponic, "living" lettuce plant.

Richard has a long history of sustainable farming. His Kea`au Banana Plantation in 1993 was the first banana company in the world to be certified "eco o.k." Richard's leadership has helped transform the world banana industry into a more environmentally friendly business. Kea`au Banana Plantation was recently selected as one of six national finalists for the [Patrick Madden Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education \(SARE\) Award](#).



"We are very cautious, and conscious, about chemicals. We always use the least toxic ones first. After all, we eat this produce, too, and we feed it to our children and grandchildren," says Richard.

Richard is increasingly uncomfortable with the way that fertilizer, chemical, packaging, and transportation costs in Hawai`i are rising, especially in the past few months, and he predicts that such [petroleum-based costs will triple](#) in the not-too-distant future. He advises small farmers on the island to try to avoid petroleum-based costs as much as possible, by, for example, shortening their distribution lines to save on transportation costs. He cautions farmers to use chemicals only when absolutely necessary:



**Photo:** Hamakua Springs hydroponic watercress is grown with no wheeled tractor fuel costs.

*"Use every strategy you can think of to help the 'good guy' bugs and hinder the 'bad guy' bugs. Sometimes, being clever like this can save you petroleum-based chemical costs. Use alternate energy sources to help you with your work. As energy costs rise, alternative energy sources will become more economically viable."*

Richard knows several Island farmers who have already made the transition to alternative energy and are farming off the electric grid.

One uses solar in Puna and one on the Hamakua Coast uses a combination of micro-hydro and solar. He doesn't know of anyone who is entirely independent from fossil fuels, though he says he has recently noticed some diesel vehicles "that smell of french fries as they pass by."

"Farmers cannot afford to stand in gas lines," Richard insists. He thinks that farmers should build small-scale, farm-appropriate bio-diesel plants. Richard believes that bio-diesel technology lends itself to small-scale operations, but he is not convinced the economics make sense for large-scale operations:

*"Let's say a gallon of ethanol, or bio-diesel, can be landed in Hawai'i from foreign sources for \$3 per gallon. There are eight pounds in a gallon, so the liquid fuel is worth 37½ cents per pound. What if it takes twice as much fuel stock to produce that pound of liquid fuel? The raw fuel stock would be worth 18 ¾ cents per pound. I don't know any farmer who would farm anything for that return. Would they farm bio-fuel stock if the price was tripled - or 56 cents per pound? Maybe. We do need liquid fuel, so*

*maybe it is worth the State's while to subsidize bio-fuel production."*

Hamakua Springs uses mostly fossil fuel-based energy now, but Richard has plans to change this. Hamakua Springs is looking into small-scale bio-diesel production. Richard is also planning to use plant waste from the farm to make pelletized fish food, thereby avoiding some imported fertilizer. The waste from the fish will be run through a bio-filter to make usable nitrogen for plants being cultivated downstream. He is also considering raising animals to integrate animal waste into the farm's fertilizer/energy stream.

**Photo:** Wai A`ama flume intake on the Hamakua Springs property.

Richard is currently designing a **hydroelectric plant** to take advantage of his farm's **abundant water supply**. The new plant should take Hamakua Springs entirely off the electric grid. He plans to use the electricity he generates for pumping, filtering, conveying, aerating, fruit drying, freeze drying, powering his cars, and all sorts of other site-specific uses.



*"I am waiting on financing for the hydro plant. There is a 100% tax credit for investors in our project. I am hoping to find investors who would take the 100% tax credit, but leave me with the equity of the resource. I need the cheap electricity to innovate and increase yields."*

Water is another essential ingredient for farming. When Richard was considering sites for the expansion of his farm, he based his final decision on finding a location which would support a sustainable operation in the long-term. "The deciding factor was the availability of water. There were three springs and three streams running through the Hamakua Springs site. The sugar company flume system was overgrown and in major disrepair, but it was functional," he explains. Where possible, Richard recommends that farmers locate as close as they can to a dependable water source and adjust their production methods to adapt to their particular micro-climate.

Richard takes a long-term view of farming, since experience has taught him that, many times, the short-term solution does not yield long-term benefits. Farmers know that yields increase with a certain combination of minerals. "If we provide these inputs at critical times we can produce food intensively. If we don't, we will need to use more land to get equivalent production. But using more land for food runs into conflict with people needing affordable housing. It's a tough situation," Richard admits.



**Photo:** Ida Castillo, tomato packing house supervisor at Hamakua Springs Farm, recording food safety data.

One of Richard's overarching goals is to maximize the food productivity of available land.

Richard is working with key agricultural leaders, including: Dean Hashimoto of CTAHR (College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources at UH); Sandy Kunimoto, Chairperson of the Hawai`i Department of Agriculture; Dean Okimoto, President of the Hawai`i Farm Bureau; and others to develop a white paper that will evaluate the bottlenecks that farmers need to overcome in order to feed Hawai`i's population. The group will evaluate what each person in the State needs in terms of calories in order to have a nutritious diet - in order to accurately assess what crops the State needs to produce to be able to feed its people and in what proportion to provide adequate nutrition. The bottlenecks are things that Hawai`i's farmers need to overcome as fossil fuel costs rise, like finding local sources of calcium and phosphorus. "We need to know where the fertilizer will come from, and what can be developed here through composting and aquaponics," Richard explains.

**Photo:** Keiki from Kaumana Elementary School enjoying bananas on an excursion to Hamakua Springs Farm.



Nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, calcium, and magnesium are the most important minerals imported by the State's agriculture industry. Calcium is readily available here, and nitrogen-rich manures from animal operations are available locally in limited quantities. "That being the case," says Richard, "we need to utilize the fertilizer potential of finished crops in order to reuse these essential minerals." Richard advocates integrating livestock with vegetable and fruit production, so that farmers can utilize the fertilizer/energy potential of the animal waste products to cultivate their crops. Such practices can provide a local source of nitrogen.

*"After 100 years of fertilizing sugar cane there is a lot of phosphorous tied up in the former sugar lands. I'm no chemist, but I've been told that phosphorous can be recovered through a high-temperature process. I would like to know if this is economically feasible with 'free' hydro-electricity."*

Richard also wants to identify what produce items are flown to Hawai'i - to see what opportunities there are for Hawai'i's farmers. "Why should we fly it here, when we can grow it?" he asks.



**Photo:** Chef Alan Wong and Hualalai Resort staff examining Richard Ha's hydroponic grape tomatoes.

The single most effective thing consumers can do, according to Richard, is to demand that their local markets carry locally grown produce. Richard urges consumers to talk to the "bosses" at their local markets, and even at the store's regional headquarters on the mainland, to request that locally grown products be offered for sale. "Pay attention to what you're buying and where it was grown. Ask questions in the produce department of the supermarket. They'll tell you. Buy locally grown produce." By articulating what they want to

buy in the supermarkets, Richard thinks that consumers can powerfully influence the course of events in the State.

*"We recently participated in some events Foodland put on around the Islands called 'Island-Grown Market'. The point for us was to increase people's awareness that the products being offered at this farmer's market-like event were actually available right inside the store on a regular basis. KTA Supermarkets have a well deserved reputation for supporting and nurturing local farmers. Support them and tell them that you appreciate what they are doing."*

Richard urges all of us to think about how we will protect our families if shipping gets interrupted. With that in mind, Richard recommends landscaping with fruit trees (ulu trees are one of his favorites), and making friends with your neighbors. "See who is growing what and prepare to trade. This is what people used to do in the old days. It is really satisfying to do this, and it makes for a much stronger community," he says.

**Photo:** Chef Alan Wong evaluating the aroma of heirloom tomatoes, with Richard Ha (center) and Kimo Pa (far right), farm manager, in the background.



Richard Ha is a busy man. In addition to running his own farm and assessing the nutritional needs of Hawai'i's population, he is also working on some legislation at the State level designed to promote alternative energy loans for farmers. Richard's idea is that the State Department of Agriculture should make a new farm loan category specifically for farmers who want to do alternate energy projects. The

loan would have attractive terms, including a long payback period (40 years), a low down payment (15%), and a low interest rate (below 5%). The loan ceiling would be 1.5 million dollars or so. To qualify, one would need to be a bona fide farmer. Richard's idea is that the more energy farmers have available to help them farm, the larger the amount of food one farmer can produce. "The more food one farmer produces, the more complex our society can be," says Richard. "Think about it - if everyone has to return to farming in order to feed their own family, then our choices, and our society, will be limited."



Richard's loan proposal has been incorporated into the Farm Bureau legislative package for the upcoming 2008 legislative session. Richard encourages residents to contact Jill Tokuda, Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and Clift Tsuji, Chair of the House Agriculture Committee, to voice their support for this bill.

*"If this bill passes, then as fossil fuel costs rise, our local farmers' costs would stabilize, and they would make more money. If farmers made more money, more people would go into farming and that would help us maintain a vibrant society here in Hawai'i. And it would help us in our quest to produce more food locally and be less dependent on importing our food."*

**Photo:** The bounty of the land: a Hamakua Springs produce basket.

Richard believes there is a strong likelihood that his bill will be enacted in 2008. He feels that most State legislators understand the importance of food in a post-peak oil world. Richard is emphatic that the electric utility companies cannot respond fast enough to changing economics to be useful to farmers. "But I have great faith in the ingenuity of the individual farmer," he concludes.

Read Richard Ha's "[Law of Survival](#)".

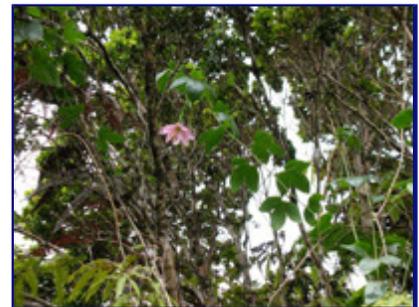
## Killing Poka, Protecting the 'Āina

### Perspective and Photos by Melora Purell Based on an Informal Interview with Linda Copman

**Photo:** The showy pink flowers of banana poka, an invasive vine in the passion flower family.

*"We still have a chance to control the spread of banana poka into the native forest, but it will take a commitment over many years."*

I am the coordinator of the Kohala Watershed Partnership (KWP). I started work in April of 2007. My job is to coordinate the implementation of our management plan, and my position is long-term. The KWP Management Plan lays out our stewardship objectives for the next 20 years and beyond. It involves on-the-ground protection of the forested watershed, along with public outreach and education. Key documents like our management plan and environmental assessments are posted online at the [Hawaii Association of Watershed Partnerships](#) website.



Our first protected area is on ranch land along the cliffs of Pololu and Honokane Valleys. We are fencing about 500 acres of this special forest, removing feral cattle and pigs, controlling weeds, and promoting the regeneration of native forest. This will protect rare plants, birds, and tree snails - as well as the sources of many streams.



**Photo:** Melora Purell hacking at ginger in the Kilohana Stream Unit enclosure.

I report to the partners of the KWP, which are Kahua Ranch, Ponoholo Ranch, Parker Ranch, Surety Kohala, DHHH and DOFAW - State of Hawai`i, Kamehameha Schools, Queen Emma Land Company, Laupahoehoe Nui LLC, Nature Conservancy, and the County Department of Water Supply.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) was instrumental in organizing the private landowners, and then the State got involved as well. KWP is the newest of the nine watershed partnerships in the State of Hawai`i, so TNC had experience on other islands in organizing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) amongst the partners. The partnership is based entirely on an MOU; we are not a government agency, nor a non-profit. Rather, we are a coalition of land stewards. The partnership obtains

grants to do conservation management on both public and private land, and our funding comes from Federal, State, and private sources.

**Photo:** KWP volunteers explore the cloud forest on Eke Ridge after their work is pau (done).



The partners give abundantly of their time and resources to achieve our goals. The public has a huge influence in what happens on State land, but private landowners have more leeway in the amount of public involvement they may want. Most of our management actions take place across property boundaries, but each partner involved may have different reasons for participating in the action. For example, State Natural Area Reserves have a mandate to protect native forest, but ranchers may be protecting the forest because they want to guarantee a clean and abundant water source, while an owner of Hawaiian legacy lands may be looking at the forest as a cultural resource for Native people.

*"It boggles my mind sometimes that this group of landowners has found common ground to protect Kohala Mountain. But in the end, this is what inspires me!"*

Some short-term goals for KWP include removing feral cattle from the watershed area; control of incipient weed populations in accessible areas; public outreach on the topics of garden-variety invasive species and better alternatives; propagation of native species for forest restoration; monitoring water quality and biodiversity in selected streams; and educating children and adults about the connections between water quality, feral animals, and invasive plant pests.

Community members can get involved in protecting Kohala Mountain in five key ways:

1. Educate yourself about which plants should NOT be planted in your garden;
2. Be on the lookout for real problem species like Miconia that are not yet on Kohala Mountain;
3. Take care to clean your boots and gear before you enter the forest;
4. Use public access points or get permission from landowners; and
5. Join the KWP volunteer crew.

The best way to learn about the work we do is to participate in a volunteer work day. The locations and activities for the work days will vary each month, dependent upon the number of volunteers. Throughout the year, volunteers will be working on native seed collection, trail construction, weed control, and planting of native species. My goal is to give the volunteers a well-rounded experience with various conservation activities and locations around our Kohala Mountain.



**Photo:** The smiling volunteer crew after the September 2007 work day of the Kohala Watershed Partnership.

I have done outreach programs with a number of community groups in Waimea, and I will be working with students in public and charter schools later this year. I am eager to do presentations for clubs, classes, or community groups, and will happily arrange a guided hike. For volunteers or school groups who want to get more involved, we will be offering opportunities for more in-depth training and work in the forest.

We gratefully accept donations of tools, materials for building trails and fences, and supplies for our volunteers. Contact me at [melora@purells.net](mailto:melora@purells.net) or via phone at 333-0976 for more details.

*"Thank YOU for helping me make more connections by passing this information on to friends and 'ohana who might be interested - especially to all those students in our community!"*

Learn more about the **"10 least wanted" invasive species** on the Island. These plants should not be used in landscaping and are targeted by the Big Island Invasive Species Committee for control or eradication.

## Passing a Law to Lend a Hand

**By Linda Copman**

**Based on an Informal Interview with Donna Goodale & Amber Datta**

**Photo:** Amber Datta won an award as the 2007 Outstanding Youth Advocate by the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawaii for her efforts over the past few years to ban smoking at Kahaluu Beach Park. Photos by Baron Sekiya, West Hawaii Today. Read the [full WHT story](#).



*"Though at first I was concerned mostly by the effect of toxic cigarette butts on precious marine life, my concerns soon expanded to the effect of secondhand smoke and dirty cigarettes in the sand on beachgoers. Hundreds of locals and tourists alike visit this beach every week to lie on the sand or appreciate the wonders of the coral reef. Is this what I would want to see on my vacation? Would I like to inhale another's smoke while experiencing the salty tang of the ocean air? Would I want to watch as a child blissfully built castle's of sand, topping them off with cigarette flags?"* – Amber Datta, WHYFC member and 2007 Youth Advocate of the Year

Donna Goodale is a biologist, a teacher, and a member of the West Hawai`i Fisheries Council (WHFC). Back in 2004, Donna helped to set up a youth group for the WHFC. West Hawai`i Youth Fisheries Council (WHYFC) began meeting once a month at Hualalai Academy, where Donna works as a science teacher. The group discussed the context for activities sponsored by their parent organization, WHFC, such as setting up Fish Replenishment Areas along the Kona Coast to replenish reef fish and reduce the conflict created by aquarium fish collectors. Donna invited Dr. Bill Walsh, DLNR fisheries biologist, and Sara Peck from Sea Grant to talk to the students. She also asked Leonard Torricer to teach the group how to conduct a fish survey at Kahalu`u Bay.

Donna regularly uses Kahalu`u Bay as a site to teach fish identification and reef ecology to her Hualalai Academy classes. Says Donna, "I have had students snorkeling and studying the Kahalu`u reef for the last 5 years. I also take a group of students there on Make a Difference Day in April. We pick up trash and we used to have a contest to see how many cigarette butts we could pick up in 30 minutes. My students also teach the public about invertebrates and tide pools during the annual Reef Awareness Day in April. My students and I have spent a lot of time learning about the environment at Kahalu`u."

Donna talked with WHYFC members about conflicts in the community and asked them to think through how their youth group might help the local environment. The group came up with the idea of banning smoking. One of the students, Devyn Park, went right home and wrote a petition, and another student, Laura Andersen, worked with her father to formalize the language of the petition. The students then spent the next one and a half years circulating their petitions at Kahalu`u Beach Park and throughout Kona town. During this time, Laura created a science fair project that tested the effect of cigarette butts on the population of ghost crabs at Kahalu`u Beach. Laura's results showed that there were fewer crabs where there were more butts, a finding that affirmed the group's commitment to their cause.



**Photo:** WHYFC students pose with Virginia Isbell and the cigarette butts they collected from Kahalu`u Beach. The group drove to Hilo in July 2006 to testify at the first hearing on their resolution to ban smoking. Pictured are **(from left to right)** Nathaniel Goodale, Donna Goodale, Virginia Isbell, Tien Austin, Phoebe Hono, Mackenzie Buckner, Laura Andersen, and Devyn Park.

In the spring of 2006 WHYFC invited former Hawai`i County Council member Virginia Isbell to a meeting and presented her with the signed petitions. Ms. Isbell challenged the kids to rewrite the petition as a formal resolution for submission to her colleagues on the County Council. WHYFC prepared a resolution to ban smoking at the Beach Park, which the Council passed on August 1, 2006. Empowered by their success, the students advocated for increased protection through prohibiting **all tobacco use** at Kahalu`u Beach Park by law. The students testified at a total of six hearings before the County Council before the ban on tobacco use at Kahalu`u Beach Park was enacted into law. The final ordinance was passed by the Council on January 4, 2007, and it was signed by Mayor Harry Kim on January 19, 2007. Mayor Kim personally met with WHYFC students on June 1, 2007 to congratulate and thank them for their hard work and perseverance.

Amber's mentors Chris Dein-Gaughen, Coordinator of the Hawai`i Island Tobacco-Free Partnership of West Hawai`i (HITFP-WH), and Donna Goodale, West Hawai`i Youth Fisheries Council (WHYFC) Advisor, report that Amber was instrumental in moving the youth group forward to attain their goal. According to the nomination essay submitted by Amber's mentors:

*"Amber contacted Alan Hong, manager of Hanauma Bay, to ask his advice on how to succeed in banning smoking. Amber set up a conference call for the entire youth group to ask Mr. Hong questions and listen to his answers. Through her efforts, she made it possible for all the members of the group to be included in the discussion with Mr. Hong, learn from it and be energized by it to continue their work to obtain a smoking ban at Kahalu`u."*

**Photo:** Amber Datta testifying in Kona in October 2006, via videoconferencing to the County Council meeting in Hilo.



*"Despite the long process, I was impressed by the ability we have, as young members of the public, to have our voice heard and fairly considered. The Council listened to us testify, heard what we had to say, and after careful consideration, passed our resolution. After three more meetings, an ordinance banning smoking at Kahalu`u Beach Park was passed as law. In two years time, our idea became a law and changed the direction of Kahalu`u - by making it a cleaner and healthier place for both its sea life and visitors." - Amber Datta*

From 2004 to 2007 Donna Goodale was the organizing force behind the students, emailing them and encouraging them to continue their commitment, write their testimony, send it in to the County Clerk on time, get a ride to the next hearing, and get up in front of the Council and testify. Donna coordinated with Chris Dein-Gaughen, Coordinator of the Hawai`i Island Tobacco-Free Partnership of West Hawai`i.

Chris procured the money to purchase t-shirts for the students to symbolize their commitment and solidarity. But, says Donna, the success of the project hinged on the students:

*"I was the organizer behind the students, but they are ones who convinced the County Council to pass the law. I don't think it would have passed if a group of adults had tried to do it. The Council had a hard time saying no to a group of 11-14 year olds."*

Donna Goodale is proud to honor all the members of the West Hawai`i Youth Fisheries Council's Kahalu`u Smoking Ban Team: Devyn Park, Laura Andersen, Phoebe Hono, Nathaniel Goodale, Tien Austin, Allison Alterman, Loren Jessup, Sonny Hapgood, Adrien Lipps, Miranda Villegas, Mackenzie Buckner, Dominique Saks, and Amber Datta. Donna extends a special *mahalo* (thank you) to WHYFC member Nathaniel Goodale, who testified in person at all six hearings. Donna also thanks Phoebe Hono, who designed the front of the smoking ban t-shirt, Miranda Villegas, who designed the back of the shirt, and Amber Datta, who helped to finish the drawings to make them more "workable" for silk screening. Last but not least, Donna thanks Felicity Johnson, Principal of Hualalai Academy, for her support and for generously approving all of the time both the students and Donna spent working on this project. All of the Smoking Ban Team members attended Hualalai Academy.

[Front Page](#)