

# West Hawaii Today

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Volunteers give Kahaluu Beach Park some TLC

By Chelsea Jensen

Kahaluu Beach Park got some tender loving care Saturday morning as Big Island residents and visitors worked together to fix damage and clean debris left in the wake of recent warning-level surf.

The high surf episodes, which began Dec. 20 and continued into the new year with waves forecast between 20 and 25 feet, inundated areas of the 4-acre Hawaii County beach park located off Alii Drive in Keauhou. Waves damaged rock walls and Waikuaaala pond and left debris strewn across the popular park — Kahaluu is visited by 400,000 people annually, according to county estimates.

Rocks, some larger than a basketball, plant debris and coral fragments pushed some 50 feet inland by the surf were among the items picked up by more than a dozen volunteers who participated in the cleanup at Kahaluu. The volunteers also picked up rubbish, which included broken glass, cigarette butts and plastic items.

The cleanup was organized by the Kahaluu Bay Education Center, which falls under the auspices of The Kohala Center, said Cindi Punihaole, program director at the Kahaluu Bay Education Center. The nonprofit Kahaluu center works to nurture meaningful outdoor experiences for residents and visitors while protecting the area's natural and cultural resources. It has also partnered with the county to put into place a 10-year master plan to restore and protect the bay.



“It’s our kuleana (responsibility) while we’re here to malama (care for) our aina (land) and our beloved Kahaluu,” Punihaole said about why people should take part in such volunteer efforts at Kahaluu. “We have to leave something for our children and grandchildren.”

Avery Williams, a 17-year-old Parker School student who recently moved to Kailua-Kona from Texas, said her mission for the cleanup was to rid the Kahaluu shoreline of as much plastic and garbage as possible to protect the sea life there, including turtles, which she said can mistake plastic bags for jellyfish.

“We need these animals, and I’m trying to help with that,” she said while pulling glass from the sand.”

Tess Cayou, an Edmonds, Wash., native who has visited Kona annually for “at least the past decade” said it was her “special affinity” for the ocean and shoreline that brought her down to the park for the cleanup. Like Punihaole, she also wants to ensure Kahaluu is around for the next generation to enjoy.

“I want to be able to pass it on to the next generation,” said Cayou, who recently became a volunteer with the education center’s ReefTeach program, which teaches beachgoers how to protect corals, reef life and turtles. “If we don’t care now we won’t be able to.”

For more information, including the master plan to restore Kahaluu, visit [kahaluubay.org](http://kahaluubay.org), call 640-1166 or email [kahaluubay@kohalacenter.com](mailto:kahaluubay@kohalacenter.com).

- See more at: <http://westhawaiiitoday.com/news/local-news/volunteers-give-kahaluu-beach-park-some-tlc#sthash.yXSg0Da7.dpuf>

**Photo Credit:** Volunteers clean up large rocks and debris that got washed ashore during recent high surf at Kahaluu Beach Park on Saturday morning. (Laura Shimabuku/Special to West Hawaii Today) - See more at: <http://westhawaiiitoday.com/news/local-news/volunteers-give-kahaluu-beach-park-some-tlc#sthash.yXSg0Da7.dpuf>

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