

For Immediate Release

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The Kohala Center receives \$150,000 from Office of Hawaiian Affairs *Grant funds will strengthen ahupua‘a relationships in leeward Kohala*

WAIMEA, Hawai‘i Island, Hawai‘i (June 7, 2021)—The Kohala Center today announced that it received a grant award totaling \$150,000 that will support the native Hawaiian community through the Office of Hawaiian Affairs’ (OHA) ‘Ohana and Community Based Program Grant for Hawai‘i Island. The grant will help to reinforce and strengthen native Hawaiians’ ‘ohana (family), mo‘omeheu (culture), and ‘āina (land and water) in the ahupua‘a of Kawaihae during the year-long project period.

The grant will enable The Center to address the interrelated needs of ‘āina, kānaka (people), and mo‘omeheu in the ahupua‘a (traditional mountain-to-sea land division) of Kawaihae in leeward Kohala, which includes the Honokoa watershed. Through its “Ho‘olauna Kawaihae: Building pilina through respectful engagement” initiative, The Center will use the grant funds to research, learn, assess, and incorporate ancestral practices to engage respectfully in restoring dryland native forests in the ahupua‘a and strengthening reciprocal relationships between its people and the natural environment.

Most directly impacted by threats to Honokoa’s integrity are the more than 150 families that live in Honokoa on the Kawaihae Hawaiian Homestead. These homesteaders representing the Kailapa Community Association (KCA) call this ‘āina home. Located in one of the driest areas of the Main Hawaiian Islands, KCA needs fresh water, which is of foundational importance to their self-reliance, independence, and resiliency as a Hawaiian community. A lack of rainfall and freshwater resources present major issues for further community development and sustainability in the low-elevation areas of Kawaihae: without water, about 7,500 acres of designated agricultural land is not viable.

“The Hawaiian worldview ties together the health of ‘āina and the health of kānaka,” said Cheryl Ka‘uhane Lupenui, president and CEO of The Kohala Center. “More than 90% of Hawai‘i’s original dryland forests has been destroyed, resulting in the loss of native species, culture, ‘ike Hawai‘i, and habitats. This is a key project in our long-term efforts to strengthen ‘āina-kānaka relationships and resiliency as an ahupua‘a-stewarded community.”

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*The Kohala Center is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.
This project is sponsored by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, working to improve the lives of Native Hawaiians.*

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The purpose of the ‘Ohana and Community Based Program Grant is to serve the native Hawaiian lāhui in alignment with the strategic foundations, directions, and outcomes of OHA’s 15-year Mana i Maui Ola Strategic Plan.

About The Kohala Center

Founded in the year 2000, The Kohala Center (kohalacenter.org) is an independent, community-based center focused on research, education, and ‘āina stewardship for healthier ecosystems. By turning ancestral knowledge and research into action, we cultivate conditions that reconnect us with our place, water, food, and people, so that communities in Hawai‘i and around the world can thrive—ecologically, economically, culturally, and socially.

About the Office of Hawaiian Affairs

Established by the state Constitutional Convention in 1978, OHA is a semi-autonomous state agency mandated to better the conditions of Native Hawaiians. Guided by a board of nine publicly elected trustees, OHA fulfills its mandate through advocacy, research, community engagement, land management, and the funding of community programs. Learn more at oha.org.

About OHA’s Community Grants Program

OHA’s Community Grants Program supports non-profit organizations whose projects and programs serve the Native Hawaiian community and align with OHA’s Strategic Plan. For more information about the Community Grants Program, please visit oha.org/grants.

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A homesteader and member of the Kailapa Community Association tends to an ‘a‘ali‘i shrub planted near Kilohana Stream in Kawaihae. Photo courtesy The Kohala Center.