



For Immediate Release: October 17, 2023
HTA Release (23-44)

Hawai'i Tourism Authority Expands Destination Management Work on Hawai'i Island *Two community groups supported to mitigate visitor impacts in Punalu'u and Kealakekua*

ISLAND OF HAWAII – The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA), in partnership with the Island of Hawai'i Visitors Bureau (IHVB), has engaged two community-based organizations to support visitor education efforts and mitigate tourism impacts in Punalu'u and Kealakekua Bay.

This effort is a part of HTA's newly launched Hawai'i Island Community-Based Action Stewardship Program. HTA is funding this community-driven approach to destination management as guided by its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan and [Hawai'i Island Destination Management Action Plan \(DMAP\)](#).

"HTA continues to collaborate with Hawai'i Island residents to better manage tourism's impacts and support the initiatives they want to see and actively engage in for their communities, such as in Punalu'u and Kealakekua Bay," said Daniel Nāho'opi'i, HTA's Interim President and CEO. "Reinvesting in these non-profit organizations to expand the work they are doing to protect, preserve and educate people about the culture, history and natural resources of these special places is our kuleana to the community and those who visit."

Ka 'Ohana O Honu'apo (KOOH) was selected for its "Ka'ū Hoa Pili 'Āina Training Program," which will focus on training ten local stewards in Punalu'u on the practices of mālama 'āina built on the foundation of cultural practices and protocols, conservation and biological sciences, and place-based messaging about the Ka'ū coastline. The stewards will educate visitors about the area and assist with data collection. KOOH will also hire a Mālama 'Āina Coordinator to oversee and organize the stewards' training as guided by the KOOH Board of Directors and with support from other local non-profit organizations. KOOH will also continue working cohesively with the local Hawai'i Wildlife Fund which will handle HR management for the coordinator position. While this 'āina-based education program will initially cover the fragile and highly visited coastline of Punalu'u, the training will later be expanded to the greater Ka'ū coastline and ma uka into the forests and watersheds.

Ho'āla Kealakekua Nui, Inc. (HKN) was selected for its project, "Building 'Āina-Based Stewardship Programs for Kealakekua Bay." HKN is an indigenous-led non-profit organization that has been actively building capacity to co-manage Kealakekua Bay State Historical Park and the surrounding community. Through this project, HKN aims to educate visitors, residents and commercial tour operators about the Kealakekua Bay Community Action Plan Code of Conduct developed by the community on how to respectfully interact within Kealakekua Bay; provide equipment to community volunteers actively restoring coastal habitat during Hana Lima workdays; and train citizen scientists to monitor the health of the area using a recently developed app called Kilokilo, customized for Kealakekua Bay.

"With the support of HTA and its emphasis on destination management, we are seeing more ways in which regenerative tourism on Hawai'i Island is working through 'āina- and place-based community models," said Rachel Kaiama, IHVB's destination manager. "These programs will further assist in our collaborative efforts to care for the natural and cultural resources of sacred places with resident-community stewards taking the lead for Punalu'u and Kealakekua. Mahalo nui to our partners Ka 'Ohana O Honu'apo and Ho'āla Kealakekua Nui, Inc."

IHVB issued a Request for Proposals in July for 'āina-based non-profit organizations on Hawai'i Island to develop and manage community stewardship programs to educate visitors and protect natural and cultural resources in areas including Punalu'u and Kealakekua Bay, as called for by residents in HTA's Hawai'i Island DMAP. These areas have become especially popular with visitors, resulting in overcrowding, congestion, natural and cultural resource degradation, and safety hazards.

The Hawai'i Island Community-Based Action Stewardship Program builds on the success of the Keaukaha Steward Pilot Program and Community Cultural-Based Education Program which launched in July. This effort, supported by HTA, the County of Hawai'i and IHVB, works to mitigate visitor impacts and protect natural resources at Waiuli (also known as Richardson Ocean Park) and Lehia Beach Parks.

To learn more about how destination management and stewardship is advancing on the island of Hawai'i, visit: <https://holomua.hawaiiitourismauthority.org/hawaii-island/>.

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About the Hawai'i Tourism Authority

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority is the state agency responsible for representing The Hawaiian Islands around the world, and for holistically managing tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with community desires, economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources, and visitor industry needs. HTA works with the community and industry to Mālama Hawai'i – care for our beloved home. For more information about HTA, visit hawaiiitourismauthority.org or follow @HawaiiHTA on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), Threads and [Twitter](#).

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