





# Building our Future

## *Pa'a ke Kahua—A firm foundation is set*

The year 2023 was the hottest on record, causing catastrophic flooding in some areas of the globe and severe drought in others, the highest ocean temperatures ever recorded, a staggering 62,000 human heat-related deaths in Europe, and billions of dollars' worth of damage globally.

Closer to home, the devastating fires on Maui, Hawai'i Island and even O'ahu are a reminder not to take nature for granted. We must care for our native lands and waters so that they provide the ecosystem services that sustain and protect us.

We at The Nature Conservancy Hawai'i and Palmyra take this kuleana to heart. This year we finalized our new five-year Strategic Plan, aligned with TNC's global 2030 goals, to pursue the fight against both biodiversity loss and climate change through four conservation strategies: Resisting Extinctions,

Building Nature's Resilience, Tackling Climate Change, and Connecting Mauka to Makai.

In this report, we share accomplishment highlights over the past year, including: answering the call from communities for help managing nearshore fisheries; giving rare and diverse native forest habitats a stronger chance for survival; launching a bold innovation to save native forest birds; returning long lost species to a Pacific atoll; and boosting private support for natural climate solutions, to name just a few.

These achievements are all thanks to the hard work of our dedicated staff, volunteers, partners and donors. Because of your support, we can look forward to advancing our bold efforts to protect the lands, ocean and freshwater on which we all depend.

Mahalo nui loa,

Ulalia Woodside Lee  
*Executive Director*  
Anne Carter  
*Chair, Board of Trustees*



© Toni Parras/TNC

Kalalau Valley  
© Nina Ritchie/TNC Photo Contest 2021

*According to the Hawaiian creation chant the Kumulipo, the coral polyp is the foundation for all other life. We strive to ensure a firm foundation as we work toward a sustainable and resilient future for our islands.*

COVER  
Close-up view of coral at Palmyra Atoll  
© Tim Calver



# Impact Across Our Islands

- 13 TNC Preserves
- 10 Watershed Partnerships
- ▲ 24 TNC Marine Monitoring Sites
- 46 Marine Community Partners

“ I support many environmental protection organizations, but **TNC is my favorite** because its work is so creative and effective in making real positive changes for nature. I particularly appreciate how TNC teams up with local people to share knowledge, so we all become stellar stewards of our land and animal and plant communities together. ”

Vicki Flavell, Donor



Aerial view of Palmyra Atoll  
© Joe Pollock/TNC

Palmyra Atoll

“ The partnership between The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is providing insights into coral reef dynamics at Palmyra at spatial scales and levels of detail never previously possible ”

Amanda Pollock, Ph.D.  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1,000 MILES SOUTH



Lo'i (taro patch) being harvested by volunteers at He'eia, O'ahu © Ian Shive

“ Haleakala Ranch is so fortunate to have The Nature Conservancy as a close partner in our conservation and land stewardship efforts. We have collaborated effectively and with great success for many years on a collective vision for our native species, watersheds and community. ”

Jordan Jokiel  
Vice President and Land Manager,  
Haleakala Ranch, Maui



A juvenile 'iwi feeding from the flowers of a Haleakala Sandalwood.  
© Zach Pezzillo/TNC Photo Contest 2019

“ We are so grateful to The Nature Conservancy, who continues to support our community as we mālama 'āina ”

Leina'ala "Auntie Lei" Lightner  
Ka'ūpūlehu Marine Life Advisory Committee  
Hawai'i Island



Leina'ala "Auntie Lei" Lightner © Ryzone Media





# Protecting Lands, Ocean and Freshwater

*The health and well-being of people depend on that of our forests, streams, coral reefs and other natural spaces. We work to ensure the resilience of our native lands, coasts and communities by protecting watersheds and reefs and restoring native species.*

- ✿ We introduced FishKit, a customized app for local fisheries that puts all the information planners need to weigh benefits and tradeoffs of various management actions at their fingertips. Communities in West Hawai'i used the app to develop plans that support communal interests for food security and reef health.
- ✿ The Alaka'i Plateau contains diverse native forest and bogs important for Kaua'i's watersheds. We protect these lands by removing invasive weeds and ungulates (pigs, deer and goats), which damage the native ecosystem. The upper Plateau is now virtually free of invasive ungulates, and the forest has regenerated beautifully in these areas.
- ✿ Working with ranchers and landowners, we tested different methods for restoring vegetation in Hawai'i Island's Pelekane watershed. A soil-tilling method resulted in the highest vegetation cover, with some native plants showing good survival and resilience even in dry periods. Finding ways to effectively restore these uplands is vital for reducing erosion.

TNC's FishKit app can help the development of sustainable fisheries management plans. © Doug Perrine



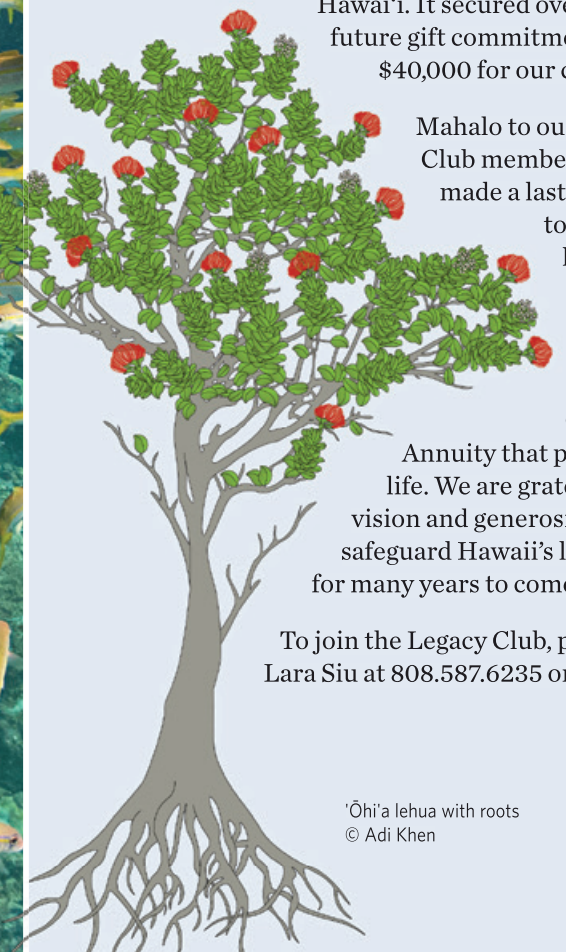
Restored native forest on left inside fence versus ungulate damaged forest on the right © Nicolai Barca/TNC



'Apapane  
© Adi Khen

## LEGACY POLLINATOR FUND IMPACT

The Legacy Pollinator Fund inspired 20 new legacy gifts and matching gifts to keep TNC's mission strong, now and into the future! Launched by Trustee Legacy Ambassador Dr. Tana Burkert and Ihupani Council emeritus trustees in summer 2022 and completed in fall 2023, the Fund matched each new legacy gift with a \$2,000 donation for immediate use in Hawai'i. It secured over \$3.5 million in future gift commitments to TNC and \$40,000 for our current priorities.



Mahalo to our new Legacy Club members, who have made a lasting commitment to Hawai'i with legacy gifts in their will, trust, retirement plan, financial account or Charitable Gift

Annuity that pays income for life. We are grateful for your vision and generosity to help us safeguard Hawaii's lands and waters for many years to come.

To join the Legacy Club, please contact Lara Siu at 808.587.6235 or [lsiu@tnc.org](mailto:lsiu@tnc.org).

'Ōhi'a lehua with roots  
© Adi Khen



# Tackling Climate Change

*We work to restore coral reefs and forests that provide natural protections against the impacts of climate change. In addition, we embark on testing and implementing bold solutions to address nature's greatest challenges.*

Working with partners, we negotiated an upgraded expanded reef insurance policy, developed a statewide post-storm reef rescue protocol and rapid response network with partners, and launched a coral restoration pilot project program. These efforts will help build reef resilience so Hawai'i's reefs are better able to persist and thrive in the face of climate change.

Global warming is assisting the spread of invasive mosquitoes that infect Hawaiian Honeycreeper birds with deadly avian malaria. By using a type of mosquito "birth control," we are controlling these pests within critical forest bird habitat on Maui, including TNC's Waikamoi Preserve, with plans to expand to Kaua'i next year.

Climate Solutions funds were used to overhaul a D5 Caterpillar bulldozer used by our Hawai'i Island team to help prepare fence lines, fight fires by creating fuel breaks, grade and repair Preserve roads after heavy seasonal rains, and scarify more than 400 acres of former pastureland to facilitate koa restoration.

Native pisonia forest on Palmyra Atoll  
© Andrew Wright

Hawai'i Island field crew member preps the bulldozer for fire season.  
© TNC



These male Culex mosquitoes have a naturally occurring strain of bacteria that prevents them from reproducing with wild mosquitoes. © Toni Parras/TNC



TNC and Ka'ūpu'ulehu Marine Life Advisory Committee members planted corals at Kahawai Bay.  
© Liquid Cosmos Divers



TNC supporter Jerry Yang with daughter, Miki © Lori Admiral/TNC

## A WORLD OF SOLUTIONS

Launched more than two years ago, the Climate Solutions Fund has raised \$1,075,000 for nature-based projects in Hawai'i and Palmyra. Director of Philanthropy Lori Admiral notes, "TNC's donors are savvy, they understand that nature is the most cost-effective way to develop solutions for climate impacts."

Donors Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang share, "Using the power of nature to restore ecosystem balance is the best way to change the current climate trajectory. Contributing to Hawai'i and climate resilience is our way of acknowledging the strength of TNC's science-based approach. The impact is seen in both the local projects and globally through the sharing of research. We are proud to see our support in action."

This fund remains one of our highest priorities and protects the health of the forests and endemic birds, ensures the safety of researchers at remote locations, and builds resilience in nearshore waters. To contribute please contact [lori.admiral@tnc.org](mailto:lori.admiral@tnc.org) 808-587-6249.



# Exploring Innovative Solutions

*We constantly innovate to keep pace with the threats impacting nature. This past year, we continued working with partners to push boundaries and test new technology to create lasting impact for nature and people.*

- At Palmyra, we're building the world's first four-dimensional virtual coral reef replica—unlocking immersive new capabilities to collaboratively monitor, model and safeguard these precious ecosystems. Through the Super Reefs initiative, these technological breakthroughs are being exported to reefs worldwide—including on Maui—to catalyze more and better reef conservation.
- At Palmyra, we've implemented innovative "seabird social attraction" techniques to re-establish seabirds that were likely driven away by invasive rats in the 1900s. To monitor seabird populations across the atoll and understand their response to management actions, we're utilizing artificial intelligence to detect seabirds in high-resolution aerial imagery collected by drones.
- In TNC's Waikamoi Preserve, we tested different Artificial Intelligence platforms to identify the highly invasive Himalayan ginger. One platform showed promise with a 75% success rate of identification using aerial imagery. Using this technology could significantly reduce the time needed to identify and remove invasives.



Virtual replicas provide insights on how to better manage coral reefs. ©Joe Pollock/TNC



Artificial Intelligence technology correctly identified invasive Himalayan ginger 75% of the time. © TNC



TNC scientist Vienna Saccomanno prepares Wingtra drone for an aerial survey at Palmyra Atoll. © Kydd Pollock/TNC

Native forest at Palmyra Atoll © Gary Andrew



Participants gather for ceremony before restoration activities begin. © Ryzone Media

## CUTTING-EDGE CORAL RESTORATION

Kennedy Wilson, a global real estate investment company, spearheaded Kona Village on Hawai'i Island and supports our work with communities there to restore coral reefs. Dave Eadie, Senior VP, Entitlement and Development at Kennedy Wilson, is a TNC donor and trustee.

"The coral restoration project represents yet another significant example of how we can work together to proactively replenish a vital and finite resource," says Eadie.

"Through Kennedy Wilson's participation in The Nature Conservancy and the Ka'ūpūlehu Marine Life Advisory Committee, we applaud the efforts of the many dedicated people who have brought this project to fruition. As a steward of best practices in sustainable development in Hawai'i for over 20 years at Kohanaiki and Kona Village, a Rosewood Resort, we offer our warmest congratulations and sincerest gratitude for the continuing work being done to sustain this planet."

A piece of coral being fragmented for outplanting on the reef © Ryzone Media





# The Power of Partnerships

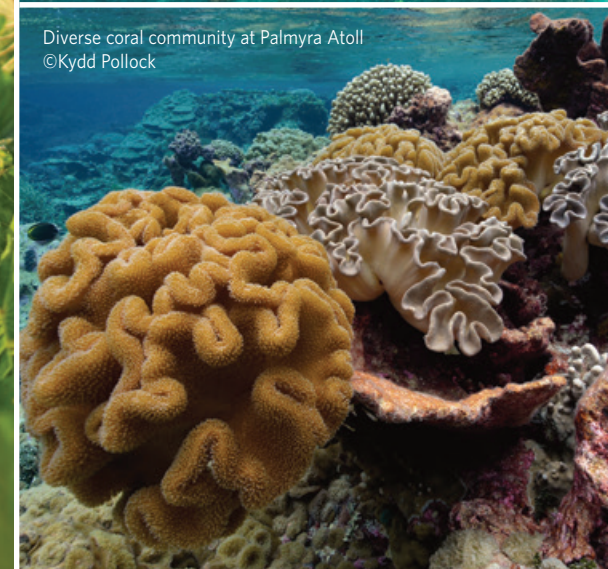
*Partnerships are essential to our work. We engage in diverse collaborations with community, state, federal and nonprofit entities to make the biggest impact. Following are just a few examples from this past year.*



Executive Director Kanekoa Kukea-Shultz ensures Kāko'o 'Ōiwi enhances cultural connections while providing sustainably farmed produce. © Michelle Mishina




Olowalu Reef © Drew Sulock





Diverse coral community at Palmyra Atoll © Kydd Pollock





Communities develop plans to protect resources along 50 miles of East Maui's coast. © Maui Nui Makai Network

 TNC and Kāko'o 'Ōiwi partnered to install an ungulate exclusion fence above restored wetlands and agricultural plots in He'eia. The fence will enable agroforestry and lā'au lapa'au (medicinal plants) cultivation in the pig-free area and reduce sediments and nutrients flowing to Kane'ohē Bay.

 Through Maui Hikina Huliāmahi, an initiative of the Maui Nui Makai Network, rural communities from the four moku (land districts) of East Maui—Ko'olau, Hāna, Kīpahulu and Kaupō—came together to develop a regional makai management plan that will protect their subsistence lifestyles.

 TNC co-manages Palmyra Atoll with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and operates the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Laboratory, which brings together world-class researchers from academic institutions across the globe to explore critical questions for coral reef resilience and island and open ocean conservation.

 Through six watershed partnerships across Hawai'i, TNC participates with public and private landowners to protect forested areas that provide clean water and other benefits for nature and people.

 We partnered with scientists at Stanford University and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution to identify "super reefs" at Olowalu on Maui. As super reefs harbor thermally tolerant corals and seed neighboring reefs, they have the potential to withstand warming ocean temperatures and promote continued coral growth.

 Hawai'i leaders from the Kai Kuleana and Maui Nui Makai Networks promoted the value of traditional knowledge and leadership for improving ocean health at the Fifth International Marine Protected Area Congress, a global forum that brings together conservation professionals and high-level officials to improve ocean management.





TNCHP staff, trustees and partners gather for learning and sharing. © Toni Parras/TNC

## TNC's Trustee Legacy

Conservation success involves many people. Staff and partners are visible in the field contributing to our work but not as easily seen are the important volunteer leaders who contribute to that success – our board of trustees.

Leadership and staff work closely with trustees, together ensuring tangible conservation results are met using TNC's hallmarks of a non-confrontational style and the highest ethical standards.

Trustees join the organization because they are passionate about

the environment and the mission and are leaders in their communities and industries. They bring a variety of perspectives and views that help make TNC a strong and diverse organization.

In 2023, our chapter met a unique milestone and joined with 29 other state boards that have at least 50% of member trustees contributing to The Legacy Club. Joining The Legacy Club means that TNC has been named as a beneficiary in their will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance or through a Charitable Gift Annuity.

This commitment helps to safeguard Hawai'i's lands and waters for generations to come.

Trustee Legacy Ambassador Tana Burkert says that she and her husband joined many years ago to “give our children and other people in this world the priceless inheritance of a healthy planet.”

The impact of Legacy giving cannot be overstated. It is an important piece of our annual fundraising that helps ensure continued conservation success now and into the future.



The spectacular coast of TNC's Mo'omomi Preserve on Molokai © Richard Cooke III



TNCHP staff and trustees spend Advocacy Day at the Capitol. © Cory Lum

## Advocacy Day

In March, TNCHP trustees and staff met with legislators at the Hawai'i State Capitol to discuss TNC's work in Hawai'i and how government funding and policies are vital to the conservation work of TNC and our partners. The group highlighted TNC's support for a visitor green fee, community-based coastal management, and the work to safeguard Hawai'i's native honeycreepers under our Hawai'i's Vanishing Forest Bird project. Subsequent legislation passed include resolutions designating a Hawaiian Honeycreeper Celebration Day and Hawai'i's coral reefs as critical natural infrastructure, and a budget appropriation of \$100 million to preserve our islands for current and future generations.

## Protecting Land. Water. Life.

The Mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

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To make a gift, please contact Lori Admiral, director of philanthropy, at (808) 587-6249 or [lori.admiral@tnc.org](mailto:lori.admiral@tnc.org).





# In Hawai'i, the environment *is* the economy.

An incredible display of light over the Kalalau Valley of Kauai © Matt Meisenheimer: TNC Photo Contest 2019

**That's why these leading companies invest in The Nature Conservancy.** They understand that our environment and economy are intrinsically linked: native forests collect fresh water, coral reefs protect our coastline, and native species are fundamental to a living Hawaiian culture.

We want to thank and recognize the members of the Corporate Council for the Environment for their commitment and generosity. To learn how your company can join the Corporate Council, please contact Lori Admiral at [lori.admiral@tnc.org](mailto:lori.admiral@tnc.org) or (808) 587-6249.

## Corporate Council for the Environment

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