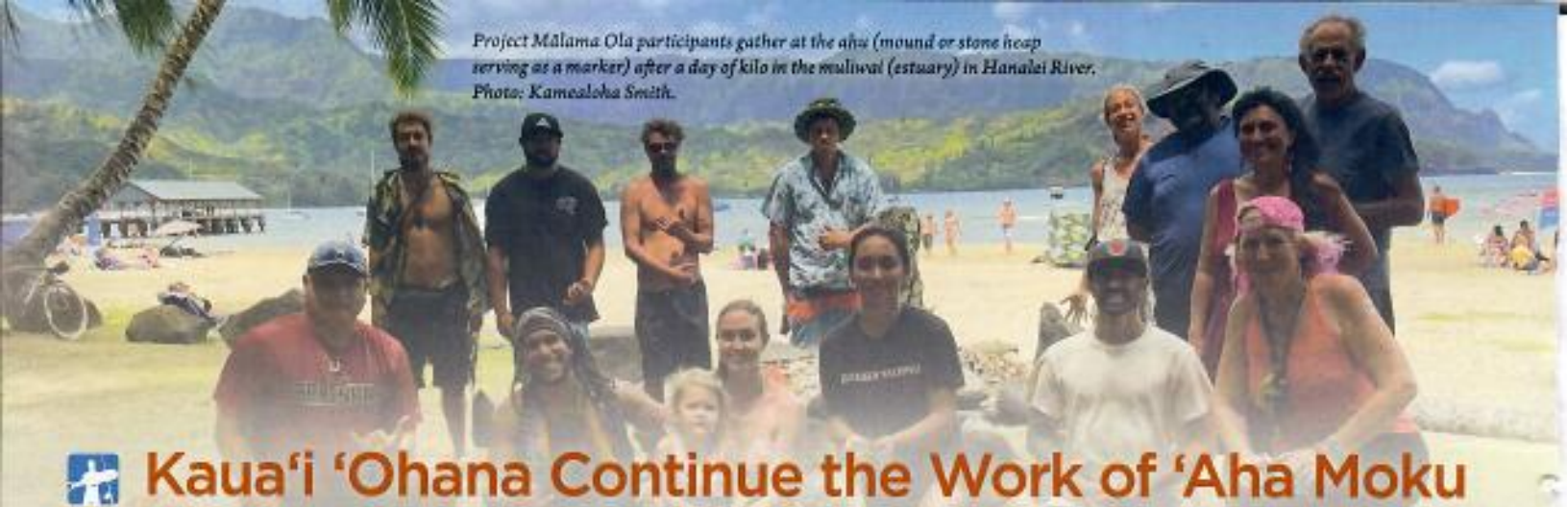


Project Mālama Ola participants gather at the ahu (mound or stone heap serving as a marker) after a day of kilo in the muliwai (estuary) in Hanalei River. Photo: Kamealoha Smith.



Kaua'i 'Ohana Continue the Work of 'Aha Moku

This is the third in a series on the 'Aha Moku, exploring how Community-Based 'Ohana Councils on Kaua'i put the system into practice.

In 2012, Act 288 was enacted and signed by Governor Abercrombie to establish the 'Aha Moku Advisory Committee (AMAC) within the Department of Land and Natural Resources to advise the department chair using an 'Aha Moku system perspective on issues under the responsibility of this agency. The 'Aha Moku system is a land, water and ocean system of best practices based upon the indigenous resource management practices of ahupua'a and moku (regional) boundaries. The AMAC is composed of eight members, each representing the eight main Hawaiian Islands.

The AMAC was active through 2016, but from 2016 to early 2022, the State of Hawai'i governor and legislature did not appoint any new members. On April 14, 2022, the legislature finally confirmed eight nominations to the committee. Although it is an accomplishment to reinstate the AMAC, traditional resource management in Hawai'i did not stop due to the committee's inactivity. During the lull, the Kaua'i



Hau bush overgrowth restricts the flow of the Hanalei River and the narrower waterway creates dams and marshy lands. Photo: Kamealoha Smith.

community continued the work of 'Aha Moku, serving as a "traditional practice" rather than as a "governing body."

Due to the political nature of the AMAC, the Kaua'i community organized its work through 'ohana (family) with kuleana (responsibility) for areas

on the island, with 'Aha Moku as a foundational practice to rebuild, restore and revitalize practices that have been carefully handed down through generations of kupuna (ancestors). The 'ohana from Halelea, Ko'olau and Puna are currently working in two watershed environments in the ahupua'a (districts) of Hanalei and Wailua.

In Hanalei (North Kaua'i), the 'ohana are engaged in several projects to engage and support communities in partnership with community-based nonprofits using funding from private,

state and federal agencies. Project Mālama Ola focuses on researching the impacts of climate change and other threats to the Hanalei River and Watershed. With support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Office of Native Hawaiian Relations in Washington D.C., this 1.5-year research project is developing and implementing a native fish habitat and migration inventory, assessment and monitoring protocol based on traditional methodology. One key element is using the Kaulana Mahina (Hawaiian moon calendar), which includes elements of kapu (when it is ok and not ok to fish based on fish spawning patterns) to better understand the impacts of climate change and green waste debris on the native fish habitat, spawning and migration patterns in Hanalei River.

Project participants engage in kilo (observation) to gather information about the 'ama'ama (striped mullet), āholehole (flagtail) and other native fish. They are creating educational materials in Hawaiian and English for schools, agencies and others who have kuleana for project and management resources in the waterways of Kaua'i and Ni'ihau.

Project Mālama Ola also supports the vision of the local community that came together in the aftermath of the April 2018 floods on Kaua'i to develop a plan to repair and restore wetlands in Hanalei Valley. The goal of the Hau Bush Maintenance Project is to clear the 'āina (land) of green waste debris by cutting hau bush and helping the water flow freely to the ocean in the lower areas of Hanalei River. This project exemplifies the community showcasing the important role that traditional knowledge and modern technology plays in helping with recovery efforts from the numerous natural disasters the north shore of Kaua'i has experienced.

In Wailua (East Kaua'i), the 'ohana from Halelea, Ko'olau and Puna have worked with native farmers, fishermen and other vendors to start a community-based farmer's market through a federal grant. They have also collaborated with 'ohana from the Wailua and Kapa'a area to restore lo'i kalo (taro patches) and 'auwai (streams) in Keauhua Valley.

Although not working through the governing AMAC body, the 'ohana on Kaua'i demonstrate that the work of 'Aha Moku can still be done. For more information on the projects highlighted in this article, visit www.hanaleiriverheritagefoundation.org.