

Koa'ekea, Hawai'i County PONC Stewardship Pōhāhā I Ka Lani October 2018 – August 2019

*Ho'omau Ka Hana
No'eau o Waipi'o*

PONC Grant Cycle for 2018 was 10 months late, with this, we continued to care for the land and included pictures and write up for January 2018 – September 2018 with our 2017 final report.

Mālama 'Āina

Due to funds coming in late, instead of having a baby shower for one of our board member's 'ohana, they asked to have a mālama 'āina instead and asked friends and family to come to Koa'ekea to help tend to the lands instead of purchasing gifts for the baby. With the help of 40+ who came to help clean up Koa'ekea, our board member and 'ohana could have a break that was much appreciated and the land was well cared for.



Carroll University Student Learning How To Make Ti Leaf Lei



Weeding Gardens, Planting 'Olena, Ti Leaf



Kumu Ryan & His Hālau Tending To The Kalo Gardens



Biology 156 Class with Kumu Allie Atkins
Weeded Gardens, Planted Kalo, Sugarcane, 'Uala and Kalo





The sugarcane that was harvested was utilized to plant a large section of the bottom area of Koa'ekea.









HAAS Public Charter School K-12th Grade Tended To The Gardens At Koa'ekea















Mālama ‘Āina Days











HĀ SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS HELPED BY REDOING BAMBOO FENCING FOR KOA 'EKEA PARCEL











SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS HELPED TEND TO THE 'ĀINA



STUDENTS FROM BIG ISLAND FARMS CAME TO KŌKUA AT KOA'EKEA





INTERNS FROM PEAHI ED GROUP CAME TO HELP MALAMA THE MAI'A PATCHES



HAUMĀNA FROM GEOGRAPHY CLASSES CAME TO KŌKUA IN THE MANY DIFFERENT GARDENS





It's been over three years and there are still layers of rubbish needing to be removed from the land.







Layers and layers of glass



After picking up all the rubbish, we need to haul it to rubbish dump.











**Some Of The Groups That Volunteered
Countless Hours To Mālama Iā Koa‘ekea,**



Carroll University



Kumu Ryan and his hālau



Allie Atkin's Biology 156 Class



HAAS PCS and 'Ohana Members



Goldbelt Heritage Foundation, Alaska



Big Island Farms

In between hosting of groups, Pōhāhā I Ka Lani board member and ‘ohana often goes to take care of Koa’ekea. We have been volunteering our time to cut the grass, weed the gardens, shovel mulch, and removing trash. We volunteer our time communicating with the groups wanting to participate in our workshops, mālama ‘āina days etc. For the past three years, it has been our personal truck utilized to do hauling of trash, abandon vehicles, mowers, tents for workshops etc.

Acasio Ohana
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August 26, 2019

To Whom it May Concern,

The purpose of this letter is to share our family's experience and full support of Pohaha I Ka Lani, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization which aims to revitalize and advance indigenous Hawaiian culture through land stewardship and community education.

Our family of four from Hilo has participated in this organization's programs for over 10 years at its various sites within Waipi'o Valley. The Pohaha I Ka Lani workshops and events we attend always include ancient and current stories from Waipi'o, teaching us about its unique history and greater context within the island of Hawai'i. We are immersed in cultural place-based protocol and education, while being provided with invaluable opportunities to work with the land, to learn about traditional medicines and culinary practices, and to participate in cultural practices such as hula, chant, story-telling and song. Pohaha I Ka Lani gracefully weaves hands-on science such as native and invasive plant identification, horticulture, ethnobotany and biology within its important mission of stewardship and cultural preservation.

We specifically find that the work at the top-side parcel of Koa'ekea is incredibly pertinent. It is very accessible for large groups, youth and elderly, for day-long workshops and educational events. It is a highly visible site for visitors and locals alike who come to the Waipio look-out, and provides stewardship opportunities for those who want to connect to Waipio without adding to the already over-trafficked road into the valley, affecting its residents and resources. For these reasons, it is extremely valuable for Pohaha I Ka Lani to continue to access and cultivate Koa'ekea.

We fully support Pohaha I Ka Lani's work and encourage you to consider funding this amazing program and its future endeavors. Not only is this organization hardworking, generous, diligent, efficient and very well organized, but their dedication to relevant place-based education is unparalleled and extremely meaningful for our community. With Pohaha I Ka Lani, we learn deeply-rooted Hawaiian cultural values through doing: Aloha i ke kahi i kekahi (loving one another), Malama aina (taking care of the land), Laulima (many hands make light work), Malama pono no ka Ohana (how to properly care for young ones and elderly), and the joy of service to others.

Pohaha I Ka Lani is a labor of love with a backbone of dedication and hardwork. It is a veritable demonstration of kuleana in action. Throughout the years, we have recruited many extended family members and friends to share and participate in their programs, and have worked alongside vast amount of students, local groups, visitors and people from all walks of life who

have been deeply touched by participating in their work. Pohaha I Ka Lani is an incredible asset to our land, our culture, our community, and our islands at large.

Please contact us should you have any questions about our support of this organization.

Sincerely,

Lana Acasio *Lynold Acasio*

Laura and Lynold Acasio

Kaiulu (14) and Kumele Tiogangco (12)

Kaiulu Tiogangco *Kumele T.*

Aloha,

My name is Kawehi Lopez and Hawai'i Island is my home. Despite growing up in Hilo my whole life, it wasn't until high school that I realized the power of a strong sense of place. During my first semester at UH Hilo I noticed a flyer for a volunteer day at Waipi'o Valley. I was very excited, especially because I had never been to Waipio. I learned that in times of famine, the amount of food produced in Waipi'o was enough to feed everyone on the island. Ever since that first trip I realized how a small grassroots organization could have such far reaching impacts on many people's lives.

Earlier this year I had the opportunity to work at Koa'ekea with a few friends. Over the course of a few hours we were able to weed an entire hillside and filled up over 14 contractor trash bags! That day was special because Pohaha I Ka Lani gifted my fiance, Pila, and I with over 150 huli. We were excited to plant the kalo and also give some away to our loved ones. A few months ago, Pila and I were blessed to attend Pohaha i ka Lani's poi board workshop. All of the wood for the papa ku'i'ai came from invasive mango that was removed from the property. This experience was transformative and very powerful because not only would we have kalo but we would have a board to pound our kalo on. It was also a chance to reconnect to our ancestors and promote a healthy way of living. Attending the workshop also gave me the opportunity to meet lots of people whose lives have been impacted by Pohaha I Ka Lani.

Pohaha I Ka Lani's dedication to this 'āina is awe-inspiring. It has been no small feat rehabilitating this land from its previous state as a dumping ground. The hard work is always worth it because when it comes down to it. Pohaha I Ka Lani believe that there should be a board, stone, and kalo in every household. It seems like an attainable task as I got to talk with those at the workshop. Pohaha I Ka Lani host many volunteer groups and continue to have a positive impact on this island community and I look forward to seeing the continual transformation of the place as a space of learning, connection, and rejuvenation.

People of all ages come to Koa'ekea and are able to reconnect with nature. They learn mo'olelo, they get their hands dirty, and they forge new connections with people. As an emerging professional in community outreach and engagement, I feel that Pohaha i ka Lani is a deserving steward of this 'āina and deserve to mālama Koa'ekea.

Mahalo,
Kawehi Lopez



June 17, 2019

Aloha,

This letter is written in support of the organization Pōhāhā I Ka Lani, with whom I have had a professional relationship for several years. Since 2014 I have brought groups of students in my Geography classes from Hawai'i Community College and the University of Hawai'i at Hilo to Waipi'o to work directly with Pōhāhā I Ka Lani. We have, thus far, made a total of 11 trips, bringing over 300 college and university students.

The impact on my students has been incredibly positive. Not only do my students demonstrate high levels of engagement and enthusiasm as they learn about the cultural and environmental landscapes of Waipi'o from Pōhāhā I Ka Lani, but they are pleased and honored to enter into a reciprocal relationship with that 'āina, those lands, and participation in the restoration and stewarding of the cultural sites of the ancient village of Nāpo'opo'o, the lo'i kalo or taro patches, 'auwai or irrigation system, po'owai or water head, as well as of Koa'ekea at the top of the valley, where they have been involved with planting native plants, and clearing and cleaning that historic site.

The reflections my students write following their huaka'i or excursion provide testimony about the positive and, in many cases, transformative experience they have had at Waipi'o with Pōhāhā I Ka Lani. They comment on connections they have made or strengthened with the land, on the importance of the mo'olelo or histories/stories associated with the place, on the necessity for perpetuating Hawaiian cultural practices and how vital it was for them to experience that, on a deeper understanding of the significance clean and fresh water plays in our lives and its role in traditional agriculture, on sustainability, on the value of working together to accomplish tasks and goals, and so much more.

At the end of each semester, these hundreds of students have created visual projects and artwork that speak to their profound learning and experiences at Waipi'o with Pōhāhā I Ka Lani, which they hō'ike or present to other students. They express their gratitude to Pōhāhā I Ka Lani and artistically and creatively represent the powerful impact Waipi'o has had on them personally. I have had some students share with me that their huaka'i to Waipi'o with Pōhāhā I Ka Lani was not only the pinnacle of their academic journey, but also changed their lives. In the work that Pōhāhā I Ka Lani does there is a lot of healing and

nurturing, not just of the land, but also of the spirit, and it is clear that this is precisely what many of our community members need, as well as the place itself.

I will continue to bring my students to Waipi'o to be hosted by Pōhāhā I Ka Lani, as I have seen what these experiences can do: they inspire my students on so many levels — academically, culturally, professionally, spiritually — and help to create a more balanced, interdependent, caring, and informed larger community of which our students are part. Mahalo for the opportunity for me to share a bit about the relationship my students and I have with Pōhāhā I Ka Lani, and the deep appreciation I have for their passion and work, for the 'ike or knowledge they have generously shared, and for them as people and dedicated caretakers of a very precious place that requires that level of commitment and aloha 'aina.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Drew Kapp', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Drew Kapp

Instructor of Geography, Hawai'i Community College

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Sam Houston State University

MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

July 19, 2019

Dear Grant Committee Members:

We are pleased to write a letter of recommendation for Pohaha I Ka Lani, a non-profit organization that is truly dedicated to the preservation of Hawaiian culture through land restoration. Our Geography department at Sam Houston State University regularly offers a *Hawaii Field Course* that explores both the cultural and environmental diversity of the Big Island of Hawaii. An integral component of the course involves a volunteer service day where our students have the opportunity to “give back” to the island. We have been working with Pohaha I Ka Lani for three years now and our volunteer day is the highlight for us all.

Our *Hawaii Field Course* has not been our only endeavor that involves immersing college students in the field. As professional geographers, we have been engaged in several educational projects that focus on the celebration and commemoration of cultural heritages across multiple destinations. For instance, we regularly lead groups of students and/or professionals through the field in conjunction with courses that focus on the interdisciplinary study of a variety of international and domestic destinations – Texas, Mississippi Delta, Italy, Spain and Morocco, just to name a few. These endeavors have provided us the opportunity to interact with a number of excellent field guides. Yet, we can honestly state that the experiences Pohaha I Ka Lani provide our group are unmatched by any that we have ever worked with. The exuberance, knowledge and passion they possess for Hawaiian heritage, all of which they are more than willing to share with us, are vividly evident to everybody involved. The feedback we have received from participants concerning our field experiences on the Big Island emphasize more than anything else, how all that they learned about Hawaii really came “alive” during our interactions with Pohaha I Ka Lani in Waipi'o Valley. Pohaha I Ka Lani also function as an important community nexus for a broad network of other local contacts that we utilize during our field course. In short, we know of no other organization on the Big Island that facilitates the preservation of the cultural and environmental heritage of Hawaii better than Pohaha I Ka Lani.

In our modern fast-paced world, ancient Hawaiian cultural practices and knowledge are rapidly being lost. Sometimes, the answers to our ecological and social problems can be found in looking to the past.

Hands-on learning and in-the-field activities are essential components in education. We firmly believe and support the mission and goals of Pohaha I Ka Lani and any assistance and funding would benefit not only the students lucky enough to participate, but will have wider implications on the outside world. If you have any further questions about our experience, please do not hesitate to contact us by phone or email.

Sincerely,

Dr. John B. Strait
Professor of Geography

Ava R. Fujimoto-Strait
Instructor of Geography

Charles Pipes
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1 July 2019

Dear Grant Committee Members:

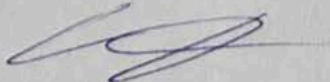
I am pleased to write a letter of recommendation for Pohaha I Ka Lani. The organization's passion for public education and environmental conservation is an asset to promoting and preserving Hawaiian culture. Additionally, Kulia and her husband's programs strive to teach their participants to be better world citizens. Far beyond an education in native Hawaiian culture, Pohaha I Ka Lani seeks to educate the public on how we can better cherish and maintain the natural world. Through practical demonstrations of agricultural techniques, participants are immersed in the kinship between humans and the land.

As a graduate student and a public school teacher, I have worked with Pohaha I Ka Lani several times in the past. The organization held a vital role in my own research, and Kulia went to incredible lengths to help me. The time I spent with them in the *lo'i* made my thesis even more vibrant. Their contribution does not end there. I can impart the lessons I learned to my own students, a testament to the organization's message of community and interconnectedness.

Recently, I was working with Kulia and a team of volunteers. One of them told me they were a group of medical school students, completing their last year of study before becoming medical doctors in rural areas. They had come out to volunteer with Pohaha I Ka Lani to get experience in how their future patients live and work. I thought this was a remarkable thing and speaks to the interdisciplinary nature of the organization. Including taro cultivation as a small part of a doctor's training illustrates Kulia's goals – namely, educating the public on the importance of ecological consciousness.

I do hope the committee finds in favor of Pohaha I Ka Lani. This is an important organization that serves as a connection to other communities. Their contributions to education and the preservation of environmental and cultural diversity extend far beyond the islands. I look forward to continuing my partnership with Pohaha I Ka Lani and passing on their contributions to my students.

Sincerely,



Charles Pipes