

MOLOKA'I WETLAND PARTNERSHIP

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES 2023-2028



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Our vision is an interconnected network of diverse and resilient wetlands that support thriving community traditional practices, native flora and fauna, and ecosystem services in the face of climate change and sea-level rise.

The Partnership

The **Moloka'i Wetland Partnership** (MWP) was formed in 2019 to explore opportunities for wetland restoration on Moloka'i, integrating both cultural uses and habitat needs. MWP brings together organizations and individuals with an interest in protecting and enhancing the island's wetlands and water for the benefit of community and wildlife.



Moloka'i faces serious impacts from sea-level rise and severe run-off and sedimentation from upland forest degradation. Wetlands can provide important ecosystem services to Moloka'i residents, such as sediment control, water quality improvements, and flood control. Restoration also brings the opportunity to revitalize traditional lo'ipūnāwai (spring fed taro pondfields) and loko i'a (fishponds), creating sustainable, self-sufficient food sources on Moloka'i.

Lastly, wetlands provide habitat for native Hawaiian plants and wildlife, including makaloa for weaving mats, and native waterbirds that feature heavily in Hawaiian mo'olelo (stories).



Partners

Our partners include the below organizations, but we welcome new members with an interest in wetland restoration and management on Moloka'i, particularly community members and organizations.

Organization	Name	Position
Department of Hawaiian Homelands (DHHL)	Nancy McPherson	Senior Planner
Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW)	John Medeiros	Wildlife Biologist
Division of Forestry and Wildlife	Jason Misaki	Wildlife Biologist
Hawaiian Islands Conservation Collective	Arleone Dibben Young	Executive Director
Ka Ipu Makani Cultural Heritage Center	Pūlama Lima	Executive Director
Moloka'i Land Trust (MLT)	Butch Haase	Executive Director
Moloka'i Land Trust	Ali Lucas	Programs Manager
Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture (PB)	Helen Raine	Hawai'i Conservation Coordinator
Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture	Monica Iglecia	U.S. Coordinator
U.S Geological Survey (USGS)	Judith Drexler	Wetland Ecologist
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Bret Wolfe	Manager - Kākāhai'a National Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Carrie Harrington	Biologist, Hawai'i & Maui Nui
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Sheldon Plentovich	Coastal Program Manager



Partnership Goals and Objectives

MWP is working to establish a model for wetland restoration that is inclusive of traditional and western knowledge, Hawaiian cultural practices, and environmental education. The model will be used to re-establish healthy water systems and wetlands that provide food, healthy ecosystems, and resilience to climate change for all residents of Molokaʻi.

GOAL 1: Provide a bridge between federal & state agencies, funders and local community as they restore and manage loʻi kalo, loʻipūnāwai and loko iʻa.

Objectives

- Work with community to understand any challenges in restoring and managing loʻi kalo, loʻipūnāwai and loko iʻa (particularly challenges linked to federal or state policies and practices).
- Develop proposed solutions that are community approved.
- Communicate community approved solutions to federal & state agencies, and funders; work with them to implement solutions.
- Encourage agency wetland policy to be grounded in community management priorities and traditional ecological knowledge.
- Engage with and inform the USFWS, Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) and DOFAW to simplify compliance processes for wetland restoration work.
- Engage with and inform DOFAW, DAR, the County of Maui (CoM) and nonprofits in the wetland planning process.
- Develop a co-management model for wetlands on Hawaiian Home Lands and public and private lands with interested landowners.

GOAL 2: Collaborate with local educators for students to advance wetland literacy.

Objectives

- Engage with educators to understand what the STEM curriculum requires and the gaps that need to be filled.
- Advance knowledge of the ecosystem services of wetlands by developing curriculum with local educators, for students, with field components in which students restore wetlands and monitor progress.
- Provide educators with resource materials as needed.
- Renew community appreciation of the value of water and wetlands by:
 - Creation of video with school or college
 - Every student visits at least one wetland in their school career
 - Support 6 annual career-building opportunities
 - Provision of 1 annual internship for young conservationists
- Encourage use of Hawaiian mele, moʻolelo, ʻōlelo noʻeau e.g., “Waters of Kāne” to convey wetland hydrological processes to students.



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GOAL 3: Restore and protect prioritized wetlands that maximize benefits to wildlife, waterbirds, community resilience and traditional Hawaiian food systems, with community guidance.

Objectives: for one or more priority wetlands, with community input, by 2028:

- Assess the hydrology of wetlands and associated ahupua'a by determining surface water and groundwater connectivity from mauka a i makai (from the mountain to the ocean).
- Develop a management plan that outlines:
 - acreage targets and actions to progress restoration of lo'i kalo (taro pondfield)
 - acreage targets and actions to progress restoration and maintenance of quality nesting and foraging habitat for ae'o and 'alae ke'oke'o.
 - acreage targets and actions to progress restoration of habitat for native fish and invertebrates
 - acreage targets and actions to progress native plant restoration and invasive plant species removal
 - biological monitoring and resilience targets
 - comprehensive budget estimates

- Seek funding for these wetland restoration actions.
- Initiate wetland restoration actions.
- Create safe, predator-free places for waterbirds to safely nest and breed.

GOAL 4: Prioritize climate resilient wetlands for restoration on Molokaʻi.

Objectives:

- Determine which priority coastal wetlands are most sustainable under sea-level rise and drought through Pacific Island Climate Adaptation Science Center (PI-CASC) – see final page.
- Determine which former loʻipūnāwai and loko iʻa are most sustainable under sea-level rise and drought (through new funding source).
- Prioritize Molokaʻi's wetlands for restoration (wetlands and loʻi).



GOAL 5. Build trust between communities and Moloka'i Wetland Partnership by encouraging thriving community involvement, and rebuilding community connection and a sense of place.

Objectives:

- Include the restoration of cultural practices in wetland planning and prioritization.
- Identify Kanaka 'Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) and place-based criteria and methods to perpetuate sustainable, traditional uses of wetland resources, with community participation.
- Identify and share strategies and mechanisms for human communities to ensure ongoing sustainable human access in wetlands.
- Identify novel ways to enhance the synergy between community resilience and wetland conservation efforts.
- Develop a best practice document for re-establishing coastal wetlands and indigenous agro-ecology sites, supported at least partially by springs.
- Summarize outcomes for goal one in a community document by December 2026.



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GOAL 6: Engage and align with partners to grow long term logistical and financial support for Moloka'i Wetland Partners.

Objectives

- Identify and support community initiatives that align with MWP objectives.
- Collaborate with USFWS Coastal Program, Fish Habitat Partnership and Partners Program to achieve shared goals in South Moloka'i wetlands.
- Engage with DHHL's Community Resilience planning project for Moloka'i's coastal homestead areas at strategic points in the planning process.
- Engage with Pacific Birds to ensure Moloka'i wetland needs are appropriately included in their forthcoming Strategic Plan for Hawai'i Wetlands.
- Maintain and share list of funding opportunities with partners; support partners in preparing funding applications.
- Develop closer relationships with other key organizations, e.g., Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF).



PICASC – further information

Several members of the Moloka'i Wetland Partnership are working on a project funded by the Pacific Island Climate Adaptation Science Center (PI-CASC) to prioritize restoration of wetland sites on Moloka'i. The project team used data from a rapid assessment together with spatial data to conduct a GIS suitability analysis of twelve wetland sites on the island. The research from this project will help the Moloka'i Wetland Partnership better understand the different kinds of wetlands found on Moloka'i, how they function, their current status, and their potential for restoration. This information will be provided to Moloka'i residents and community members so they can use it to decide how and where restoration efforts may best be initiated.

