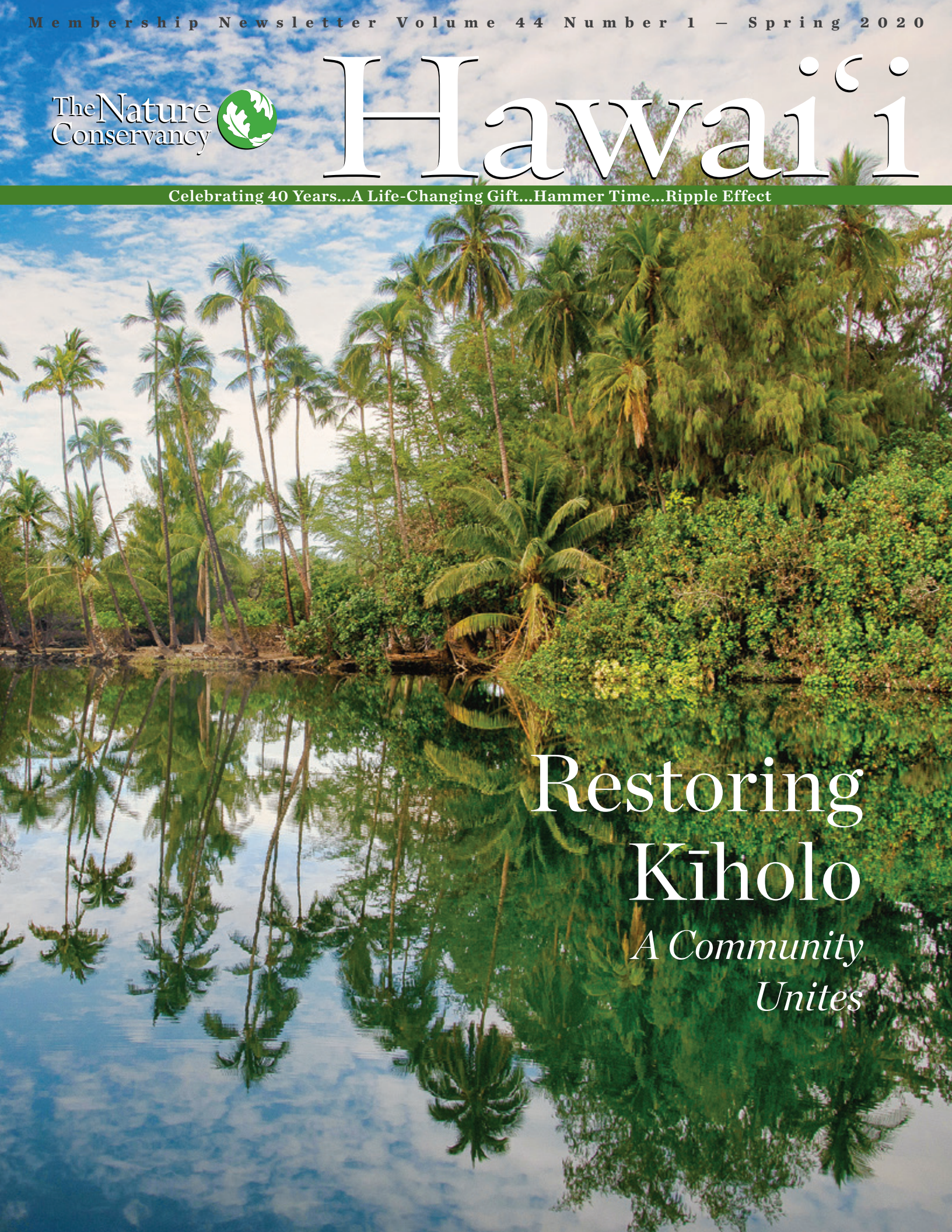


The Nature
Conservancy



Hawai'i

Celebrating 40 Years...A Life-Changing Gift...Hammer Time...Ripple Effect



Restoring
Kīholo
*A Community
Unites*

It's A *Kākou* Thing

I always feel encouraged by how much more we can accomplish by working together, and this feeling is even stronger now as I witness our communities and teams supporting one another in the midst of our current global pandemic. This is signified by the word *kākou*, which means we, or all of us. The phrase “it’s a *kākou* thing” suggests everyone’s participation is both invited and needed to achieve something. It’s a perspective of connection, cooperation and relying on one another. This is always important, but even more so in these uncertain times.

Kākou is how we approach our work along Hawai‘i’s coastlines. Collaboration and partnerships are deeply embedded in our support of more than 50 communities who are working to restore abundance to Hawai‘i’s nearshore reefs. You can read about this in our cover story about Kiholo Preserve on Hawai‘i Island, where we work with community partners and volunteers to integrate Hawaiian culture and practice into fishpond revitalization. We are also facilitating peer learning networks that build knowledge and capacity across geographies and generations.

In another story, *kākou* is the spirit that brought a community together to comfort a family and honor the legacy of a young spearfisherman through a memorial fund benefiting The Nature Conservancy.

Innovation is a *kākou* thing too. On Kaua‘i, we are teaming up with a helicopter company to test an innovative mechanical method to kill one of the islands’ most devastating weeds.

Kākou includes not just our human community, but all the plants, birds, fish, and other living things we share Hawai‘i with. I am inspired by the way nature recovers when we give it a hand—just like we can support one another. Nature can



John John Florence (center) and his sailing crew at Palmyra Atoll.

inspire, soothe, calm, uplift and restore. Science shows that simply thinking about or looking at pictures of nature can boost our mood. Going outside is better, but while many of our favorite places may be temporarily off limits, we can experience nature through virtual visits.

For example, pro-surfer John John Florence recently shared his sailing trip to our Climate Adaptation + Resilience Laboratory at Palmyra Atoll in his *Vela* video series. Visit his YouTube page to watch it, and visit our social media pages and website to see other videos and photos that will lift your spirits.

Perhaps most of all, *kākou* is the collective of people like you who are engaged with The Nature Conservancy. We couldn’t do anything without your support, and thanks to you, this year we celebrate 40 years of reviving and protecting nature in Hawai‘i. We look forward to celebrating with you and sharing stories about lush recovery in our forest preserves, increasing fish abundance in clearer shoreline waters, collaborating with communities to create positive change together, and much more.

Join us as we continue to nurture this special place we all call home.

Mahalo a nui loa,

Ulalia Woodside



Richard A. Cooke III

James Watt/NOAA

The Nature Conservancy 

Protecting nature. Preserving life.

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The Nature Conservancy in Hawai‘i is the local affiliate of The Nature Conservancy, an international, non-profit organization based in Arlington, VA.

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

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On the Cover: Kiholo State Park Reserve.
Photo: Matt Gragg

The Nature Conservancy in Hawai‘i

Conservation in Brief



TNC veterans Martha Hanson, Sam Gon, Kim Hum, Jan Eber and Ed Misaki at a board retreat at Pu'u Wa'awa'a in 1998.

TNC

WE'RE CELEBRATING 40!

This year marks our 40th anniversary in Hawai'i! Thanks to our committed staff, partners, and supporters, it's been a fruitful and rewarding journey. Much credit rests with early leaders who laid a strong foundation, and to donors and supporters like you. This collective effort allowed us to acquire and protect Preserves spanning more than 200,000 acres of native habitat, where we pioneered new tools and technologies to accelerate conservation from mauka to makai. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) launched the first Watershed Partnership to protect vital sources of fresh water on Maui, leading us to 10 Watershed Partnerships now protecting two million acres of forest across five islands. We share tools and expertise and promote

peer learning through networks to help more than 50 communities protect the coastal resources that sustain Hawai'i's culture, economy, and lifestyle. TNC also implemented cutting-edge research at Palmyra Atoll—the most remote scientific laboratory on the planet—to identify ways to help Hawai'i and islands around the world build resilience to the impacts of climate change. Because collaboration is vital to our mission, we convene hundreds of government agencies and private organizations to work collectively to restore, steward, and advocate for our island home.

We look forward to sharing highlights of the past four decades with you over the coming year. Please email us at hawaii@tnc.org to stay informed and contribute your recollections.

MAHALO AND HO'OMAIKA'I!

This March we bid *ho'omaika'i* and a *hui hou* to Communications Director Grady Timmons, who retired after 24 years—more than half of our 40-year history in Hawai'i! His efforts raised awareness and funds for The Nature Conservancy and shaped the conversation about conservation here. He brought the urgency of combatting invasive species in our islands to the public's attention, highlighted the importance of Hawai'i's native forests and coral reefs to our lives and culture, and made the case for the vital need for more urgent conservation action through compelling stories, editorial pieces, articles and other outreach materials.

"Grady was my second voice, someone I could rely on to shape my message in ways that were best suited to the page," says Executive Director Ulalia Woodside. "We are grateful to him for his dedication to sharing our stories and our mission."

"I take tremendous pride in being part of this organization and will continue to be involved as a Legacy Club member," he said on his last day.



TNC

HAMMER TIME

Growing deep within the native forest is one of Kaua'i's most devastating weeds: Australian tree fern (ATF). ATF shades out native forests and sends millions of spores traveling on the wind, quickly invading the watershed that provides Kaua'i's source of fresh water. Several years ago, we pioneered a method to target these weeds and called it the "Stinger"—a precision aerial application method that drops a miniscule amount of herbicide directly into the center growing stem of each individual plant. Although this method has about 98% efficacy, there are drawbacks, including weather limitations due to frequent heavy rains and mist, and potential mechanical equipment failure.

In partnership with Airborne Aviation, we developed and began testing another innovative tool: the "Hammer"—a 300-pound bell shaped concrete weight attached by a longline to a helicopter. When lowered precisely, the Hammer smashes the center growing stem and spore-producing heart of the ATF, preventing regrowth. After three months, we found a success rate of 90%. If subsequent monitoring continues to show no regrowth for one year, we will employ the Hammer technology to suppress this aggressive weed to protect Kaua'i's native forest and source of fresh water.



Evelyn Wight/TNC



TNC

Restoring Kīholo

A COMMUNITY UNITES



Ku'ulei Keakealani with her father, Sonny, and other friends and volunteers, repairing Kīholo's ancient rock walls.

Cecile Walsh/TNC

In 2011, The Nature Conservancy received an extraordinary gift: seven acres at Kīholo Bay, including a historic Hawaiian fishpond. Commissioned by Kamehameha I in the early 1800s, the Kīholo pond originally encompassed about 600 acres and ranked among the finest in the Islands, with six-foot-high rock walls and many *mākāhā* (sluice gates) controlling the flow of water and fish between pond and sea.

Unique in the world for their sophistication and productivity, traditional fishponds, or *loko'ia*, serve as a nursery for reef fish. Juvenile fish feed on algae in the relative safety of the pond before being harvested by the community or swimming out through

the *mākāhā* to replenish the reefs. Fishponds filter freshwater, absorbing sediments that would otherwise flow onto the reefs. Once prominent features along coastlines throughout Hawai'i, few *loko'ia* remain today.

In 1859, lava destroyed most of Kīholo village and reduced the fishpond to just 3.2 acres. Yet Kīholo remains an extraordinary place by any measure. Its fishhook-shaped lagoon glows electric blue against the volcanic shore. Threatened green sea turtles and endangered monk seals haul out to rest on the black sand. Scattered throughout its lava plains are glittering anchialine pools, the sole habitat for tiny endemic shrimp called *'ōpae 'ula*. A natural oasis along South Kohala's parched coast,

Christine Shepard



Drew Erickson

Kīholo is fed by underground springs that bring millions of gallons of cold freshwater and nutrients through its lagoon and fishpond to the coast every day, enhancing productivity and potentially buffering reefs from the impacts of warming ocean waters.

In the 1980s, hair care icon Paul Mitchell purchased seven acres at Kīholo Bay, where he intended to build his dream home. Sadly, he succumbed to cancer before he could. His son, Angus Mitchell, generously donated the land to TNC, giving us the honor of helping restore this special place.

"Understanding the fishpond's significance for communities and marine life along the coast, we engaged community members and partners to help us restore it," says Rebecca Most, TNC's Hawai'i Island Marine Program Manager. Longtime *hoa 'āina* (caretakers), cultural practitioners, State resource managers, and scientists lent valuable expertise to the effort. "With the help of many volunteers, we set out to rebuild the pond's storm-toppled walls,

Christine Shepard



The Nature Conservancy in Hawai'i



Christine Shepard

Christine Shepard

TNC

remove the invasive species choking its perimeter, and revive its native fish and plant populations. With all of us working together, it's a community labor of love."

Those who know the place best have been generous with their knowledge. Sonny Keakealani, a fisherman who traces his ancestral ties to Kiholo back several generations, remembered diving into the pond to *helu* (count) all of the fish as a teen in the 1950s. He shared which species were most plentiful then, and how to harvest various types of fish. Since 2012, Rebecca and Lehua Kamaka of Hui Aloha Kiholo have followed Sonny's example and *helu* every fish in the pond monthly. Their data show native fish populations have increased in size and variety.

"I cannot tell you what it means for *kūpuna* (elders) to feel truly valued, that their knowledge is held in high regard," says Sonny's daughter Ku'ulei Keakealani. "TNC brought a willingness to embrace us, our ways, and our knowledge." Ku'ulei helped establish Hui Aloha Kiholo, a group of lineal descendants committed to preserving Kiholo and ensuring traditional knowledge is passed along to younger generations.

Once a month, TNC and Hui Aloha Kiholo host volunteer workdays. Nearly 6,000 volunteers have logged 27,000 hours over the past seven years. Guided by expert dry-stack masons, volunteers restored 1,300 feet of rock walls encircling the fishpond. They cleared non-native ironwood and kiawe trees from the pond so native fish and plants could thrive once again. The TNC team planted native *pohuehue* vines and *'ae'ae* groundcover grown in

an on-site nursery and fenced critical access points to protect the hardwon restoration from feral goats. In April, the team witnessed the arrival and mating of a pair of *ae'o*, endangered Hawaiian birds never before seen at the pond.

"We were born into the stewardship of this place," says Ku'ulei. "For me it is truly an inherited responsibility, my *kuleana*. Kiholo is the birthplace of my great-grandfather. Now my three daughters are having that same relationship. Kiholo is our *kūpuna*." Regardless of where people come from, Ku'ulei invites them to bring their best selves to Kiholo and to feel the aloha. Because, as she says, "you care for things that you love."

Hui Aloha Kiholo also helps host educational events, where *kūpuna* share ancestral wisdom and guidance in the oral tradition through *mo'olelo* (stories) and demonstrate traditional practices for local groups and students. Ku'ulei remembers one event in particular, during which her father Sonny demonstrated how to handle a throw net, while *'opelu* fisherman extraordinaire Mike Hind taught people how to process the tasty fish. "The transfer of place-based, traditional knowledge from generation to generation is vital for preparing future stewards," she says.

Because of the health of its coastal resources, West Hawai'i has been designated one of just 10 Habitat Focus Areas (HFA) in the U.S. by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). "I am in awe of the work being done by local communities in West Hawai'i," says Lani Watson, NOAA's Marine Habitat Resource Specialist who leads the HFA effort in Hawai'i.

"By leading restoration efforts, they are building coastal and community resilience, and can serve as a model for other communities across Hawai'i and the nation." To scale up coastal restoration efforts and connect the diverse groups managing West Hawai'i's fishponds and anchialine pools, TNC and NOAA helped launch Hui Loko, a peer network of 15 sites where members share lessons learned and support each others' restoration efforts.

TNC and NOAA also support Kai Kuleana, another peer network in West Hawai'i, working to restore coral reefs and reef fisheries. Though the specific needs of each community are different, the collective accelerates the adoption of important conservation initiatives, like at neighboring Ka'ūpūlehu. The community there led an effort to establish a 10-year "Try Wait" rest period to restore declining reef fish stocks. In 2016, the State approved the Ka'ūpūlehu Marine Reserve. After only two years, TNC dive surveys showed some food fishes increased by more than 60 percent inside the rest area, compared to only three percent outside of the area.

"We share things that we've tried and learn from one another," says Ku'ulei, a member of both networks. "What is good for one place might not be good for another, but that diversity is healthy."

According to Most, "The Hui Loko and Kai Kuleana community networks show us what is possible when we unite to share, learn, and work toward a common goal. By scaling up from one site to many, we multiply our efforts for greater impact, learning from those who came before us to provide a model for generations to come."

- Shannon Wianecki

A Life-Changing Gift

Nine years ago, Angus Mitchell donated a special piece of family property to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in memory of his father, Paul Mitchell, who died in 1989. In February 2020, Angus made his first visit back since making the gift, and he was astounded by the changes.

“If you had been here in 2011, you wouldn’t even recognize it. It was so overgrown then. Look at what you’ve accomplished! Now we can start to see what this place can be,” said Angus that morning.

In partnership with Hui Aloha Kīholo, TNC is working to revitalize the lands and waters of Kīholo, including restoring the 3.2-acre fishpond within the seven-acre TNC preserve. The collective goal is to restore the fishpond and the land around it for both native species and as a model for other ponds along the West Hawai‘i coast, as well as to reawaken the area as a place for education, partnership, conservation, and sustainable harvest. Over time, Kīholo is becoming a place where generations can learn from and contribute to its story.



Angus Mitchell during his first visit since 2011.

Estelle Bohl

“My intention was for this property to go back to the people of Hawai‘i. I thought they would be the best stewards and that TNC could protect it in perpetuity,” Angus said.

As Angus noted, the changes have been remarkable. Among other things, he was impressed that he could actually see the pond’s shoreline and the ancient rock walls surrounding it.

“Angus’s gift changed the lives of people who work in and are connected to Kīholo Bay,” said Hawai‘i Island Marine Program Manager Rebecca Most. “This preserve is a great example of how working with and integrating communities into the management of natural areas, in a way that includes cultural and traditional practices, is a powerfully positive approach to conservation. Angus’s gift helped create space for relationships to grow, and for this place to heal, and I am so grateful to him for that.”



Forty people from John Paul Mitchell Systems joined Angus for a memorable Kīholo homecoming.

Estelle Bohl

LEAVE A LEGACY

What does tomorrow hold for the natural world we love and depend on? No matter what the future holds, TNC will be here to help people and nature thrive. If you want to make a lasting impact on Hawai‘i’s lands and waters, please consider naming us in your will or trust as follows:

“The Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the District of Columbia, with principal business address of 4245 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 100, Arlington, VA 22203-1606. Tax identification number: 53-0242652. This bequest shall be used to further the purposes of The Nature Conservancy in the state of Hawai‘i.”

For more information, please contact: Lara Siu at (808) 587-6235 or lsiu@tnc.org.

A green sea turtle glides in Kīholo fish pond.

Christine Shepard



The Nature Conservancy in Hawai‘i

Ripple Effect

A SINGLE PERSON CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

In January 2009, Michael Morriss lost his life doing what he loved: free diving with friends off Hawai'i's South Kohala coast. The 23-year-old was an avid surfer and spearfisher, and people gathered *en masse* to celebrate his life. His mother Liz Morriss remembers her house filling with friends and family wanting to honor the young man they loved. "The girls were practicing hula and the boys were going to do a haka in the ocean," she says. A friend suggested establishing a memorial fund with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to honor Michael's legacy.

After discussions with Chad Wiggins, TNC's Hawai'i Island Marine Program Manager at the time, the Morriss family chose to support work in Puakō Bay, one of Michael's favorite dive sites, and a place where TNC research revealed that coral reefs had been in decline for the past several decades. Specifically, contributions to the Michael Morriss Memorial Fund would support a multi-year study to assess the impact of roi, an invasive fish, on Puakō's reefs.

Local fishers and spearfishers joined forces with TNC and Michael's friends to remove the unwelcome fish which seemed to thrive while native fish declined. TNC shared the findings from this and other studies to help the Puakō community and fishermen as they work to restore the area's coral and reef fish populations.

Inspired by Michael's story, a student in Waimea launched a "rep-a-thon" to raise funds to contribute to the Michael Morriss Memorial Fund. The fourth grader belonged to CrossFit All-Stars gym and convinced other kids to get donations for every pull-up and box jump. Together, they raised and generously donated nearly \$3,000 to the fund.

On the first anniversary of Michael's passing, the Morriss family hosted a benefit concert at the Blue Dragon in Kawaihae. The Morrisses invited Chad to talk about Puakō Bay and TNC's work there. "I left overwhelmed by the generosity of spirit at the gathering. Through raffles and games, the event raised \$17,000," he says. "It was a truly uplifting experience and an honor to be part of it." The Fund accomplished what it intended and has been closed.

"Commemorating someone's life like this can be healing," says Lori Admiral, TNC's Director of Philanthropy. "In establishing the Fund and supporting work at Puakō, the Morrisses gave Michael's friends and family something to rally around and were able to direct considerable resources to protecting this special place. Altogether they raised over \$100,000—a truly meaningful tribute to the young spearfisher." Donations to Michael's fund were matched by state and federal grants.

Michael's unexpected death was a source of great pain, but it also served as a catalyst for his community to forge new relationships and understand a precious marine resource. "I'm not surprised by it," Liz says, of the outpouring of support for her son and the ripple effect generated at his passing. "Michael was a very special person...spiritual and ahead of his time."

- Shannon Wianecki



Liz Morriss



Puakō

John DeMello



Michael with mom Liz and sisters Chelsea and Lindsey.

Liz Morriss



Celebrating Hawaiʻi

In February, we gathered our corporate and foundation friends to celebrate our shared commitment to Hawaiʻi's lands and waters. Mahalo to trustee Brett MacNaughton for hosting the pau hana at the Lotus Honolulu at Diamond Head, and to Waikiki Brewing Company for donating the beer. If your business is interested in supporting Hawaiʻi's lands and waters, please join the Corporate Council for the Environment by contacting Lara Siu at (808) 587-6235 or lsiu@tnc.org.

Photos Sean Marrs/TNC



Ulalia Woodside (TNC), Tanya Alston (spouse), Paul Alston (Dentons), Kaʻiulani de Silva (Hawaiian Electric), Brett MacNaughton (The MacNaughton Group)



John Morgan (Kualoa Ranch), Debbie Nakanelua-Richards (Hawaiian Airlines), Billy Richards (spouse)



Jarad Makaiau (NOAA), Amber Strong Makaiau (Cooke Foundation), Terry George (The Harold K.L. Castle Foundation)



Duke Ah Moo (Hilton), Scott Meidell (Haleakala Ranch), Jason Morgan (Kahala Sportswear), Andy Downes (Bank of Hawaii)