

STATE OF HAWAII: HELEMANO WILDERNESS AREA

The Helemano Wilderness Area (HWA) Forest Legacy project was a complex acquisition that took over five years of partner collaboration with the USDA Forest Service, other partners, and multiple funding sources. This property now provides increased access for recreation and native Hawaiian traditional and cultural practices as well as environmental benefits and a new source for forest products. The acquisition also furthers the goals of the State of Hawai'i related to economic, agricultural, and water sustainability.

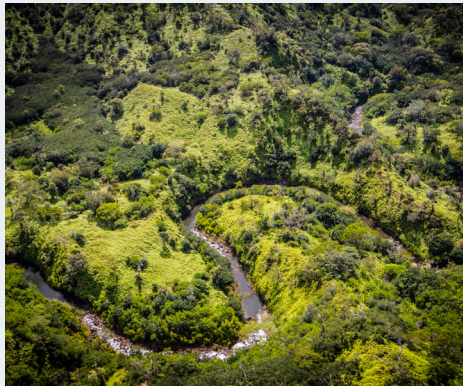
O'ahu has lost more forestland to conversion to non-forest uses than any other island in the State of Hawai'i. Conversion to suburban development and high intensity agriculture threatens the health of the watershed on Hawai'i's most populous island, as well as the supply of water for residential and agricultural use.

Nearby land is also conserved in perpetuity by the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, including the Ewa and Waiahole Forest Reserves, Kahana State Park, and the federally owned O'ahu Forest National Wildlife Refuge. HWA expands these protected forest lands and provides crucial access to the actively managed watershed forests of the Ko'olau Mountains Watershed Partnership that bring together landowners across the entire eastern mountain range of O'ahu.



Tourism in Hawai'i is worth an estimated **\$13 billion a year** from 10 million tourists annually.

The acquisition of HWA provides public lands on the most populous island and epicenter of tourism. Only thirty minutes from the famous Waikiki Beach and city of Honolulu, HWA is a prime location for



the preservation of open space and development of new recreational opportunities. Currently, there is only one developed camping area in O'ahu's Forest Reserves. The HWA project aims to provide additional trails and campsite development, including ADA-accessible sites.

In spite of demand from local woodworkers and artisans, there are no state timber areas in O'ahu. Forest management of HWA provides an opportunity for forest product development thanks to its accessibility and potential for high yields. Cultural practitioners will benefit from increased access to traditional Hawaiian and Polynesian forest products for lei, garlands, medical uses, and other cultural practices.

"These areas of Helemano and upper Wahiawā, sitting at the foothills of the Ko'olau mountains, combine native forest, watersheds, and good soils in an accessible central location to create an ideal setting to support our communities' physical and spiritual sustenance."

— Suzanne Case, Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources



HWA is one of 13 priority watersheds designated by the County Board of Water Supply for its high aquifer recharge and water production qualities, of which a third of O'ahu's population relies.

HWA provides habitat for 37 state and federally-listed threatened and endangered species, including the elepaio bird, seven invertebrate species, and 28 plant species as well as the official state land mammal, the Hawaiian hoary bat.

Through the power of partnerships, including the Trust for Public Lands, state and federal agencies, nonprofits and associations the acquisition of the HWA demonstrates how the Forest Legacy Program can be leveraged to complete complex but critically important land acquisitions that support the environment, the community, and the economy.



"This complex land purchase is the product of many years of focused work by a team of professionals across public and private sectors."

— Marigold Zoll, O'ahu Forestry and Wildlife District Manager

Community engagement was key to the acquisition of the HWA and will be key in the long-term stewardship to Malama aina (to care for the land).

AT-A-GLANCE



O'ahu population: **991,778 residents, 8 million tourists** per year.



Provides habitat for **37** state and federally-listed threatened and endangered species.



The acquisition of HWA provides **public lands on the most populous island** and epicenter of tourism.



Secures **six miles of public access** to the historic Poamoho Ridge Trail that was constructed in 1934 by the Civilian Conservation Corps.



HWA contains **21 miles of streams** and their tributaries, the largest drainage basin in O'ahu.



Project lands link **17,288 acres** under active forest management.

Top L: Aerial of Helemano Wilderness Project area. (Photo: Richard Drake, DLNR); **Middle L:** HWA contains over 20 miles of streams and tributaries. (Photo: Richard Drake, DLNR); **Top R:** HWA provides public access to the Poamoho Ridge Trail. (Photo: Richard Drake, DLNR); **Top R:** Aerial of Helemano Wilderness Project area. (Photo: Richard Drake, DLNR)

For more information, visit
<https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/forestry/lap/forest-legacy/>.