

Climate Resilience Regional Challenge

PROJECT SUMMARIES

‘ĀINA RESTORATION THROUGH COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE TO ADVANCE CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

Project Lead: University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant College Program and Natural Resources

Funding Amount: \$68,497,799

SUMMARY

The goal of this project is a reinvigorated *moku* system (a Native Hawaiian framework for traditional land tenure and contemporary biocultural stewardship) to build a resilient future for the Hawaiian Islands. The project is led by a collaborative of fourteen state and county government agencies, academia, national and local non-profit organizations, and collectives of Indigenous and local stewards.

Actions include 1) conserving and restoring forests and watersheds; 2) enhancing regional community-based coastal stewardship; 3) restoring marine abundance; 4) sharing knowledge and strengthening networks across communities; 5) reducing risk and improving disaster resilience; and 6) advancing community governance and co-stewardship models.

Project activities center on five *moku*, one on each on the islands of Kaua‘i, O‘ahu, Moloka‘i, Maui, and Hawai‘i. Building on the foundational activities found in these five *moku*, the project will support regional knowledge sharing, Native Hawaiian stewardship and cultural practices, collective action, and transferable strategies for resource stewardship and climate change adaptation.

DETAILS

Conserving and Restoring Forests and Watersheds

Project partners will remove invasive species and plant native vegetation in forested watersheds to reduce wildfire risk and decrease sediment loading to downstream areas, including coral reefs. Planting native vegetation as green breaks, implementing native food forests, and managing invasive mammal populations will help control the spread of wildfire. In addition to these restoration activities, wildfire education opportunities targeted to community leaders and local youth will build enduring capacity.

Enhancing Regional Community-Based Coastal Stewardship

This resilience action will restore natural infrastructure, including wetlands and dune systems that act as a buffer against climate and weather hazards. Activities include: developing regional shoreline management and adaptation strategies for coastal areas on O‘ahu, Maui, and Moloka‘i; restoring wetland habitat in two wildlife sanctuaries in Moloka‘i and Maui; transferring 423 acres of land on Maui to the public domain



to implement shoreline restoration and conservation projects and codevelop sea level rise adaptation pathways; addressing impacts of tourism pressure on the historic Pololū Trail on Hawai'i Island to protect coastal and marine resources and important Native Hawaiian cultural sites; and developing an inventory of historic and cultural coastal sites and detailing preservation and mitigation actions in response to natural disaster events.

Restoring Marine Abundance

The award will support restoration of critical food systems including loko i'a (Native Hawaiian fishponds) and limu (seaweed) as well as coral reefs. Activities include the expansion of an existing high school aquaculture program to restock native mullet in loko i'a across the state; the restoration of coral reefs and training community members in restoration techniques; the revival of limu (native seaweed) harvesting traditions and training new generations of limu practitioners; and an increased capacity for community engagement and participation in natural resource management decisions and stewardship programs.

Sharing Knowledge and Strengthening Networks Across Communities

To amplify the benefits gained through moku-scale resilience actions, project partners will facilitate knowledge sharing and networks of place-based community organizations and practitioners at multiple scales. Activities will support ongoing statewide network-building and inclusion of previously underserved communities; island-scale networks designed to address localized resilience needs; and community information sharing and skill building.

Reducing Risk and Improving Disaster Resilience

This action will support risk reduction through the development of green infrastructure and capacity-building within at-risk communities. Activities include: community-led wildfire management and risk reduction outreach; a homeowner's handbook and outreach to prepare for natural hazards; and support for community resilience hubs and networks.

Advancing Community Governance

To address comanagement barriers, this project will support the implementation of governance models that address historical power imbalances, increase capacity for equitable community-government collaborations, expand community-based monitoring efforts, and advance Indigenous knowledge sovereignty.

ABOUT THE CLIMATE RESILIENCE REGIONAL CHALLENGE

In 2022, Congress appropriated approximately \$575 million, through the *Inflation Reduction Act*, to be competitively awarded for projects that help coastal communities become more resilient as they face increasing threats from extreme weather and climate change. This historic, transformative effort is known as the *Climate Resilience Regional Challenge*.

To learn more about the program and the funded projects, visit the website.
coast.noaa.gov/funding/ira/resilience-challenge/

