



**Malama Kai Foundation
FINAL REPORT
to
NOAA's Coral Conservation Program**

1. Organization Title:

Malama Kai Foundation

2. Project Title:

Conserving Coral Reefs on the Big Island of Hawaii through Community Involvement and Strategic Partnerships.

3. Award Number:

NA05NMF4631040

4. Report Period:

October 1, 2005 – March 31, 2007

5. Introduction:

This is the final report of the NOAA-funded project to promote community involvement in coral reef conservation on the West Coast of the Big Island of Hawaii. This phase of funding assisted with the continuation of initiatives in Miloli'i and Ho`okena and also provided assistance to the establishment of marine conservation programs at Honaunau. Over the past three years, NOAA has been a consistent supporter of efforts to enhance coral reef conservation on the Big Island. As described in this report, through the support of NOAA and other donors, local communities and their partners have made significant progress on coral reef conservation.

The Malama Kai Foundation's main partner on the implementation of this project has been the Community Conservation Network (CCN), which has been working with communities in Hawaii for the past four years to assist them in pursuing marine conservation in ways that are culturally appropriate. This project has been an excellent partnership between MKF, CCN, and three local communities on the Big Island, all of which are working hard to improve management of coral reefs in their areas.

The communities involved in this project have long expressed significant concern about depletion of coral reef resources in their areas and have requested assistance from the partners on

this project to support various activities including: marine conservation education programs for youth; the collection and use of traditional knowledge to enhance marine conservation; Makai Watch programs including outreach to ocean users to reduce violations, surveillance programs to prevent and report on violators, and marine monitoring to track changes in the condition of coral reefs; and a sustainable finance mechanism for their activities. Each community is in a different phase of project development. Miloli`i has been conducting coral reef conservation activities for over three years. Ho`okena is moving from the start-up phase to the project implementation phase. Ho`okena is in a start up phase and has begun Human Use and Biological Monitoring. They have also implemented activities such as a Youth Summer Fun Program and Traditional Knowledge and also have been an active participant in the “Managing Better Together” Network.

This project also provided an excellent model for the establishment of other community-oriented coral reef conservation projects throughout the Hawaiian Islands. Through the Managing Better Together Network several other communities around Hawaii became aware of the efforts on the Big Island and established similar projects in their areas. Examples include Haena, Pupukeya, and several communities on Maui.

The project proponents are aware that the NOAA Coral Reef Grant Program was never intended to become a long-term funding source for individual community-based coral reef conservation efforts but instead should help to establish successful projects that then develop sustainability mechanisms. As a result, the projects are now working diligently to create sustainable financing mechanisms on a project scale, as well as a community scale, for each of these community efforts.

6. Purpose:

The project’s primary goal was to:

Conserve Priority Coral Reef Areas Along the Kona Coast by Supporting Communities to Continue the Execution of Multi-Stakeholder Coral Reef Management Efforts that have been Initiated through Previous NOAA Funding.

The components of this project included:

- I. Helping the Communities to Organize and Build Capacity for Coral Reef Management;**
- II. Implementing Conservation Awareness and Involvement Programs including Community Monitoring of Coral Reef Ecosystems;**
- III. Continuing Efforts to Pilot Community-Based Observation and Compliance Program at Miloli`i and Expanding this Effort to Ho`okena and Honaunau;**
- IV. Working with Youth to Collect and Apply Historical Stewardship Knowledge and Information from Kupuna to Contemporary Management Efforts; and**
- V. Developing financial sustainability strategy for Miloli`i and Ho`okena.**

7. Results / Accomplishments:

During the recently completed grant period we focused on strengthening the existing programs, helping Honaunau to establish Makai Watch in their community, and developing mechanisms to ensure the long-term sustainability of these community based projects. Not only has this program assisted the State and communities with the preservation of their marine resources, it has created a renewed sense of stewardship, pride, and respect within local Hawaiian communities. The success of the Makai Watch program is a direct result of funding received from NOAA's Coral Program.

We have organized the report by Community rather than by Objective. However, the progress that each community has made under each objective is summarized.

Miloli'i:

At Miloli'i the project contracted several individuals to serve as Makai Watch Officers. These individuals were all trained in how to carry out the tasks of Makai Watch including Outreach and Education, Biological and Human Use Monitoring, and Observation and Compliance. These individuals carried out patrols for a minimum of ten hours per week and conducted biological monitoring approximately once per month during the project period.

In addition, the project contracted one master fisherman to teach traditional opelu fishing to community youth. During the project period the fisherman taught over 30 youth the details of traditional opelu fishing. Traditional fishing includes numerous important tenants regarding sustainability. As a result, community members feel it is important that traditional fishing is practiced by youth as it teaches them important aspects of how to live sustainably.

The project has consistently supported implementation of Summer Fun for youth education. Summer fun has included a component of youth working with Kupuna to collect and apply traditional knowledge. In the summer of 2006, the project supported a film festival in Miloli'i with youth from around the islands to celebrate the sharing of traditional knowledge from elders to youth.

Miloli'i has also made major progress on the establishment of a community-based Subsistence Fishing Zone. This Zone was officially established by the legislature in 2005 after major urging by the Miloli'i community. Since its official creation, the project has been working with local community members to develop a series of fishing rules to help restore the once healthy subsistence fishing. These rules are now nearly ready to be submitted to the State for review and approval. Once they are legally established, these rules will be supported through the Miloli'i Makai Watch program. The establishment of this community Marine Managed Area is a major precedent for Hawaiian marine conservation. Several other communities have learned from this model and are now pursuing the establishment of their own community-based marine managed areas. Haena on Kauai has successfully established such an area through the legislature and is now working on its Management Plan and rule package. Hookena is also pursuing development of such an area, as are Honaunau and several communities on Maui.

Both through this project and with funding support from the Office of Hawaii Affairs, the Miloli'i community is pursuing the development of economic sustainability models. This includes undertaking feasibility studies for several possible economic ventures that could help to support marine conservation in the community. Possible ventures include a Community Center, Eco-Tourism, a dried fish business, and a community store. A feasibility study has been completed for the Community Center and the community has already raised \$200,000 to construct the center. A feasibility study is underway for community-based Eco-tourism.

Ho'okena:

The Hookena community has made a great deal of progress during the course of this grant. With NOAA funding, the project was able to contract Damien Kennison to help coordinate the effort at Ho'okena. A long-term community resident, Damien has worked for decades to improve the quality of life of the community. He and other community members are pursuing numerous initiatives to help improve the marine environment of Ho'okena. They have established a Makai Watch program where youth are working to help collect Human Use and Biological Monitoring data. They have not started the Outreach and Education and Observation and Compliance part of this initiative as they felt its important to start with a manageable set of activities.

Following the example of Miloli'i the community is now working on the establishment of a Community-based Marine Managed Area. Damien is leading a community effort to prepare a management plan including a set of rules and zoning for the area. The community is primarily concerned about restoring the health of the subsistence fishery of their traditional fishing grounds. Once they have developed draft rules, they will work with the State to route these through the State approval process. Once the rules are in place, the community will expand its Makai Watch to include more regular Outreach and Observation and Compliance. These elements will help a great deal to ensure the rules are followed and the local fishery is restored.

Damien has also implemented a Summer Fun Program to enhance youth education about the marine environment. He has helped youth to gain school credit for participating in projects to record traditional knowledge from kupuna and to participate in marine monitoring.

The Hookena community has also been pursuing several efforts to enhance the sustainability of their marine conservation projects. This includes a large grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop economic ventures in the community as well as another grant jointly with Miloli'i to design and build a community center.

The progress in Hookena has been outstanding. The plan in the next year is to complete the Management Plan and rules as well as to initiate several community-based economic enterprises and to complete the community center.

Honaunau:

At the beginning of this phase of the project, the Honaunau community had just started their efforts to initiate a project to conserve their coral reefs. The community felt there was a major

problem with overuse of these reef but did not know what to do. The main threats seemed to stem from the high number of recreational users of a small and traditionally important bay as well as overfishing through the larger traditional community fishing grounds.

The community started by undertaking extensive Human Use surveys to understand patterns of human use. This included all day surveys over numerous weekends and holidays. The community gained a very good understanding of the numbers of visitors and observed numerous negative activities including harassment of dolphins and turtles, trampling of coral, littering, and eliminating human waste in inappropriate areas.

The community has now added biological monitoring and youth education to their efforts. The target is to develop a full Makai Watch project within the next six months. Working with local community members this project is sponsoring all aspects of developing Makai Watch. In addition, the project is assisting the community to develop a Management Plan and series of rules to help improve the conservation of the coral reefs of the area. The community is targeting to complete the plan by August of this year and then to submit the rules to the State for the creation of a Community-based Marine Managed Area (MMA).

The Honaunau community has also developed a youth education program in cooperation with the Queen Liliuokalani Children's Center. This program is focusing on giving youth positive experiences in their traditional environment. This has included involving youth in efforts to gather and apply traditional marine fisheries knowledge from Kupuna. The main vehicle for youth education has been through a Summer Fun program that is similar to the programs in Miloli'i and Hookena.

The Honaunau community is not yet at the phase to fully develop sustainability initiatives. While the community members are already thinking about ways to sustain their activities, they are currently focusing the majority of their effort on develop their project.

Other Accomplishments:

In addition to these specific community-based accomplishments, the project has also accomplished the following:

1. CCN Hired a Hawaiian Program Officer for the Big Island. CCN has long worked to identify an ethnically Hawaiian individual to serve as our Big Island Program Officer. This year, we identified and hired a marine biologist who is ethnically Hawaiian to serve as our Program Officer. This is particularly important as we believe in empowering members of the host culture in Hawaii to support the efforts of community members to conserve their coral reefs.
2. Vitalized Community-based Coral Reef Conservation in Hawaii: When the NOAA funding to Malama Kai started, there was very little support for community-based conservation in Hawaii at the Government level. Working with CCN and other partners such as The Nature Conservancy and the Hawaii Wildlife Fund, the situation has completely changed. The State government is now very supportive of community efforts to play an active role in marine conservation. The state has embraced the Makai Watch

concept and has supported the creation of Community-based Marine Conservation areas. The progress is absolutely outstanding and has created a foundation for long-term success in community-based marine conservation

3. Created a Model for Community-based Conservation that can and has been Replicated Throughout the Hawaiian Islands. Another very aspect of the project is the creation of a model that is easily replicable both in Hawaii and other parts of the Pacific. Makai Watch addressed the main issues in marine conservation at most communities. The Makai Watch methodology is easily replicated but needs to be adapted for the specific situation. This project has developed several approaches including Makai Watch curriculum and training materials that can help communities to adopt the Makai Watch approach. At Miloli'i, it was determined that Makai Watch alone is not enough to restore the local fishery because the existing rules simply are not sufficient. As a result, the concept of the Community-based Marine Managed Area was introduced to Hawaii. Under this concept, the community works with the government to help develop new rules and zoning that will help them to achieve their marine conservation objectives. In most cases, this is the restoration of community-based subsistence fisheries. This model is also very replicable and has already been replicated by one Hawaiian community and is now being worked on by several more communities.

8. Changes/Problems Encountered:

The main challenges encountered include:

1. Regularly Involving a Significant Portion of the Community. As with most community-based marine conservation projects, it has been difficult to regularly involve a large number of community members. Typical involvement in community-meetings averages about 10 to 15 community members while participation in community projects also varies. In some cases only a few people show up to undertake monitoring or a beach clean up. In other cases, particularly with youth projects, a large number of community members will be present. By far the most successful event in terms of community participation has been the Summer Fun program. These program have involved as many as 40 youth, and, in many cases, their parents also participate. The project has worked to make its events more attractive to a larger group of community members by providing refreshments, early announcements, more fun activities, and other strategies. This has resulted in increased participation. Regarding community meetings, the project has simply concluded that at times it has to go door to door to get input from community members rather than expecting them all to come to a community meeting. This strategy has been successful in getting the input the project has needed for the development of Management Plans etc.
2. Balancing the Pace of the Project to Fit with the Pace of the Community: It is also necessary to work at the pace of the community. It is important for us to have a work plan and a timeline, but it is important for us to remain flexible and to not force the community into taking action until fully ready. In our experience, accomplishments typically occur in bunches after break-throughs, followed by a slower period of strengthening the activities and engaging the community. Also, although a community may be ready to implement the project, it takes time to get a reliable, committed group of

individuals together who will ensure that the project moves forward. We have identified the need to provide a small stipend to these individuals instead of expecting them to volunteer. We will be piloting the stipend program at Miloli`i and Ho`okena and, if successful and funding allows, we will expand this to other Makai Watch programs in the state.

3. **Having Sufficient Human Resources to Address All Needs at the Community Level:** Community-based conservation is by its very nature a very intensive undertaking. It requires months of working with community members to build their trust and a great deal of time to organize and pursue activities at the community level. The community members themselves are primarily volunteers, and, therefore, the project has to recognize their need to go at the pace that is appropriate for them. However, when working with three communities, there is always a great deal of activity that needs to be undertaken. Malama Kai has had only one part time personnel during most of this project. As a result, we worked very closely with CCN to implement the effort. CCN also only had a half time Big Island Program Officer during most of the project. This made implementation almost completely dependent on community volunteers and contractors. CCN mainly played the role of training these individuals and working with them at key times during the project. There is always, however, much more to do than can possibly be done by the few individuals who are coordinating the effort. This means things move at a slower pace and that the project has to prioritize the actions it take each day. In the future, project efforts such as this will work to raise sufficient funds to employ or contract more individuals to help with the project.