



KOHALA WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

Protecting and sustaining the forest, the water and the people of Kohala.

For Immediate Release

Contact: Melora K. Purell, Coordinator, Kohala Watershed Partnership
P.O. Box 437182, Kamuela, HI 96743
Phone: 333-0976; E-mail: Coordinator@kohalawatershed.org
Web site: www.hawp.org/kohala.asp

Pelekane Bay Watershed Restoration Project Is Underway

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—August 17, 2009—The Pelekane Bay Watershed Restoration Project on the leeward coast of Kohala Mountain was officially launched today in a ceremony that included remarks by Senator Daniel K. Inouye.

To fund the project, the Kohala Watershed Partnership (KWP) received \$2.69 million in federal funds through a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) coastal restoration grant through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“After many years of community input and conservation planning, it is so fulfilling to see the work beginning on this project. This first step in cleaning up Pelekane Bay will reduce the amount of sediment moving in to the estuary from the watershed. Future projects may address the sediments that are already in the bay,” said Melora Purell, KWP coordinator.

“The Pelekane Bay Watershed Restoration Project is one of two Hawai‘i habitat restoration projects and one of just 50 selected nationwide from 814 proposals to receive stimulus funding from NOAA,” said Matt Hamabata, executive director of The Kohala Center, which works in partnership with the KWP. “We always strive for excellence, and it is very satisfying to see the KWP team receive this award because they excel at what they do. Succeeding because of merit means that we expect the very best of ourselves, so that we can deliver the only very best for Hawai‘i.” The Nature Conservancy also received funding for its Maunalua Bay Reef Restoration Project on Oahu.

Attending the blessing hosted by The Kohala Center were some of the 15 new employees hired for the project, who are being trained as field crew and field technicians.

Pelekane Bay, south of Kawaihae Harbor, was traditionally a sheltered place for young fish to grow and mature. With the introduction of exotic plants and animals, the mauka watershed deteriorated, and sediments are dumped into the bay every time there is a storm.

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The project will work to restore the coral reef habitat of Pelekane Bay by rehabilitating the mauka watershed through erosion control and by planting native vegetation to reduce the amount of soil being carried into the bay.

Project goals include:

- Restoration of 400 acres of native vegetation along 6 miles of stream corridors;
- Restoration of 100 critically-eroding sites (13 acres of erosion control fabric and grass plantings, 1,450 acres of watershed impacted) with at least 50 sediment check dams protecting four miles downstream of check dams;
- Installation of 100,000 native plants; and
- Construction of 20 miles of goat-proof fencing to create 11,750 acres free of feral goats.

To learn more about the project and KWP, visit hawp.org/kohala.asp or contact Melora Purell, coordinator, at 333-0976, by e-mail at coordinator@kohalawatershed.org, or in person at The Kohala Center, 65-1291A Kawaihae Road, Kamuela. For more information about NOAA Recovery Act projects, see <http://www.noaa.gov/recovery/>.