

Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2026-04-14 6:00 PM

Meeting Time: 04-14-26 18:00

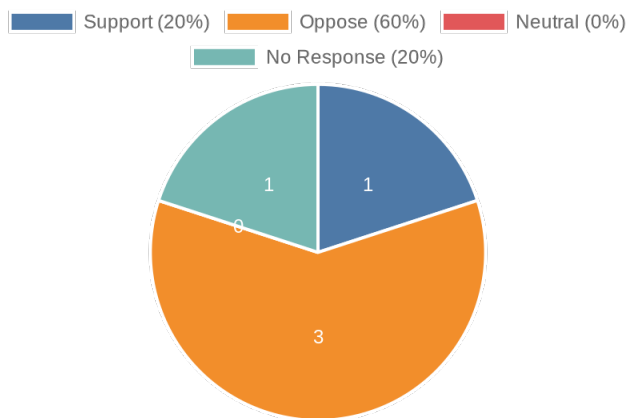
eComments Report

Meetings	Meeting Time	Agenda Items	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2026-04-14 6:00 PM	04-14-26 18:00	2	5	1	3	0

Sentiments for All Meetings

The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



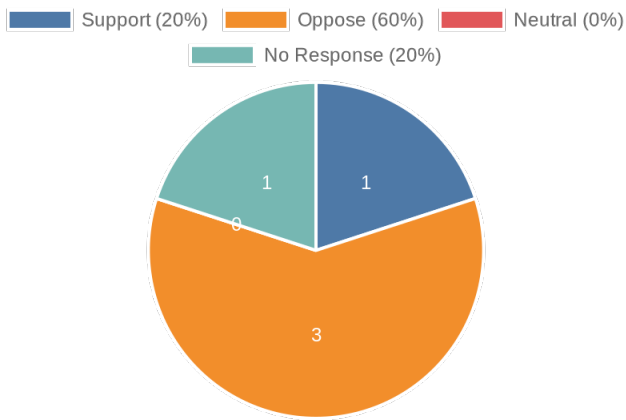
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee (2025-2027) on 2026-04-14 6:00 PM
04-14-26 18:00

Agenda Name	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
A G E N D A	3	1	2	0
BFED-1 PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET FOR THE COUNTY OF MAUI (BFED-1)	2	0	1	0

Sentiments for All Agenda Items

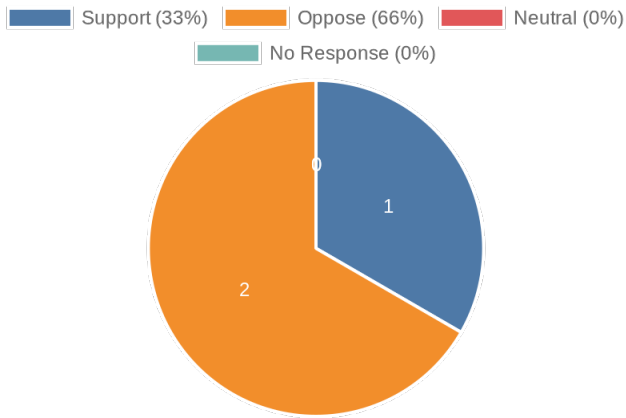
The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



Agenda Item: eComments for A G E N D A

Overall Sentiment



Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 7:08pm 04-14-26

Enough with the handouts to nonprofits—Maui AIDS organizations, churches, environmental groups, and others—while residents struggle to get by. Do you understand what many people on this island deal with every day? You don't see ordinary residents standing in front of the council asking for taxpayer money to cover their bills, and certainly not asking for it tax-free.

The county's first responsibility is to the basic functions of government and the residents who fund it. Strengthen and support the departments you are actually responsible for—public works, infrastructure, permitting, safety, and services that people rely on every day.

It's time for leadership that focuses on core responsibilities instead of dispersing public money without clear accountability. Either take that responsibility seriously or step aside. Enough is enough.

Edward Codelia

Location:

Submitted At: 10:09am 04-14-26

I submit this testimony in opposition to the proposed FY2027 budget as currently structured. A county budget approaching **\$1.6 billion—roughly \$10,000 per resident annually—should produce measurable improvements in infrastructure, housing delivery, public safety, and economic stability, yet many residents do not see those results in daily life. The proposal to expand government staffing while dozens of positions remain vacant and more than \$170 million in funds remain unused raises serious concerns about financial discipline and priorities. Before expanding spending or programs, the County should focus on infrastructure, housing execution, and the basic systems that sustain life on Maui.

Daniel Southmayd

Location:

Submitted At: 1:22pm 04-13-26

Aloha Council members, my name is Daniel Southmayd, and I am the newly appointed housing director for Maui AIDS Foundation, after spending over five years as a medical case manager for the agency. The wrap-around services that Maui AIDS Foundation provides – STI testing and prevention, linkage to care, insurance navigation, case management for people living with HIV (which itself encompasses a wide range of assistance, including financial assistance to qualifying individuals), harm reduction programs, food pantries, and a housing program that serves Maui, Kauai and Hawaii Island – are critical supports to not only people living with HIV, but to the underserved population and to the community at large concerned with their sexual health and well-being.

Maui AIDS Foundation has approached the concerns surrounding this well-being with a moderate yet deliberate approach that observes the traditional values of the Hawaiian culture with discretion and sensitivity. Compassion and care are not radical concepts, but the cornerstone of our agency and our community.

I was informed by our Executive Director, Linda Puppolo, that our agency request for funding for the upcoming year has been included in the County budget proposal. Three day later, our agency learned that our federal housing funds were in serious jeopardy. Our agency housing program currently serves 50 clients and their families across 3 islands at a time when simply having shelter is a daily challenge for many due to a housing shortage and a difficult economic climate.

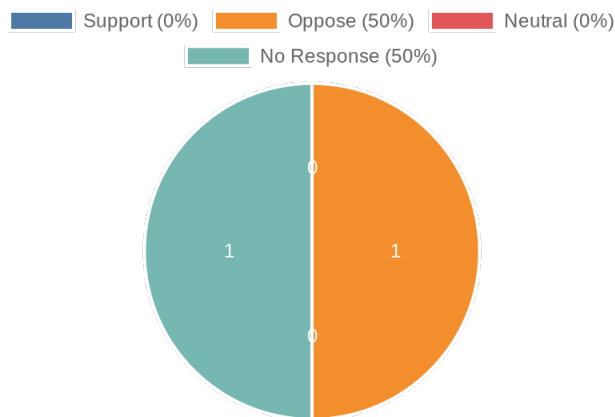
In 2020, when I started at MAF, the agency had 6 clients living in unstable housing situations (which includes houseless, transitional living and shelter living.) When I left case management recently, the agency had approximately 24 individuals living in unstable housing.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Council for its recognition and support of the work that Maui AIDS Foundation does, which is needed more than ever. The MAF team is working tirelessly now to identify and apply for grants to shore up resources needed to keep our community safe and healthy. The Council's continuing assistance towards achieving these fundamental goals is a testament to its commitment to its citizens and to its compassion and care.

Mahalo nui to all of you for your dedication, your support, and your aloha.

Agenda Item: eComments for BFED-1 PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET FOR THE COUNTY OF MAUI (BFED-1)

Overall Sentiment



BFED Committee

Location:

Submitted At: 8:27am 04-15-26

Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 7:17pm 04-14-26

Enough is enough.

Maui residents are watching their government struggle to perform its most basic responsibilities while millions of dollars continue to flow out through grants, subsidies, and handouts to nonprofits, organizations, and special interests. Meanwhile the people who actually fund this government—the residents and taxpayers of Maui County—are left dealing with rising costs, failing infrastructure, crime, slow permitting, and departments that can barely keep up with their core duties.

Ask a simple question: when was the last time you saw an ordinary resident stand in front of the council asking for taxpayer money to pay their bills, tax-free? It doesn't happen. Working families on Maui handle their responsibilities every day without subsidies or special treatment. Yet government seems far more comfortable writing checks to organizations than fixing the systems it directly controls.

The county's responsibility is not to function as a grant-distribution agency. Its responsibility is to run the government—public safety, roads, drainage, permitting, planning, infrastructure, and the departments residents rely on every single day. Those systems should be functioning at a high level before taxpayer money is dispersed elsewhere.

At the same time, residents are being asked to trust leadership despite a record that raises serious concerns. We have seen leadership failures, rising public safety questions, and a government structure that often appears more focused on messaging and programs than on competence and results. Accountability matters, and public officials should always be prepared to answer for the outcomes under their watch.

If Maui residents want things to change, the first step is showing up, paying attention, and demanding accountability. Government should serve the people of this island first—not political priorities, not press releases, and not a network of organizations funded by public money.

Support the departments you are responsible for. Fix the systems that are failing residents. Focus on competence and results.

And if leaders cannot do that, they should step aside and allow people who will.



November 20, 2025

From: Maui Green & Beautiful

PO Box 402, Kahului, HI 96733

www.mauibeautiful.org

mauigreenbeautiful@gmail.com

501(c)3 Nonprofit Public, Federal ID-EIN #46-4790636

To: Jennifer Maydan, AICP

Department of Management

Grant Funding Needs to continue the Citizen Forester Program and the ReShade Maui Program in FY27

Citizen Forester Program:

CFP Goal: Increase tree advocacy in the community through hands on experience and monitor the ecological return on investment of our urban (community) forest.

- 1) Part time coordinator/trainer-20 hours a week- contractor at \$25-\$30 per hour. Estimated \$2400 a month, **\$29,000** a year
- 2) Equipment **\$500** for each team-to start one team a month, meeting weekly
- 3) Tree Plotter subscription **\$5500** a year.
- 4) **\$3000** on supplies-CF certificates. \$20 donation from the volunteer will provide for subsidies for the t-shirts.
- 5) **Total for budget: \$38,000**

ReShade Maui Program:

RMP Goal: Reduce Heat islands (parking lots) by increasing shade of tree canopies. "Stop the Chop" of incorrect pruning including topping and monitor the ecological return on investment of our urban (community) forest

- 1) Part time coordinator/outreach/public relations-20 hours a week-contractor at \$25-\$30 per hour. Estimated \$2400 a month, **\$29,000** a year
Outreach includes-arborists, property managers and community members
- 2) Education-*Hiring instructors* to provide free classes for arborists, property managers and community members to "stop the chop" and cost effectiveness of proper pruning.
Community Events educating the public-educational material
\$10,000
- 3) Lobbying to improve parking lot shade ordinances, protect tree ordinances-outreach to community events, schools, County council
- 4) **Total for budget: \$39,000**

Contact information:

Elaine Malina

Maui Green & Beautiful Board Treasurer ISA Cerified Arborist WE-3778A

808-281-9297

mauigreenbeautiful@gmail.com

craterpair@hawaii.rr.com

RECEIVED AT SOUTH MAUI
BFED MEETING ON 4-14-2026



Six Pillars of Brain Health

Friday, May 10th | 10 AM to Noon



Join us for a free interactive workshop to learn about the six pillars of brain health. Participate in hands on activities that promote stress management, healthy sleep, a brain healthy diet, flexibility, strength and balance.

Featured presenters:

- Carl Powell of *Grow With Carl*
- Claudia Micco, *cCeator of Hypnofitness*,
- Dr. Bridget Bongaard, *President and Founder of Maui Cancer Resources*.

Location: Kaunoa Senior Services—Paia
401 Alakapa PL—Multipurpose Room

Registration Required:

Online: <https://events.aarp.org/brain5-10>

Register by phone with Kaunoa Senior Services at 808-270-7308.



May 10th at Kaunoa

Kay Anderson's Testimony for the BFED – 1 - FY2027 Maui County Kihei, HI

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my questions today. I understand that you may not be able to provide answers immediately, but I hope you will consider these questions carefully and ensure that the budgeted numbers accurately reflect the real requirements and solutions identified through your review.

I will be referring specifically to the *“Water” Section, CBS No. CBS-6649, Project Name: Central Maui — South Maui Desalination Water Treatment Plant.*

1. What process of desalination is planned for this Water Treatment Plant — thermal (distillation, multi-stage flash, multi-effect distillation), membrane-based (reverse osmosis, nanofiltration), or a hybrid system?
2. What type of power source will be used to operate the plant? HECO, solar, or micro-nuclear? To meet the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) and Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative (HCEI) goals for 2045, only solar or micro-nuclear would appear capable of meeting these standards.
3. Where will the facility be located, and does the County currently own the site?
4. What will be the source of feedwater for desalination?
5. What are the projected water output capacities (in TGD) for this facility, and how many residents and visitors will it be designed to support, based on the current South Maui population of approximately 28,000 residents and 27,000 visitors per day?
6. Has there been any projection of potential water rate increases for property owners? Will these costs be shared countywide or applied only to customers directly connected to this desalination system?
7. Given the Director of Water's prior experience with a reverse osmosis project in Tucson — where the facility was designed to blend aesthetically with nearby homes — will a similar approach be pursued here to maintain Maui's scenic beauty and community integrity?

I appreciate your time and effort in addressing these questions. I am supportive of desalination technology as part of Maui's water resilience strategy, but I want to ensure that sufficient funding and planning are in place to make this project successful.

Mahalo,

Kay Anderson

President, Wailea808

www.808wailea.com

808wailea@gmail.com

469-733-5972

RECEIVED AT SOUTH MAUI
BFED MEETING ON 4-14-2026

Maui County Council Budget Committee Testimony FY 26-27

Aloha, Chair Sugimura and Members of the Budget Committee,

My name is Bevanne Bowers, and for the last 11 years, I have had the privilege to serve as Executive Director of Mediation Services of Maui, Inc, better known as Maui Mediation Services. During this time, I have seen firsthand how critical County Council support has been and the difference that it has made. I am here to ask that your support continue. Maui Mediation is one of five community mediation centers across the state. We were founded in 1982 with a simple but powerful mission – to help people resolve conflict peacefully and respectfully, and over the past four decades, our organization has evolved to meet the changing needs of our community.

After the Maui wildfires, Act 202 was enacted, requiring Maui Island landlords to attempt mediation before filing eviction proceedings for unpaid rent. 80% of Act 202 mediations resulted in an agreement between landlords and tenants. It proved to be such a success that this past February, our state legislature enacted Act 278. This time, the eviction prevention program is statewide, and again, landlords and tenants have the opportunity to work out their own best solutions. Hope instead of homelessness, or having to leave the island that you love. A recent SF Gate article reported that since the 2023 wildfires, Maui County has lost about 3,400 residents. Act 278 is designed to help parties communicate and stem the flow of residents leaving their homes. In March, we received 82 eviction notices. Two weeks into April, and we have already received 22 more.

Domestic mediations remain our most requested case type outside of Act 278 cases, and we are also seeing an increase in consumer-merchant disputes. During a time when Maui County residents face many stressors, the need for accessible conflict-resolution services continues to grow.

Community mediation is highly effective – it saves time, reduces costs, and, importantly, helps preserve relationships. We ask our mediation participants to fill out feedback forms at the end of their session. Last quarter, 84% of respondents reported being satisfied with our process, and 91% said they would recommend mediation to others.

A core principle of Maui Mediation is that no one is ever turned away due to inability to pay. Some mediations are absolutely free.

RECEIVED AT SOUTH MAUI BPED MEETING ON 4-14-2026

Maui County Council
200 W. High Street
Wailuku, HI 96793

February 23, 2026

RE: Support for Funding – Maui Mediation Services

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in strong support of continued and increased funding for Maui Mediation Services and its Mediation and Education Program. I completed the January 2026 Basic Mediation Training through Maui Mediation Services and I can say without hesitation that it was exemplary.

I am an attorney licensed in Washington, Oregon, and Tennessee, with more than twenty years of experience in public service law, including extensive work in high-conflict family and child welfare matters. Over the course of my career, I have participated in mediations and similar trainings many times. I am happy to report that Maui Mediation Services is at the top of that list.

The curriculum was thoughtful, rigorous, and grounded in both theory and practical application. The trainers were exceptional—highly skilled, deeply experienced, and generous in their instruction. They created an environment that emphasized professionalism, neutrality, cultural awareness, and community-centered problem solving. The cohort of trainees was equally impressive: committed, diverse, and motivated to serve Maui in meaningful ways.

Mediation is an essential community resource. It reduces strain on the courts, helps families, neighbors, landlords, and tenants resolve conflict constructively, and promotes long-term stability. Particularly in a community like Maui—where relationships, cultural context, and restoration matter deeply—accessible mediation services are critical.

I have only lived on Maui for about six months, but even in that short amount of time I have to come to learn that Maui Mediation Services has a stellar reputation in a wide cross-section of the community. It has lived up to that reputation, and more. In that spirit, I respectfully urge the Council to continue and prioritize funding for this essential program.

Mahalo for your service to our community and for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Andrea Carter
PO Box 399
Makawao, HI 96768

RECEIVED AT SOUTH MAUI
BFED MEETING ON 4-14-2026

04/06/2026

Maui County Council / Economic Development and Budget Committee

Dear Councilmembers,

As Board President of Maui Mediation Services, I am writing in support of increasing the funding for our organization to increase our ability to provide training and vital, consensual conflict resolution services to all residents of Maui County as well as to a number of non-residents who may be in conflict with our residents.

Over the past several years Maui Mediation Services has helped survivors of the Lahaina fires, businesses and families affected by those fires, tenants and landlords struggling with the cost of limited housing on both sides of that issue, families in conflict who are often suffering under the stress of those traumas, and a number of others who are also facing difficult issues, which they feel are vital to their continued ability to survive here. We are proud of our success in handling the Act 202 mediation requirement at the end of Maui County's eviction moratorium that has led the state to expand a similar program to all unpaid rent related evictions across the state through Act 278. Nonetheless, this has further increased the need for our services.

Coupled with this increased demand for our services to deal with the ongoing traumas we have suffered in recent years, I have witnessed remarkable growth in the professionalism of our small but resilient office staff to handle client intake, scheduling, and staffing of our services with our pool of trained volunteer mediators.

Not only do we provide a much-needed and effective alternative to the high cost of litigation and relief from the crowded schedules of the Maui County Judiciary, but we offer a process to the parties who come to us that transforms their conflict by providing an affordable and understandable alternative for resolving their disputes; one that helps them to understand their conflict in ways that empower them to find their own solutions; solutions that all sides can live with; solutions that greatly reduce the risk of escalation and future litigation; and often the process itself helps the parties learn more productive ways to deal with further conflict between one another or with others.

In my over twenty-three years as a mediator, I have seen first-hand the enormous beneficial impact of community mediation programs in at least two different states and I have consulted with a number of program participants in other jurisdictions, as well. I know from my current position as its board president that Maui Mediation Services stands out as a model program, well-administered and staffed, currently with among the most modest of budgets. I know that we can do more with more funding – increase staffing, reduce scheduling delays, train more mediators to help more people find their way through the trauma of conflict, and provide even greater benefit to Maui County and its residents by helping them to deal productively with conflict and in doing so, saving the County and its residents even more hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in both seen and unseen costs.

It is with the utmost sincerity that I urge the Maui County Council to increase its ongoing financial support of this vital and cost-effective service to our community.

Sincerely yours,


Stanley Majka
Board President, Maui Mediation Services
(808) 740-5211

RECEIVED AT SOUTH MAUI BPED MEETING ON 4-14-2026

April 2, 2026

Letter of Support for Maui Mediation Services

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in strong support of Maui Mediation Services and to share why I choose to serve on its Board of Directors. Throughout my career working alongside Maui's children, families, and service providers, I have seen firsthand how conflict—when left unaddressed—can fracture relationships, strain workplaces, and deepen trauma. I have also seen how the right tools, guidance, and safe spaces can transform those same conflicts into opportunities for healing, clarity, and renewed trust.

I serve on the board because I believe deeply in the power of mediation to strengthen our community from the inside out. Maui Mediation Services provides something essential: a culturally grounded, neutral, and accessible way for people to resolve disputes with dignity. Whether the conflict is between coworkers, neighbors, family members, or organizations, mediation helps people move from tension to understanding, from frustration to solutions, and from division to shared responsibility.

In a small island community like ours—where relationships matter, where we depend on one another, and where the ripple effects of conflict can be felt for years—this work is not optional. It is foundational to community wellbeing. Mediation reduces stress in workplaces, supports healthier communication, prevents escalation, and helps people navigate difficult situations without causing further harm. It is, in every sense, a form of community wellness.

Maui Mediation Services also plays a critical role in supporting our service providers, nonprofits, and agencies. Those who care for our community often carry heavy emotional loads, and unresolved conflict can undermine their ability to serve effectively. By offering a safe, confidential, and restorative process, mediation strengthens teams, protects morale, and ensures that the people doing the hardest work in our community are supported, not strained.

I am proud to support an organization that embodies fairness, compassion, and respect. Maui Mediation Services helps us build a more resilient, connected, and emotionally healthy Maui—one conversation at a time.

Mahalo for recognizing the importance of this work and for supporting the continued growth of mediation services across our islands.

With respect, *Paul Tonnessen*

RECEIVED AT SOUTH MAUI MEETING ON 4-14-2026
BFED

April 6, 2026

To: Honorable Members of the Maui County Council

From: Diane Petropulos, M.A.
Board of Directors, Maui Mediation Services

I strongly support the funding request by Maui Mediation Services and our Executive Director Bevanne Bowers to enhance the impact of the various services we provide in Maui County.

As a Member of the MMS Board of Directors, I am familiar with our extensive mediation services provided at low-cost to people caught up in legal cases.

As the Lead Trainer for Maui Mediation Services, I personally train and prepare volunteers to conduct mediations both in court and at our agency. Many of our trained volunteers are the people mediating the pre-eviction cases called for in Act 278, allowing landlords and tenants to arrive at enforceable agreements resolving their cases.

We also serve the needs of people in domestic cases, especially by assisting them in developing parenting plans for children of divorcing parents.

Beyond mediations, MMS offers various trainings throughout our community related to Civility in the Workplace concepts, such as *Collaborative Techniques of Managing Workplace Conflict* and *De-escalation and Team Emotional Intelligence*.

MMS also provides facilitation services. For example, we assisted the Mayor's Office during Covid challenges by facilitating a meeting with 21 families concerned with the rules and expectations for their children while they were playing sports.

As the Vice Chair of the Mediation Centers of Hawai'i (MCH) organization, I represent Maui Mediation on their Board of Directors. Together with the other four Hawai'i community mediation centers, MCH participated in a Social Return On Investment study conducted in 2024, which showed that the total net economic impact of MCH services was valued at \$18,475,000 and that the Social Return On Investment was 1,592%! Maui Mediation contracted for a Maui-specific study of our services in Maui County. For every \$1.00 invested in Maui Mediation Services, the County received \$3.17 in benefits.

Mahalo for the opportunity to acquaint you with the many ways that Maui Mediation Services impacts and enhances our community, and how we will constructively utilize the funding you are considering.

RECEIVED AT SOUTH MAUI BPED MEETING ON 4-14-2026

Christi A. Keliikoa
10 Palaa Place
Wailuku, HI 96793

April 3, 2026

Yuki Lei Sugimura, Chair
Maui County Council
Budget, Finance, and Economic Development Committee

RE: Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Proposals

I am writing to express my strong support for the continued—and increased—funding of Maui Mediation Services in the upcoming fiscal year.

Maui Mediation Services plays a vital role in our community by providing accessible, effective conflict resolution services that help individuals, families, and organizations navigate disputes in a constructive and culturally respectful manner. Their work reduces the burden on our courts, strengthens relationships, and promotes long-term community stability. In a place like Maui, where relationships and community ties are deeply valued, these services are not just beneficial—they are essential.

Beyond the clear social impact, there is also a compelling economic case for continued investment. A recent Social Return on Investment (SROI) report has demonstrated that Maui Mediation Services delivers significant value to the community, generating measurable returns that far exceed the cost of funding. By preventing costly legal proceedings, reducing recidivism in disputes, and fostering early resolution, the organization saves public resources while producing meaningful, lasting outcomes for participants.

Given both the qualitative and quantitative benefits, this is not simply a matter of maintaining funding—it is an opportunity to expand impact. Increased funding in the upcoming fiscal year would allow Maui Mediation Services to broaden its reach, serve more residents, and continue innovating programs that address emerging community needs.

I respectfully urge you to prioritize and increase funding for Maui Mediation Services. This investment will continue to yield strong returns—socially, economically, and culturally—for our entire community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Me Ke Ha 'aha 'a,

Christi A. Keliikoa

Christi A. Keliikoa

From: Gregory Heath <chefbonz@lahainaspice.com>
Sent: Friday, April 10, 2026 12:44 PM
To: Miriamanne Kaauwai <mkaauwai@mauimmediation.org>
Subject: Re: Template for Testimony

Aloha!!

To those of you of Maui Mediation. I would like to take this time to thank you and especially for your staff member Miriamanne Kaauwai whose efficiency and compassion guided me through a process that I would not have taken.

Miriamanne gave me that trust and to know that Maui Mediation if taking that courage to step into their office and meeting people like Miriamanne giving me the confidence that I will not lose or get lost in the system. Also know that Maui Mediation works. With sincere gratefulness. Gregory Heath.

Sent from my iPhone

RECEIVED AT SOUTH MAUI MEETING ON 4-14-2026
BPED

Aloha,

My name is Dustin Paradis, and I am the Executive Director for The Marine Institute (MOCMI). Through this meeting, MOCMI is seeking council members that align with our initiatives and will support our interest in receiving county funding as a line item in the 2027 budget. I have reviewed the county budget, specifically EP&S, with council members and have found ample funding is allocated to organizations that work in similar a niche to MOCMI. We hope to join this list of organizations supported by Maui County.

The Marine Institute (MOCMI) is a 501c3 nonprofit with the mission to protect Maui's marine ecosystems by uniting science, community engagement, and education to restore ocean health and inspire lifelong stewardship. **Our programs include: sea turtle stranding response for Maui, sea turtle rehabilitation for all Hawai'i, coral reef restoration and research, Hawaiian Monk Seal shoreline education and data gathering, education and outreach, and will soon begin seabird rehabilitation for Maui.** Since 2020, we have: rescued over 1,400 sea turtles, rehabbed over 200 turtles, planted over 2,000 coral fragments, and educated thousands of individuals in marine conservation. Since October 2025, we have responded to over 200 monk seal calls. This work is supported and driven forward by our community based volunteers- in 2025 we had over 14,000 volunteer hours. **Our long term goal is to develop a marine science center to foster our marine conservation sector and provide jobs for our keiki that meaningfully give back to our community and island.**

MOCMI's efforts are in direct response to community outcry and governmental agency requests; this work directly fulfills statutory mandates for both our State and Federal governments that they are unable to achieve on their own.

- NOAA's Marine Turtle team requested us to take on rehab for all of Hawaii in 2020 due to their inability to satisfy the needs and lack of congressional funding to support it.
- NOAA's monk seal team asked us to take on Monk Seal work for Maui when the most recent organization holding this responsibility closed their Maui program due to budgetary shortfall; NOAA did not want to take the program back as their budget cannot support it
- State of Hawaii DOFAW and NGOs asked MOCMI if they would be willing to open our services to seabird rehab as Maui was the last island with no such facilities- DOFAW and other NGOs do not wish to take on this responsibility
- Sea turtle stranding response and coral restoration efforts blossomed by community grass roots efforts, community outcry, and lack of agency action

We view our work in service of our natural resources and community. Coral reefs in Hawaii are valued at over \$33 Billion - with coral bleaching and chronic local stressors, we are at risk of reef ecosystem collapse that would be catastrophic for our subsistence fisheries, erase animals that are central to cultural identity, and drastically impact our economy- our future as an island community would be fragile, at best.

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Federal funds to support our work are threatened due to the restructuring of funding allocation and funding priorities under this current administration. This elimination of federal funds, leads to increased competition among non-profits across the US further exasperating our financial fragility. In total, we receive a meager \$160,000 for both seals and turtles from NOAA annually; are nearing the closure of two NFWF awards for a total of \$240,000 over the last two years; are nearing the end of a NOAA coral grant for \$480,000 over three years. We only receive \$4,000 annually from the State of Hawai'i.

The closure of these awards position us with the stark reality of lay-offs around the corner. I, as the leader of MOCMI, am working diligently to fill these projected funding gaps through diversification of revenue streams and our grant portfolio, but replacing \$720,000 worth of funding is difficult, at best, in this funding climate. Not only is replacing this funding a challenge, talent retention with a limited budget is nearly impossible. Our team is made up of very passionate and talented individuals that choose this work to make a difference over enriching themselves in other sectors; MOCMI has been raising our staff salaries to aid in talent retention, staff quality of life, and organizational resiliency.

Maui County financial support would aid in the pursuit of our organizational mission, continue to build capacity to better serve our community, and provide financial stability for our organization. **Without these funds, it is uncertain whether or not we could continue to exist and achieve our current level of impact.**

With Maui County financial support we can improve our facility infrastructure, support our staff, acquire the essential supplies and equipment to continue to protect, restore, and preserve our treasured native animals. Considering the funds allocated to other organizations, we feel our request would be a cost effective approach when considering economies of scale.

Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 on the following page show our current & projected grant revenue; our full cost analysis for sustainable operations; our current costs for operation; and our request from Maui County.

Mahalo nunui for your consideration.

Dustin Paradis

Grant Revenue	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
NOAA Turtles	40,000	60000	60000	60000	?
NOAA Seals	0	100000	100000	100000	?
NOAA Corals	0	212000	154000	112000	?
NFWF Turtles	0	70000	0	?	?
NFWF Corals	0	102000	68000	0	?
State of Hawaii	4000	4000	4000	?	?
Baldwin Foundation	8000		0	0	?
Atherton Foundation	0	14000	0	0	?
Seabird Litigation Funds	0	170000	0	0	0
Total	52,000	732,000	386,000	272,000	0

Figure 1. Current and forecasted grant revenue by year

Category	Program Directors	Turtles	Corals	Seals	Education	Avian	Facilities	Total
Personnel	\$ 181,000.00	\$265,000	\$185,000	\$195,000	\$100,000	\$75,000	\$ -	\$ 1,001,000.00
Fringe	\$ 68,780.00	\$95,000	\$70,300	\$74,100	\$38,000	\$22,800	\$ -	\$ 368,980.00
Supplies	\$ 5,000.00	\$142,130	\$135,660	\$25,000	\$26,750	\$31,000	\$ -	\$ 365,540.00
Equipment	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00
Total Direct	\$ 254,780.00	\$ 502,130.00	\$ 390,960.00	\$ 294,100.00	\$ 164,750.00	\$ 128,800.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 1,835,520.00
MTDC	\$ 254,780.00	\$ 502,130.00	\$ 390,960.00	\$ 294,100.00	\$ 164,750.00	\$ 128,800.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 1,835,520.00
Indirect	\$ 25,478.00	\$ 50,213.00	\$ 39,096.00	\$ 29,410.00	\$ 16,475.00	\$ 12,880.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 183,552.00
Total Cost	\$ 280,258.00	\$ 552,343.00	\$ 430,056.00	\$ 323,510.00	\$ 181,225.00	\$ 141,680.00	\$ 110,000.00	\$ 2,019,072.00

Figure 2. Full cost analysis required for MOCMI operation

Category	Program Directors	Turtles	Corals	Seals	Education	Avian	Facilities	Total
Personnel	\$ 155,000.00	\$130,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$ 60,000.00	\$70,000	\$ -	\$ 535,000.00
Fringe	\$ 58,900.00	\$45,600	\$22,800	\$22,800	\$ 22,800.00	\$22,800	\$ -	\$ 195,700.00
Supplies	\$ 5,000.00	\$56,530	\$18,160	\$8,000	\$ -	\$21,000	\$ -	\$ 108,690.00
Equipment	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
Total Direct	\$ 218,900.00	\$ 232,130.00	\$ 100,960.00	\$ 90,800.00	\$ 82,800.00	\$ 113,800.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 889,390.00
MTDC	\$ 218,900.00	\$ 232,130.00	\$ 100,960.00	\$ 90,800.00	\$ 82,800.00	\$ 113,800.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 889,390.00
Indirect								
Total Cost	\$ 218,900.00	\$ 232,130.00	\$ 100,960.00	\$ 90,800.00	\$ 82,800.00	\$ 113,800.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 889,390.00

Figure 3. Current cost of MOCMI operations

Category	Program Directors	Turtles	Corals	Seals	Education	Avian	Facilities	Total
Personnel	\$ 50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 250,000.00
Fringe	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Supplies	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Equipment	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Direct	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 300,000.00
MTDC	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 250,000.00
Indirect								
Total Cost	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 300,000.00

Figure 4. Budget request for FY 2027



MARINE INSTITUTE
MAUI OCEAN CENTER



2025

Impact Report

An underwater photograph of a whale swimming upwards in deep blue water. The whale is positioned on the right side of the frame, moving from the bottom towards the surface. The water is a rich, dark blue, and the whale's body is illuminated from above, creating a shimmering effect on its skin. The whale's tail is visible at the top of the frame, and its head is near the bottom. The overall scene is serene and majestic.

OUR MISSION

To protect Maui's marine ecosystems by uniting science, community engagement, and education to restore ocean health and inspire lifelong stewardship.

© Don McLeish Photography

Cover photo: The location of our Olowalu restoration site, a culturally significant reef on Maui known for its ancient corals and its role in seeding reefs across Maui Nui.

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TO OUR COMMUNITY

As pressures on Maui's delicate marine ecosystems intensify, the Marine Institute at Maui Ocean Center (MOCMI) serves as a frontline guardian of Hawai'i's irreplaceable marine heritage.

We believe the ocean's health reflects our collective kuleana (responsibility), connecting scientific precision to the heart of the community. Our work honors the traditional ahupua'a system of land-sea management, recognizing that our stewardship actions—like beach cleanups and marine debris removal—are inseparably linked to the vitality of the surrounding reef and the living legacy of the sea.

MOCMI's mission is grounded in the cultural and ecological significance of the honu (sea turtles), 'Ilioholoikauaua (Hawaiian monk seals), and 'āko'ako'a (coral reefs) that define the Hawaiian Archipelago. To the people of Hawai'i, the honu symbolizes resilience and ancestral guardianship, while coral reefs—central to cultural identity—form the foundation of island biodiversity and coastal protection. Protecting these species and habitats preserves ecological heritage and strengthens the future stability of our nearshore waters.

In 2025, as the global ocean faced a convergence of climate-driven and industrial challenges, MOCMI advanced data-driven solutions to support the health of Maui's marine environment. This report highlights the broader realities shaping our oceans and the measurable outcomes of our programs, reflecting a continued shift from crisis response to long-term resilience.

None of this work happens in isolation. We extend our deepest gratitude to our community members, cultural practitioners, partners, sponsors, donors, and volunteers. Your support and commitment form the backbone of our work, making every rescue, restoration milestone, and educational touchpoint possible.

Mahalo nui loa for standing with us.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

This year we documented

309

sea turtle strandings
across multiple islands

Of these strandings

272 involved fishing gear

resulting in an **88%**
fishing gear interaction rate

104 had also ingested fishing line



307

were honu, or
Hawaiian green sea turtles
(*Chelonia mydas*)

2

were honu'ea, or
Hawaiian hawksbill turtles
(*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

Our Honu Hospital treated

28

long-term patients

The Hawaiian Monk Seal Hotline
received

355

calls about

Neomonachus schauinslandi
since the program launched in Q4

187

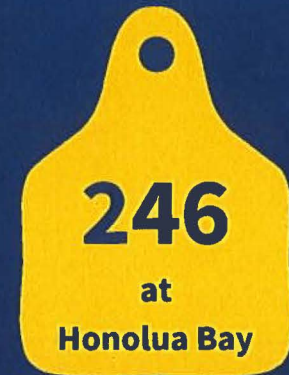
haul-out responses,
with

15

individually
identified
**Hawaiian
Monk Seals**



We outplanted
1,852
corals



- 164** *Pocillopora meandrina*
- 59** *Porites evermanni*
- 44** *Porites rus*
- 30** *Pavona duerdeni*
- 1** *Psammocora nierstraszi*



- 435** *Montipora capitata*
- 635** *Porites lobata*
- 194** *Montipora patula*
- 290** *Porites compressa*

Installed
31
fishing line
recycling bins

Educated over
2,900
students, community
members & visitors.

Activated
145
dedicated
volunteers

20,735
pieces of debris collected
totalling
40,500
kilograms of pollution

Powered by **people:**
13,661
volunteer hours logged
in support of our mission



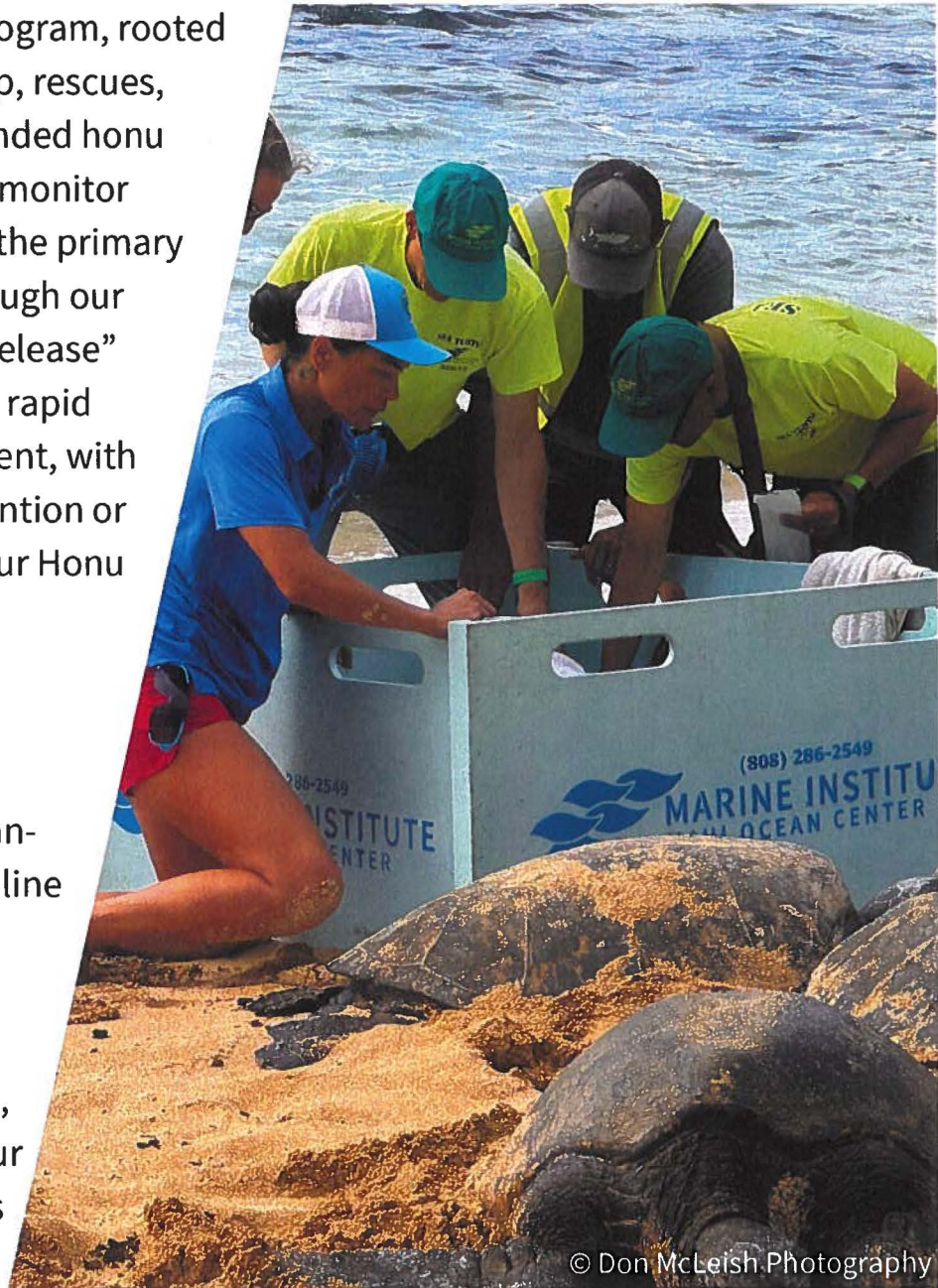
PROTECTED SPECIES PROGRAMS

SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION

IN 2025, OUR TEAM RESPONDED TO 309 STRANDED HONU, GIVING HAWAI‘I’S GREEN SEA TURTLES A SECOND CHANCE TO THRIVE.

The Sea Turtle Conservation Program, rooted in both science and stewardship, rescues, rehabilitates, and releases stranded honu while collecting critical data to monitor population health and identify the primary threats facing the species. Through our comprehensive “Response to Release” model, distressed honu receive rapid in-field assessment and treatment, with those requiring surgical intervention or long-term care transferred to our Honu Hospital.

The program remained at the forefront of local marine conservation, addressing human-induced threats such as fishing line entanglement and habitat degradation. With every rescue and release, we helped return honu safely to the ocean, while engaging and inspiring our community to protect Hawai‘i’s marine environment.



© Don McLeish Photography

- ➔ Stranded sea turtles are defined as any marine turtle found on land or in the water that is dead, injured, or exhibits any indication of ill health or abnormal behavior.

In-field Response

The in-field response serves as the vital first line of defense for Hawai‘i’s honu, relying heavily on the vigilance of our community. Residents and visitors act as our “eyes on the water,” calling our dedicated stranding hotline to report sick, injured, or distressed turtles. When a report is received, dispatchers and volunteers relay critical information to our trained responders, who are sent to locate the sea turtle.

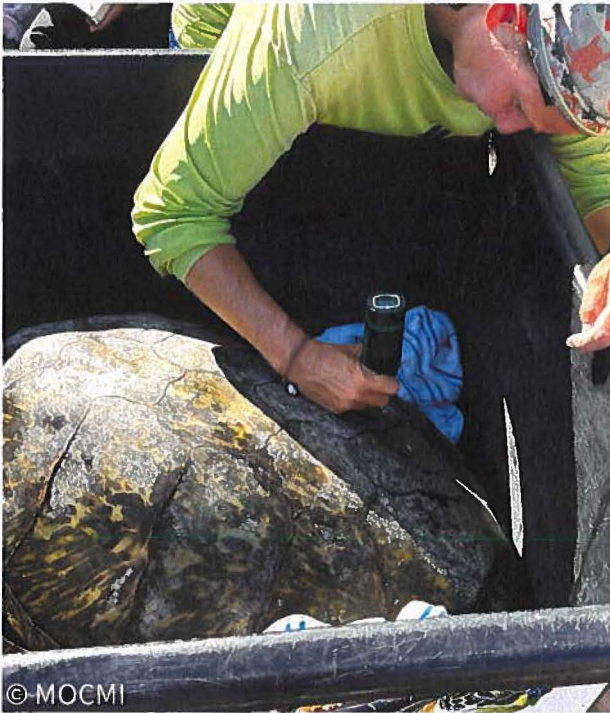


Once the honu is located, our team conducts a comprehensive assessment, recording measurements and photos to evaluate the turtle’s health. Responders also remove any fishing gear, such as lines or hooks, providing immediate relief.



Our team not only provides care to honu, but also educates the surrounding community. By explaining what happened and how it can be prevented, each rescue becomes an opportunity to turn awareness into action.

To support long-term monitoring, they check for identification and apply two types of markers: a Passive Integrative Transponder (PIT) tag in hind flippers and a motor-tool etching on the carapace (hard upper shell). These tools allow biologists to track each turtle over time, building a detailed history that informs future conservation strategies.



Motor-tooling is a painless technique in which a unique case number is carefully etched and filled with non-toxic paint.



Here we see MA497, a honu found entangled on February 23rd and again on March 2nd, highlighting the repeated risks sea turtles face.

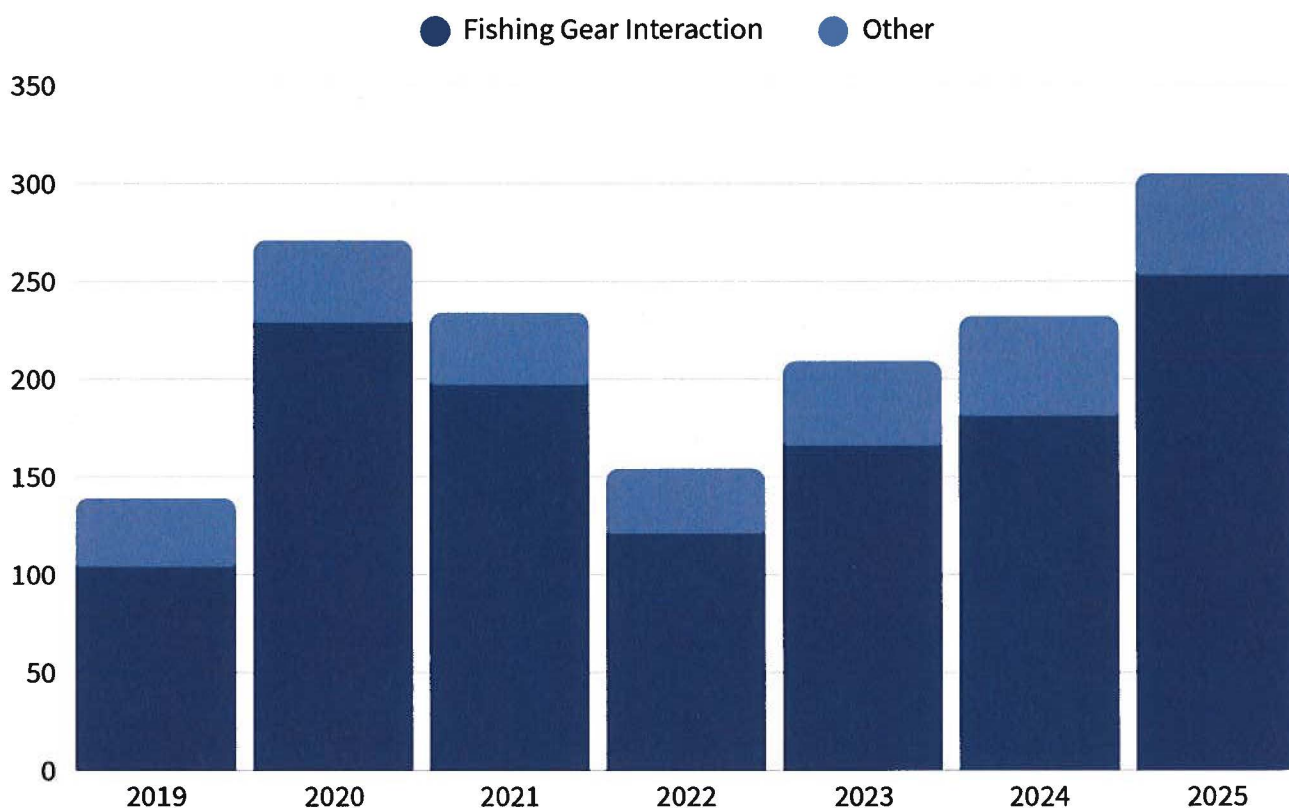
Once treatment is complete, the honu is released back into the ocean.



Stranding Data

The “Maui Strandings by Year” chart shows that 2025 marked a seven-year peak for documented honu strandings on the island, with a total of **305 individual cases** on Maui. This record high continues a notable upward trend, bringing the cumulative total to **1,544 documented strandings since 2019**.

Maui Strandings by Year



While the landscape of human–honu interaction is still obscure, the data point toward fishing gear interactions as the primary driver of this surge. In contrast, “Other” causes—including natural events and non-gear injuries—have remained relatively stable over the past seven years. The **more than twofold** increase in documented human-induced interactions since the program’s inception underscores a critical area for targeted conservation efforts and community engagement.

Strandings by Month

Honu strandings on Maui exhibited patterns consistent with seasonal variation, with peaks observed in March and April (**33 cases each**) and again in July (**40 cases**). The fewest strandings occurred in February, while activity during the rest of the year was relatively stable.

While these patterns suggest seasonal influences, the underlying drivers warrant further investigation. Looking forward, the program aims to continue analyzing these trends to explore possible correlations with fishing seasons, weather conditions, and other environmental factors.



Strandings by Cause



Analysis of documented strandings across MOCMI cases (**309** honu, totaling **333** stranding causes) revealed that human-induced interactions were the primary driver, with **272 turtles (88% of cases)** affected by fishing gear. Entrapment and natural factors, such as predation, disease, or unknown causes, were far less common.

Upon examination, **104** were also found to have ingested fishing line, compounding the impact of gear interactions.

Honu Hospital Rehabilitation

Honu requiring surgical intervention or long-term treatment were transferred to our Honu Hospital for intensive care. In 2025 alone, we managed **28 critical cases** across the islands, the majority originating from Maui.



Upon intake, each patient underwent a comprehensive medical evaluation, including blood collection to assess packed cell volume (PCV), total solids, and chemistry panels.



Treatment plans

Patients received comprehensive medical care, including topical wound treatment, antibiotics, therapeutic massage for edema, and super pulsed cold laser therapy, beginning with blue light and then adding red and infrared wavelengths after 24 hours.



Surgical Intervention

Line entanglement can become especially dangerous when the fishing line wraps tightly around a turtle's neck or flipper, a condition known as strangulation. This can restrict movement and blood flow, causing severe injury.



“Rosie” (MA612), like many honu affected by strangulation, required surgical amputation to improve her chances of survival.



Rehabilitation pools of varying sizes give turtles space to swim safely while they recover, allowing staff to observe their behavior and progress

Patients required an **average of 25.6 days in care**, with entanglement cases resulting in longer and more resource-intensive recovery periods.



HAWAIIAN MONK SEAL RESPONSE

SINCE ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROGRAM IN OCTOBER 2025, WE HAVE RECEIVED 355 HAWAIIAN MONK SEAL HOTLINE CALLS.

Expanding our role in protected species stewardship, we assumed responsibility for the Hawaiian monk seal response program in October 2025 to support the protection and recovery of *Neomonachus schauinslandi*. The program is grounded in science, community partnership, and field-based conservation, helping monitor population health and address threats facing this endangered marine mammal.

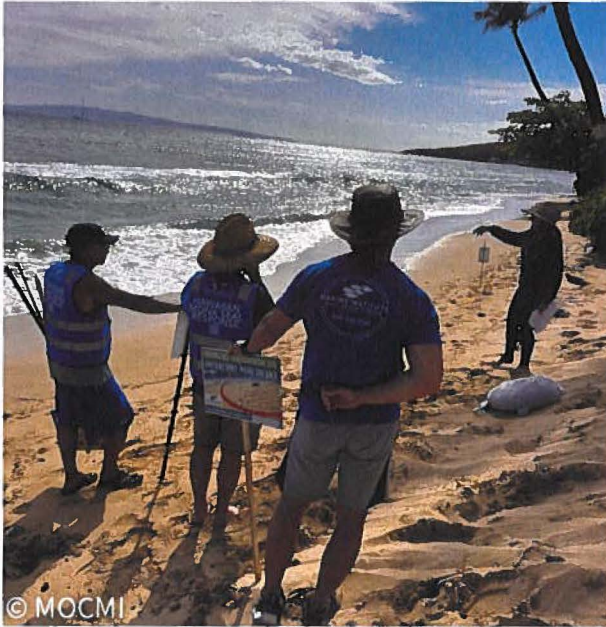
Community members and visitors play a vital role by reporting monk seal sightings to our dedicated hotline. MOCMI then dispatches trained volunteers and staff to assess seal condition, collect health and movement data, and promote safe coexistence along Maui's shorelines.



- ➔ Trained responders establish a safe perimeter around seals and provide on-site monitoring and public education.

Early Impact

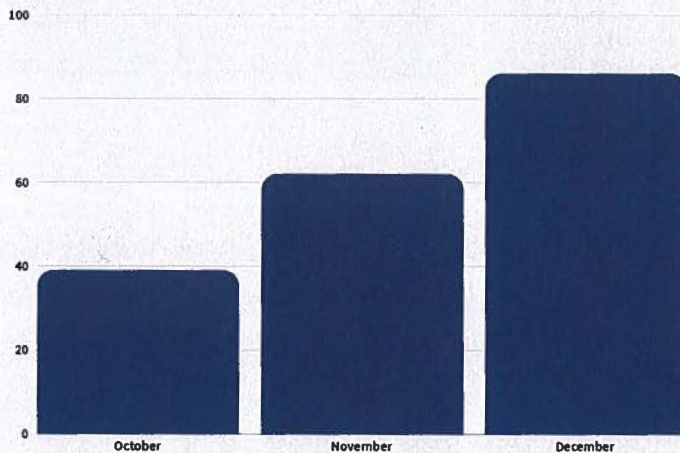
The program provided dedicated oversight for critical biological events, such as the molting periods for seals **R404** and **R1KT** between late November and mid-December.



33 responders received training on monk seal biology, dispatch and response protocols.



Volunteers contributed **887 hours** to response, monitoring, public education and community outreach.



During the first three months of the program, staff and volunteers completed **187 in-field responses**, conducting assessments and providing on-site monitoring to help protect monk seals around the island of Maui.



REEF RESTORATION

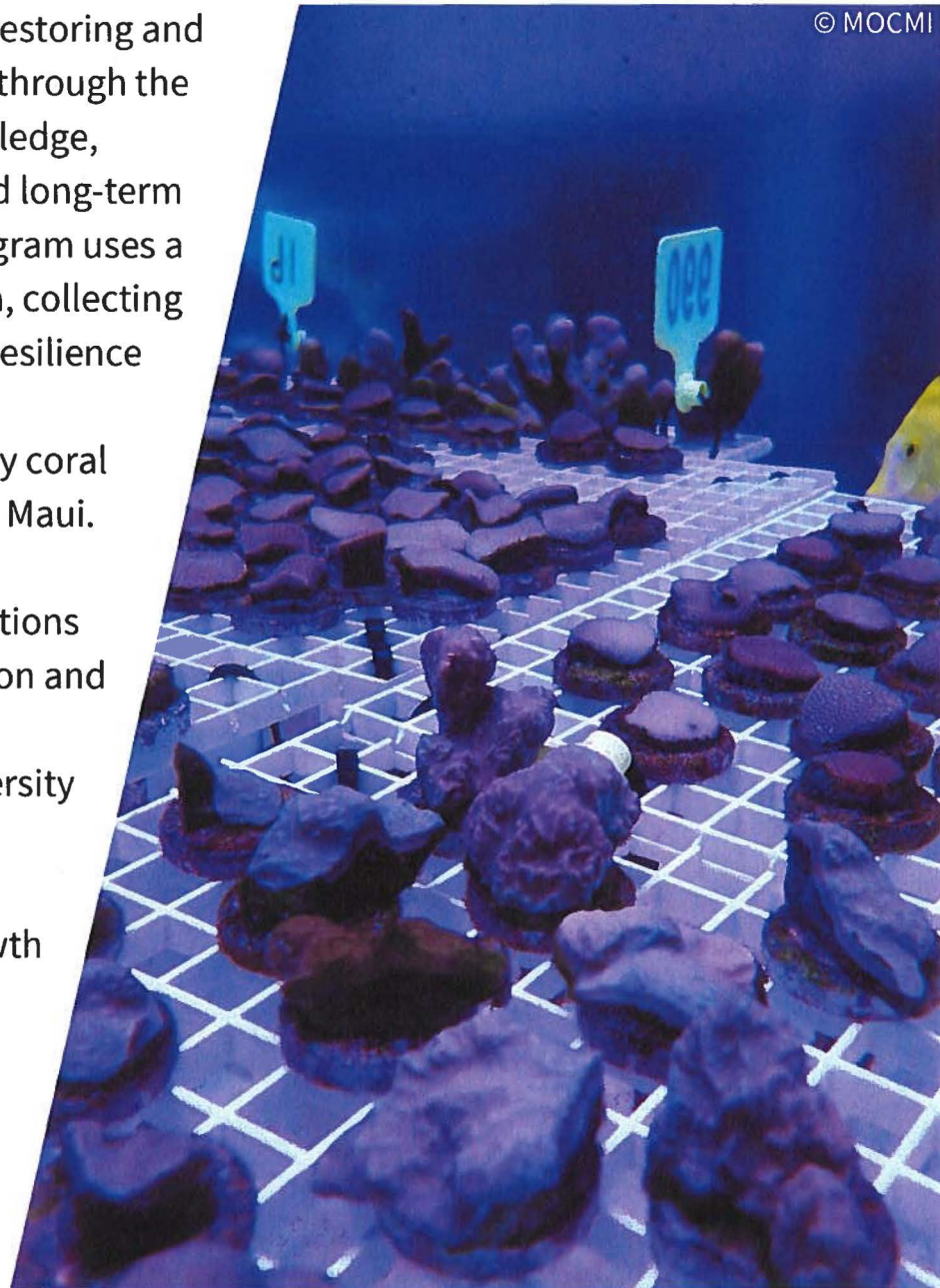
CORAL CONSERVATION

IN THE PAST YEAR, WE HAVE CARED FOR AND OUTPLANTED A TOTAL OF 1,852 HAWAIIAN CORALS, ACROSS 9 DIFFERENT SPECIES.

Coral conservation focuses on restoring and strengthening reef ecosystems through the integration of Indigenous knowledge, science-based propagation, and long-term ecological monitoring. The program uses a corals-of-opportunity approach, collecting fragmented corals for thermal resilience evaluation and propagation in our land-based nursery, the only coral husbandry facility of its kind on Maui.

These controlled nursery operations support coral growth observation and community-driven restoration preparation, promoting biodiversity and ecosystem health.

Following assessment and growth monitoring, colonies are strategically outplanted to suitable reef environments, helping to strengthen reef resilience under changing environmental conditions.



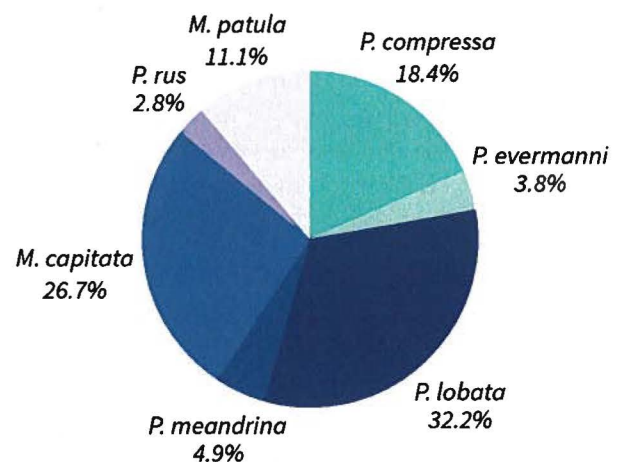
- ➔ Restoration work is conducted using “corals of opportunity,” which are naturally fragmented or dislodged corals collected for propagation and eventual return to the reef when conditions are suitable.

Olowalu Reef



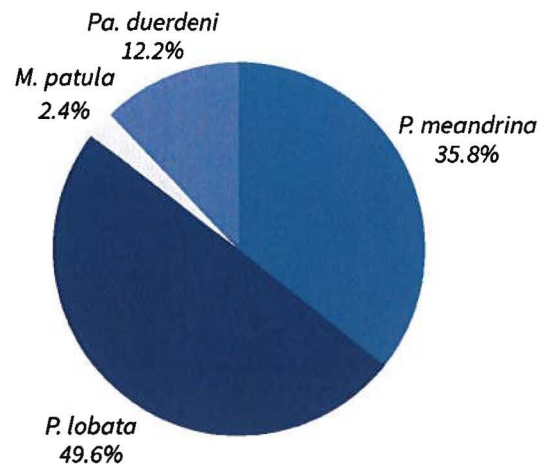
Restoration efforts at the Olowalu Reef focus on protecting what is recognized as the “Mother Reef” of Maui Nui, supporting larval connectivity for surrounding islands. In 2025, **1,552 corals** were outplanted at this site, representing **seven native Hawaiian coral species**, including major reef-builders such as *Porites lobata* and *Montipora capitata*.

This work is conducted in partnership with the Division of Aquatic Resources and supports the NOAA Ruth D. Gates Coral Restoration Innovation Grant and the Climate-Wise Coral Restoration initiative. Collaborating partners include the Coral Resilience Lab, Kuleana Coral Restoration, and the Restore with Resilience network.



Honolua Bay

This project was initiated as a compensatory restoration effort following the grounding of the vessel *Nakoa*, which caused significant damage to this culturally and ecologically important reef. Conducted in coordination with the Division of Aquatic Resources and the Maui Ocean Center, the work focused on restoring reef areas adjacent to the impact site to offset habitat loss and support long-term ecosystem recovery.



A total of **246 corals** were outplanted at the site in 2025, representing **four native Hawaiian species**: *Porites lobata*, *Pocillopora meandrina*, *Montipora patula*, and *Pavona duerdeni*. This unfunded initiative reflects a commitment to restoring reef structure, biodiversity, and ecological function in one of Maui’s most treasured bays, and aids in assessing natural habitat recovery after acute disturbance.

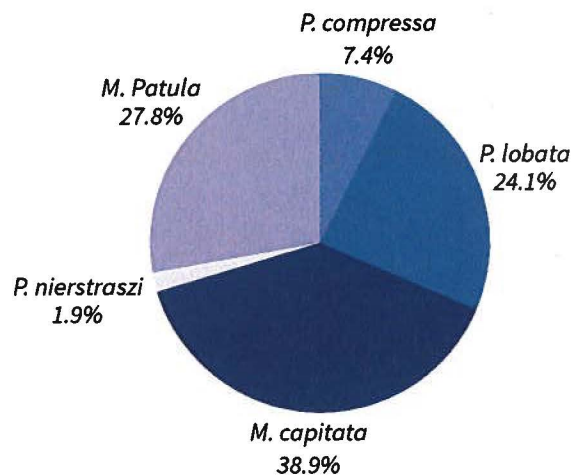


Z-Blocks



The Z-Blocks Initiative is a pilot project designed to test innovative approaches to reef recovery in degraded environments. Implemented at Kewakapu, the effort evaluates whether concrete-based “grey” infrastructure can serve as stable foundations for coral growth, helping establish hybrid reef systems that blend engineered structures with living coral colonies.

In total, **54 corals** were outplanted and monitored at this site in 2025, representing **five native Hawaiian species**. Developed in collaboration with the Division of Aquatic Resources, this unfunded research initiative expands the scientific toolkit for scalable, structural reef restoration in Hawai‘i.





EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

IN 2025, THE MARINE INSTITUTE ENGAGED OVER 2,900 STUDENTS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND VISITORS.

Conservation education remained central to our mission, integrating science, restoration, and hands-on learning to inspire environmental stewardship. Participants explored marine ecosystem science, species biology, and the human activities that influence coastal and ocean health across Maui.

Students, community members, and visitors engaged in experiential learning activities including in-water observation, restoration projects, and practical instruction on reducing human impacts on marine environments.

These efforts extended across school partnerships, community programs, professional training opportunities, and public tours, helping foster the next generation of ocean stewards while strengthening conservation awareness throughout Hawai'i.



➔ Conservation education programs are designed to promote science-based, respectful, and responsible interaction with marine ecosystems across Maui.

Community and Public Engagement

Throughout the year, we provide meaningful, hands-on opportunities for the community and visitors to actively support marine conservation across Maui. These events help increase public awareness of restoration processes while fostering community stewardship of reef resources.

Hana Puko‘a ("Working Together for Coral")

Community volunteers support restoration by tagging coral colonies and preparing plugs used in thermal resilience testing and outplanting.



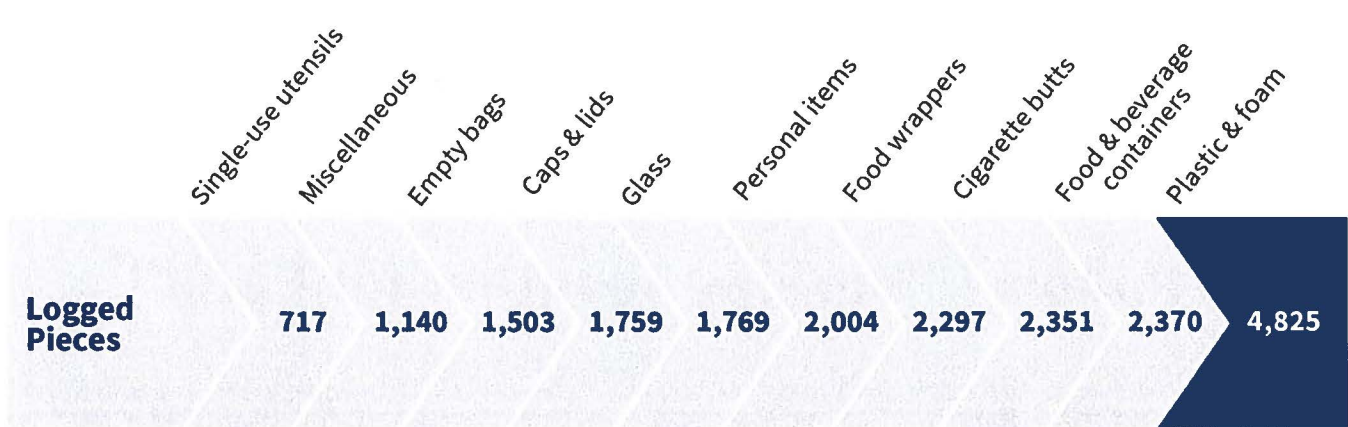
Coral biopsies are collected to help identify corals with higher relative tolerance to changing ocean temperatures.



Cutting corals into smaller fragments triggers a natural healing response, encouraging accelerated tissue growth.

Honu Hero Cleanups

Honu Hero Cleanup participants collected **20,735 pieces of debris**, directly reducing entanglement and ingestion risks for marine life.



Fishing Line Recycling Program

To provide an accessible solution for recreational fishers to properly dispose of used line, over **30 recycling bins** with educational signage were installed in high-traffic areas. By keeping discarded line out of the ocean, these bins help reduce entanglement risks for Hawai‘i’s marine life.

Educational Programs

MOCMI collaborated with several local and visiting student groups to provide curriculum-based marine science conservation experiences.

Kamehameha Schools



FLRP Collection

Partnering through our FLRP, students documented debris by weighing and photographing materials, helping build a database to track bin use and effectiveness. Monofilament fishing line, which can take centuries to break down, is recycled through conservation partners.



Students learned about green sea turtle biology, anatomy, and rehabilitation, including how veterinary tools and treatments support the recovery of injured honu. They also explored coral reef ecology, examining coral polyp anatomy, symbiotic algae, water quality testing, and the hands on techniques used to maintain healthy corals for restoration back into the ocean.

Travel for Teens & West Coast Connections

These visiting student groups participated in field-based surveys at locations such as Kahekili and Makena Landing, learning to identify gender in Green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and observing proper interaction protocols



Practical field training supports search, rescue, and wellness monitoring for honu conservation.



Understanding entanglement response techniques helps protect sea turtles from debris hazards.

Seabury Hall

This program engaged students in on-site sea turtle husbandry and coastal cleanups, alongside lessons on coral anatomy and wetland filtration at the Kealia boardwalk.





OUR 'OHANA

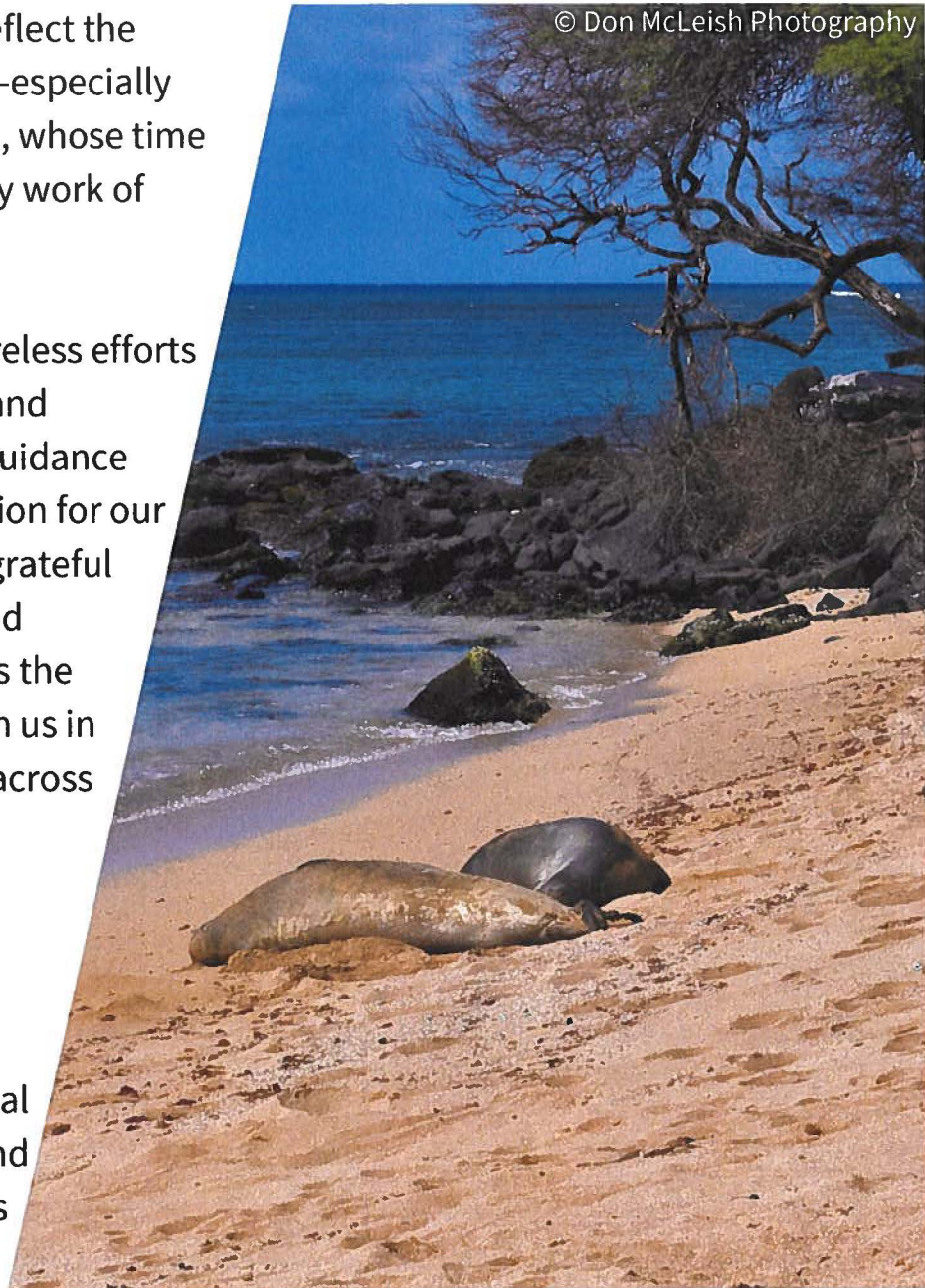
MAHALO TO YOU

THE TRUE FORCE BEHIND OUR 2025 SUCCESS IS OUR ‘OHANA—FROM OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS, FOUNDER CIRCLE MEMBERS, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AND STAFF.

The achievements of this year reflect the strength of our broader ‘ohana—especially the dedication of our volunteers, whose time and energy help sustain the daily work of conservation.

This work is supported by the tireless efforts of our staff, Board of Directors, and leadership community, whose guidance and service provide the foundation for our operations. We are also deeply grateful to our scientific, educational, and conservation partners, as well as the students and educators who join us in advancing marine stewardship across Hawai‘i.

Together, this collective ‘ohana transforms conservation from a series of projects into a shared community mission. Every animal cared for, every reef restored, and every young person inspired this year reflects your dedication.



© Don McLeish Photography

➔ The 13,661 hours donated by our volunteer Ohana in 2025 is the equivalent of a single person working full-time for over 6.5 years solely to safeguard Maui's marine resources.

Our Partners

By bridging the gap between world-class research institutions and government agencies, our partners provide the essential expertise and collaborative support needed to execute complex, large-scale restoration projects across Maui's shorelines.

Mahalo for your support



Founder's Circle

The foundational commitment of our **nine Founder's Circle members** in 2025 provides the long-term stability and visionary support necessary for the Marine Institute to remain a permanent guardian of Maui's marine heritage.

Katie Cleary, Peace 4 Animals

Tom Morton

Victor and Dianne Anderson

Dr. Kathryn Walder

Christina S. and Michael C.

Thomas and Julia Schall

Kate and Tom Marieb

Ted Bohlen

Suparna Vashisht

Board of Directors

The strategic leadership and governance of our **seven board members** ensure that our programs remain focused, impactful, and ready to meet the evolving environmental challenges facing our island's ecosystem.



John Carlstroem

Board Member



Darla White

Board Member



Vicky Priest

Board Member



Regine Lang-Miles

Board Member



Alisha Shanti Chauhan

Board Member

Tapani Vuori

President

Jacob Simons

Treasurer

Volunteers

Our **145 active volunteers** served as the heartbeat of our organization, contributing an incredible **13,661 hours** in 2025 to monitor monk seals, restore coral reefs, and provide response and rehabilitation care for injured sea turtles.

Alex Aguilar, Jean Augustowski, Shannon Barber-Meyer, Tom Barry, Melissa Beers, Larry Boysen, Mark Brewer, Julie Brooks, Robert Bruck, Shawn Caley, Jolie Call, Sue Canfield, Lissette Cantu, Pedro Cantu, Magdalena Carey, Sheryl Carter, Meryl Cohen, Cindy Coker, Peter Conmy, TJ Craig, Crystal Darling Green, Mark Deakos, Derek DeCrausaz, Kristen DeCrausaz, Lori Dela Cruz, Tim Dick, Jennifer Donaldson, Jan Elliott, Kimberly England, Alan Espiritu, Kathleen Flanders, Angie Flores, Lorrie Francis-Profio, Karen Frangos, Cherri Gallison, Dave Gallison, John Gladding, Benjamin Gobel, Ashley Gonzalez, Isaiah Gordon III, Joseph Gray, Theresa Greek, John Grimes, Maegan Grimes, Katrina Guiry, Steven Guo, Peggy Hansen, Cynthia Harbert, Jin Harlow, Brandon Harris, Michelle Harris, Grover Hatcher, Brooke Hayes, Greg Helton, Peyton Hoge, Sharon Holmes, Cathy Ibach, Steve Ibach, Louis Jarvis, Debby Johnson, Terry Joseph, Chancey Juska, Brandon Kagrise, Robin Kaiser, Scott Kelman, Wendy Kelman, Cheryl King, Jason Kline, Twyla Kline, Jennifer Kogan, Karen Krenz, Regine Lang-Miles, Amanda Larson, Laura Legge, Caroline Long, Kate Lynch, Jeanette MacNaughton, Chaston Marcos, Kate Marieb, Julia Marshall, Alexandra Martella, Marco Martella, Teri Masters, Travis Matteson, Mike McKenna, Don McLeish, Jessica Merrill, Doug Metzger, Jonelle Metzger, Patricia Moore, Brittany (Brie) Morrissette, Jonathan Nellis, Rose Nellis, Mercedes Obregon, Audrey O'Donnell, Jodi Orosz, Izabelle Palmore, Barbara Payne, Karen Perich, Tyler Petrucci, Susan Pirsch, Nolan Quinn, Benjamin Rachunas, Cynthia Reeves, Alice Rietveld, Jo-Anne Rively, Katrina Rodenberger, Steve Roe, Samantha Rose, Mar Rossi, Jamie Ryerson, Soiren Santiago, Emily Schattenburg, Tessa Schuckert, Jane Schumacher, Katie Sheppard, Kyra Sidon, Ellen Smolka, Carl Snyder, Liz Stahl, Larry Stevens, Josh Switzer, Melanie Terrazas-Lopez, Rob Treese, Derrick Valdez, Amy Van Wuffen, Gary Van Wuffen, Donna VanStralen, Suparna Vashisht, Tanner Vaughn, Mateo Vittar, Lani Wagner, Mark Webb, Bruce Weyermann, Darla White, Whitney White, Angela Wiebe, Quinlan Wilson, Jon Wimber, Julie Wimber, Anita Wintner, Stuart Wolf, Tom Wolf, 'Nia' Xytakis, and Anna Zagora.

Staff

Managing everything from the island's only land-based coral nursery to a rapid-response network, our **13 dedicated staff members** provide the professional expertise and tireless dedication that drive our organization.



Dr. Paul McCurdy
Veterinarian



Dustin Paradis
Executive Director



Larissa Treese
Director of Operations



Holly Robilliard
Marketing Manager



Ylenia Mayen-St-Louis
Coral Technician



River Cummings
Sea Turtle Technician



Darby Ryon
Conservation
Programs Technician

Brie Morrissette
Coral Technician



Petra Bertilsson
Hawaiian Monk Seal
Program Manager

Carli Barnes
Conservation
Technician

Josh Switzer
Data & Technology
Specialist

Jonelle Anderson
Volunteer
Coordinator

Lucia McKinnon
Seasonal Education
Specialist



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Agenda Item: BFED-1 – Proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget for the County of Maui

Chair Sugimura and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget for the County of Maui.

I submit this testimony in opposition to the budget as currently structured. My concerns are not simply about the size of the budget itself, but about what the budget reveals regarding the direction, priorities, and performance of county government at a time when many residents feel the conditions of daily life on Maui are not improving.

The proposed county budget totals approximately **\$1.6 billion for a county of roughly 165,000 residents**. In practical terms, that equates to roughly **\$10,000 per resident per year flowing through county government**. When government operates at that scale, residents reasonably expect to see meaningful improvements in the fundamental systems that support life on this island.

Instead, many residents feel the opposite is occurring.

Housing remains out of reach for many local families. The cost of living continues to rise. Infrastructure failures during major storms have exposed weaknesses in drainage systems, roads, and water systems. Employers regularly report difficulty finding a trained and reliable workforce. Communities across the island continue to struggle with homelessness, drug abuse, and property crime.

These are not abstract policy discussions. These are conditions that residents experience every day.

It is also important to recognize that Maui has experienced extraordinary challenges in a very short period of time. The island endured the pandemic, devastating wildfires, repeated flooding events, economic instability in tourism, and workforce disruption across nearly every sector.

During times like these, residents expect government to become more focused, more disciplined, and more responsive to the systems that support community stability.

Yet the structure of this budget suggests the opposite.

Nearly **\$390 million is categorized as “countywide costs,”** representing the internal cost of maintaining the government system itself. The budget also spreads hundreds of millions of dollars across special funds, revolving accounts, and restricted programs that make the financial structure increasingly complicated and difficult for the public to understand.

Even more concerning, recent committee discussions revealed that the administration is proposing **more than ninety new county positions while roughly ninety positions are already vacant**, and the County is carrying **well over \$170 million in unused funds**.

When residents see those numbers, a simple question arises: if government cannot fill the positions it already has and is sitting on that much unspent money, why is the solution to expand government further?

This raises a deeper structural question about how the County evaluates its own performance.

If the goal is to determine whether this budget is functioning effectively, it can be evaluated using three basic tests.

The Staffing Reality Test.

A responsible government fills the positions it already has before expanding the workforce. Proposing dozens of new positions while existing positions remain vacant suggests the government is attempting to grow before it can manage the staff it already has.

The Unused Money Test.

Government should not expand spending while large amounts of public money remain unused. When the County holds well over \$100 million in carryover funds while proposing budget growth, it raises serious questions about financial discipline and resource management.

The Outcome Test.

Residents measure success by outcomes, not by the size of government spending. When a county budget reaches roughly \$1.6 billion, the public expects measurable improvements in housing availability, infrastructure reliability, public safety, emergency preparedness, and economic stability. Yet many of these conditions remain strained.

Another issue that deserves attention is the policy discussion about “**devaluing real estate**” as a strategy for improving housing affordability.

On paper, that argument appears simple: if housing prices fall, homes become easier to afford. But on Maui the reality is far more complex.

Real estate forms the foundation of the island’s economy and tax base. Property taxes represent the largest single source of county revenue. Tourism investment, construction activity, lending, small business development, and retirement savings are all connected to the value of land and property.

When policymakers discuss intentionally reducing property values, they are effectively discussing weakening the primary economic engine that supports the county government itself.

If property values were destabilized, several consequences could follow. County tax revenue could decline. Homeowners could lose equity. Banks could tighten lending standards. Investment

in housing construction could slow. The ripple effects could move through the entire island economy.

The housing challenge on Maui is not simply about land availability. It is about **execution capacity**.

Limited water infrastructure, aging wastewater systems, road capacity constraints, permitting delays, financing uncertainty, and shortages of skilled construction labor all affect the ability to build housing. When these systems stall, housing projects already in the pipeline remain unfinished for years.

For that reason, increasing housing supply on Maui does not necessarily mean expanding development into new land areas or dramatically increasing density across the island.

Instead, it means **delivering the projects that already exist in the pipeline**.

A county budget focused on infrastructure investment and permitting efficiency could move many of these projects forward.

The County cannot manufacture new land, and it must respect the island's environmental limits. What it can do is prioritize the infrastructure and administrative capacity needed to move housing projects from planning to completion.

Maui is not a mainland city. It is an island community with physical limits, environmental risks, and a fragile economic balance. Government policy and budgeting should reflect that reality.

The County's primary focus should be on the systems that keep the island functioning:

- reliable water infrastructure
- safe roads and drainage systems
- wildfire preparedness and disaster resilience
- housing delivery supported by infrastructure and efficient permitting
- public safety and properly staffed emergency services
- a functioning local economy that allows families to remain on the island

Instead, year after year residents see budgets that grow larger while the conditions that matter most to daily life remain largely unchanged.

Looking back at the last three county budgets, many residents would struggle to identify meaningful improvements delivered to the people of this island.

Government spending has increased, but the results experienced by residents have not kept pace.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Council:

- conduct a detailed review of countywide administrative costs and identify opportunities to reduce overhead
- reconsider adding new positions while existing positions remain vacant
- prioritize capital spending that directly supports infrastructure, housing delivery, and disaster resilience
- review the use of carryover funds and determine whether some should be redirected toward infrastructure priorities or returned to taxpayers through relief
- ensure that budget decisions strengthen the long-term economic stability of Maui rather than destabilize the island's primary economic sectors

This leads to two direct questions.

If the County of Maui is effectively spending about **\$10,000 per resident every year**, where exactly are residents seeing \$10,000 worth of measurable improvements in their daily lives?

And equally important:

After the pandemic, after the fires, after the flooding, and after years of rising costs of living, **how does this budget fundamentally change the trajectory of life on Maui for the people who actually live here?**

Until those questions can be answered clearly, expanding the size of government should not be the default response.

The size of a government budget should not be the measure of success.
The measure should be whether life on Maui is actually improving.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Edward Codelia
Maui Resident