



- Auwahi is one of Hawai'i's last best sanctuary forests, protecting more native tree species than any other forest type in Maui County. Many of these are found nowhere else in the world and have deep importance to the Hawaiian culture. By the 1980s, Auwahi forest was in a state of complete disarray when a grass roots effort came together to save this one-of-a-kind forest. Today, largely because of Maui's volunteering public, Auwahi has in many senses been reborn and regained its status as a biosanctuary, a *wahipana* ('storied place'). In restoring Auwahi forest, the people of Maui have themselves been changed with many values in the community 'restored' with the effort at Auwahi.

New Zealand conservation guru John Innes after touring Auwahi proclaimed the mixing of people, forest, and culture at Auwahi, 'a model' and 'hope for the whole world.'

- The Auwahi project was one of Hawai'i's first environmental groups to extensively engage community volunteers and remains one of the largest environmental volunteer programs in the state. Over the past 23 years, the Auwahivolunteer trips have run at full capacity, engaged over 3,000 Maui residents and visitors. At Auwahi forest volunteers have planted more than 133,000 seedlings of 42 native forest species. These trips have become significant community events increasing interest in watershed forests, the Hawaiian culture, and community efforts to perpetuate them (www.facebook.com/auwahiforestrestoration and [@auwahi_forest on Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/auwahi_forest)).

Restored forest tracts in Auwahi are 'living classrooms', the closest on leeward Haleakalā to the pre-1700s landscapes in which early Hawaiians lived. Public participation in watershed forest restoration offers powerful outreach and high-impact environmental education where the

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human community is reconnected to Maui's forests. Making the community *kama'aina* (aware) not only of Hawaiian plant names but their place in the ecological world and their cultural practices (ethnobotany) creates a sense of *kuleana* (responsibility) within the community to care for native watershed forest.

- Maui County Department of Water Supply funds were augmented in 2019, when the Auwahi project partnered with award winning globally known musician Paul Simon to help create one of the largest environmental fundraising events in the history of the Hawaiian Islands here at the Maui Cultural and Arts Center. The two Maui concerts received global exposure (76 articles online, including 45 newspaper articles in 23 US states) and attracted hundreds of visitors to Maui. The concerts highlighted the need to steward Maui's watersheds and generated a few thousand dollars directly applied to environmental causes with some estimates at \$3-5 million in associated generated income for the island and its businesses. This is the type of fundraising that helps everyone move our goals forward as a community. Paul Simon's support of Auwahi forest has continued to develop ecotourism opportunities for the Auwahi project with a substantial increase of requests now coming from out of state visitors.
- In recent years, the Auwahi project has become one of the most important groups on Maui providing watershed-based education in the forest and at community events and celebrations.

Besides volunteer trips to the forest, since 2018, the Auwahi project has provided information to over 28,000 residents and visitors at 28 educational outreach events. Information was provided about the details of Maui's watersheds, ecological restoration, the beneficial effects of restoration on hydrology, and its significance to past and future generations.

- In 2019-2020, the Auwahi project, with support from Maui County's Office of Economic Development, is partnering with acclaimed, award-winning international film maker Jill Rose, to create and release a broadcast-quality film telling the story of Hawai'i's evolution, its loss of native watersheds and the efforts being made to reverse that deforestation focusing on Auwahi. The 20-minute animation will likely tour film festivals globally, again bringing attention to the importance of community support in Maui's efforts to protect her watersheds, an issue with increasing global significance.

