



DEPARTMENT OF WATER SUPPLY



**WATERSHED
PROTECTION
GRANT PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2026**



Photos: Courtesy PKW



The Purpose of the DWS Watershed Protection Grant Program

- Forested watersheds face invasive threats that reduce their ability to provide ecosystem services essential for groundwater recharge and streamflow that sustain water supplies.
- Feral ungulates (hogs, deer, cows, goats) damage forests by uprooting and trampling vegetation, destabilizing soil and increasing erosion.
- Non-native plants compete for space and resources, disrupting native forest ecosystems that capture rain and fog drip to replenish upper watershed soils.
- Watershed grantees manage fencing and control feral ungulates to protect critical upper watersheds.
- Watershed grantees are helping to reduce fire risk by creating defensible spaces in the WUI between upper watershed areas and communities.



Acacia exigua (Lilikoi) Photo: H. Oppenheimer



Selection Process

Public Request for Proposal (RFP)

Grants analysis committee evaluation

General considerations

- Detailed proposal with goals, coordination, and watershed protection management plan
- Qualified applicants to justify expenditures for watershed protection to foster water source recharge
- Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) mitigation strategies to help prevent destructive wildfire threats

Groundwater recharge & stream headwaters protected

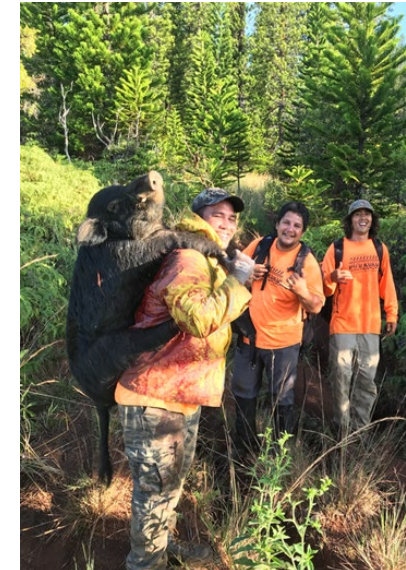
Flora and fauna recovery

Forest resilient to climate change

Collaborative work w/ partners & adjacent landowners

Community engagement

Leveraged resources




Anatomy of a Native Hawaiian Forest

Tall trees like koa and 'ohi'a catch rain, letting it *drip down slowly*, which protects against erosion.

A *variety* of ferns, herbs and mosses create a humid environment that increases water absorption & retention.

A subcanopy with *multiple layers* of shorter trees and shrubs collect water from rain and fog.

from forest  **to faucet**

The layers of the native Hawaiian forest act like a giant sponge, slowing down heavy raindrops and soaking up water for release into underground aquifers and streams.

The Native Hawaiian Forest — the best water capture system ever made!

Images modified from photographs by Jack Jeffrey, Eric Nishiyoshi and Dave Outenberg





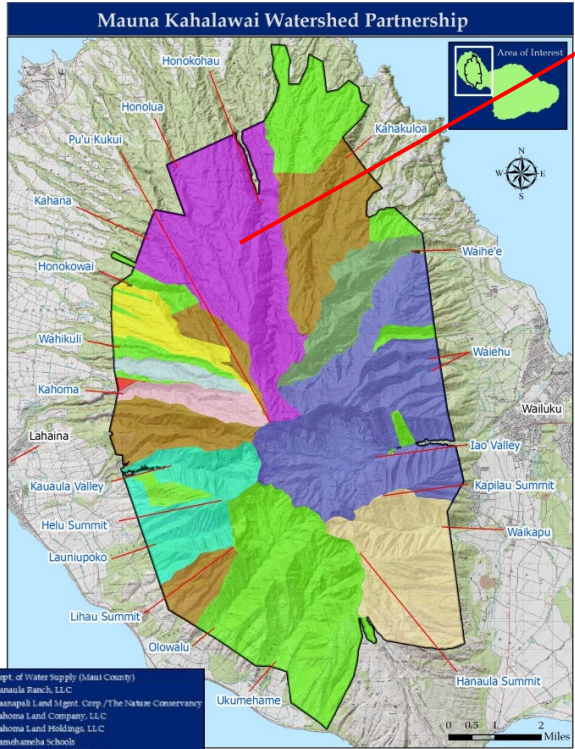
FY 2026 Watershed Protection Grantees

1. East Maui Watershed Partnership (EMWP – UH)
2. Pu’u Kukui Watershed Preserve (PKW – Aloha Pu’u Kukui)
3. Waikamoi Source Protection and Watershed Preserve Management – The Nature Conservancy (Waikamoi – TNC)
4. Honokowai and Wahikuli Source Protection (Kapunakea – TNC)
5. East Moloka’i Watershed Partnership (EMoWP – TNC)
6. Mauna Kahalawai Watershed Partnership (MKWP – UH)
7. Auwahi Forest Restoration Project (AFRP)
8. Miconia/Invasive Species Containment Project – Maui Invasive Species Committee (MISC – UH)
9. Developing Wilt Resistant Acacia Koa for Maui Watershed Restoration – Hawaii Agriculture Research Center (Koa – HARC)
10. Developing Disease Resistant ‘Ohi’a for Maui Watershed Protection on Maui (‘Ohi’a – HARC)



 Pu’u Kukui Watershed Preserve





- Dept. of Water Supply (Maui County)
- Hanaula Ranch, LLC
- Kaanapali Land Mgmt. Corp./The Nature Conservancy
- Kahome Land Company, LLC
- Kahoma Land Holdings, LLC
- Kaunohiwi Schools
- Makila Land Company, LLC
- Maui Land & Pineapple Co., Inc.
- State of Hawaii - Natural Area Reserves
- State of Hawaii - Forest Reserve
- Waikapu Water Company, LLC
- Associate Partners
- US Fish and Wildlife Service

Figure 1. Map of MKWAP boundaries, Partner landholdings, key management landmarks, and major landmarks.

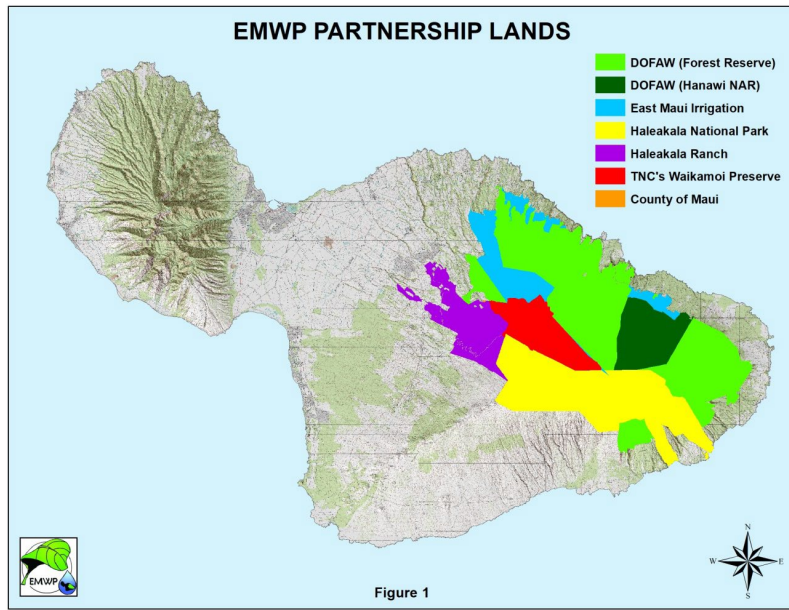
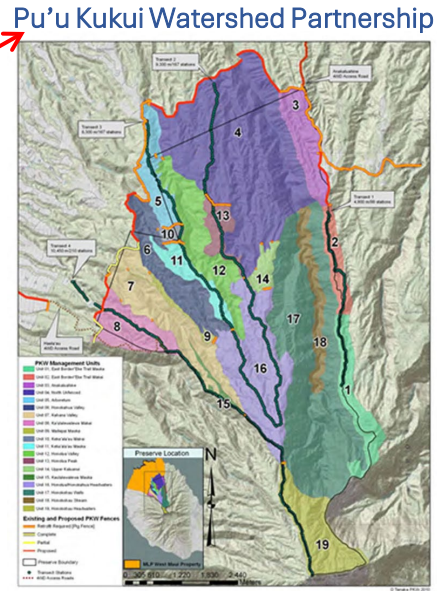
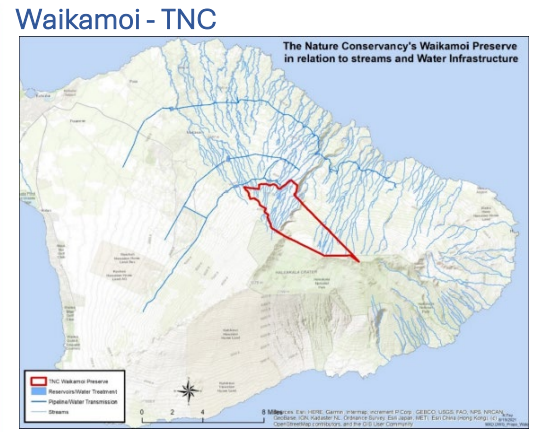
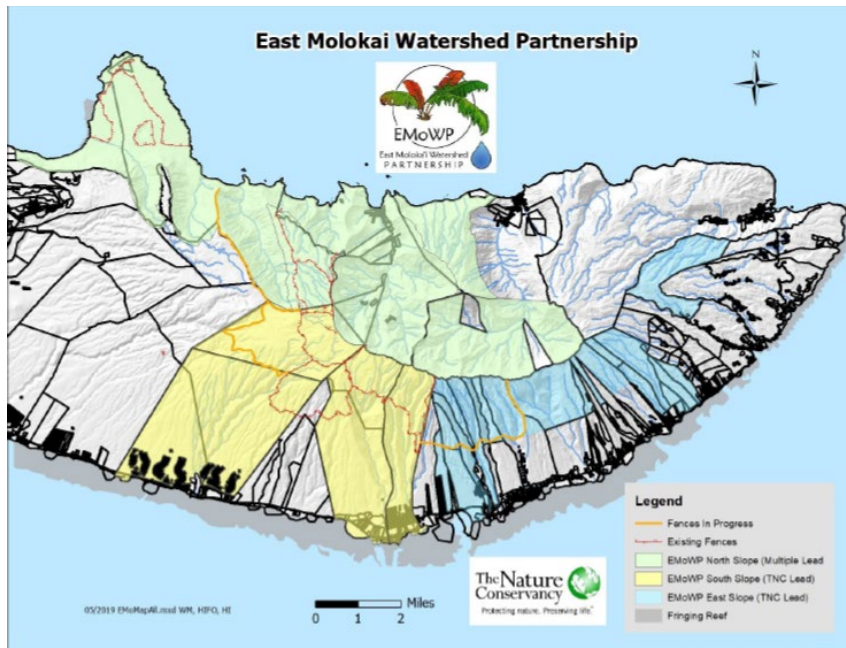
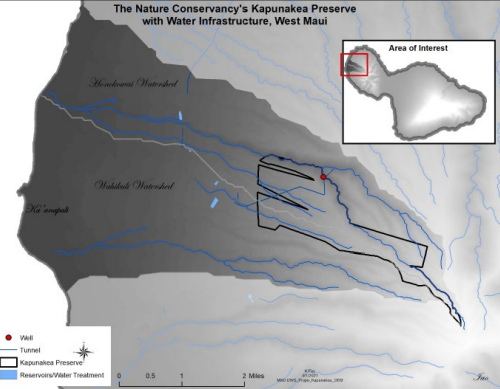


Figure 1

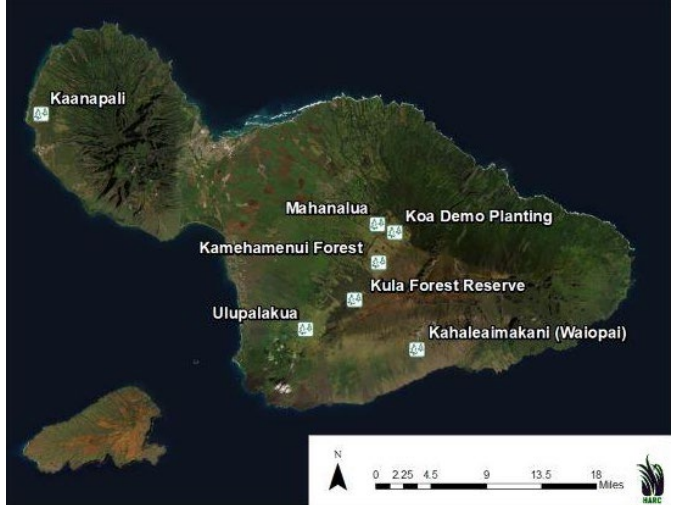


Project Locations

Kapunakea - TNC



HARC Koa & 'O'hia Projects





Monitoring Grantee Performance

- Review reports for consistency and substantive updates
- Correlate expenditures to specific deliverables and grant agreement
- Address project issues to ensure grant program sustainability
- Ensure that online Amplifund submissions are accurate and timely
- Check for issues that may prevent tasks from being accomplished

Main Deliverables

1. Ungulate control
2. Fencing
3. Invasive plant control
4. Revegetation/planting
5. Resource monitoring/research
6. Community outreach

HARC and MISC (only 2, 3, 5, 6)





FY 2026 Awards and FY 2027 Funding Requests

	FY26 Award	FY27 Proposal	FY27 Requested
1. East Maui Watershed Partnership (EMWP – UH)	\$582,746	\$597,440	\$597,440
2. Waikamoi Haipua’ena Water Source Protection (Waikamoi - TNC)	\$275,000	\$275,000	\$275,000
3. Auwahi Forest Restoration Project (AFRP)	\$155,844	\$157,744	\$157,744
4. Mauna Kahalawai Watershed Partnership (MKWP - UH)	\$1,235,535	\$1,468,227	\$1,235,535
5. Honokowai & Wahikuli Source Protection (Kapunakea - TNC)	\$126,000	\$126,000	\$126,000
6. East Molokai Watershed Partnership (EMoWP)	\$250,000	\$332,350	\$325,000
7. Maui Invasive Species Committee (MISC - UH)	\$285,000	\$368,160	\$293,550
8. Hawaii Agriculture Research Center (HARC – Koa)	\$64,000	\$72,500	\$64,000
9. Hawaii Agriculture Research Center (HARC – Ohi’a)	\$37,000	\$40,000	\$37,000
10. Pu’u Kukui Watershed Preserve (PKW – AP)	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
11. Kula Community Watershed Alliance (KCWA)-Not 501(c)(3) Compliant-Pending		\$704,834	\$250,000
(Actual awards are less to meet the DWS 4% revenue threshold)	\$3,511,125	\$4,642,255	\$3,861,269



Grants Status FY 2026

1. EMWP - UH **NTP Delayed – UH requested a contract amendment**
2. Waikamoi - TNC Benchmarking, Processing 1st Quarter Report/Payments
3. MKWP - UH **NTP Delayed – UH requested a contract amendment**
4. AFRP Benchmarking, Processing 1st Quarter Report/Payments
5. Kapunakea - TNC Benchmarking, Processing 1st Quarter Report/Payments
6. PKW Benchmarking, Processing 1st Quarter Report/Payments
7. EMoWP - TNC Benchmarking, Processing 1st Quarter Report/Payments
8. MISC – UH **NTP Delayed – UH requested a contract amendment**
9. HARC – Koa Benchmarking, Processing 1st Quarter Report/Payments
10. HARC – ‘Ohi’a Benchmarking, Processing 1st Quarter Report/Payments
11. KCWA **The applicant did not qualify as an IRS non-profit 501(c)(3)**



Before and After Pictures

Before
AFRP



After



Restoration
EMoWP



Before
MKWP

Before Fence Maintenance/Replace E



After

After (In Progress) Fence Maintenance/Replace E

Before
Waikamoi - TNC



After

Before
EMoWP



After



MKWP



Before Maintenance B



After Maintenance B

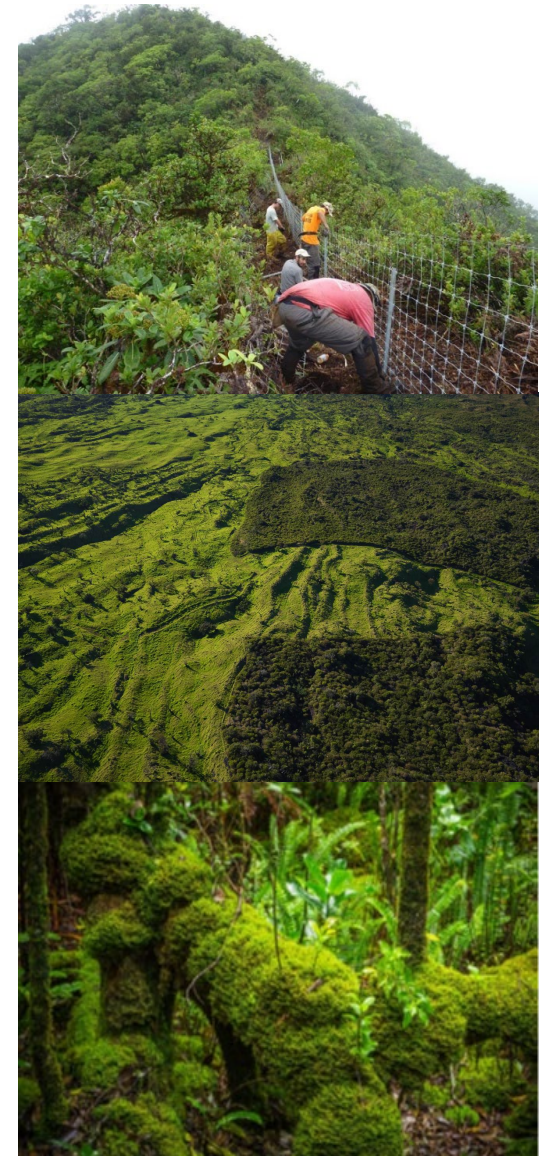
Before

After



Grantee Progress FY 2026

- The FY 2026 grant performance period started on January 1, 2026, ending on December 31, 2026. The first progress report and payment request are due at the end of March, and the final report is due within 90 days after December 31.
- Operational costs are on the rise
- New staff hired but on-going staff turnover persists, which requires retraining and operations on-boarding
- Grantees are continuing to expand and improve their operations in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) in West Maui and East Maui.
- PKW – Aloha Pu’u Kukui established the first private endowment amongst our grantees to ensure the project’s survival.
- Waikamoi – TNC does not have a WUI, but received outside founding to pilot a biochar (a charcoal like product) from invasive tree and plant species to create useful products for carbon sequestration, amending soil, a post-fire remediation for community needs.

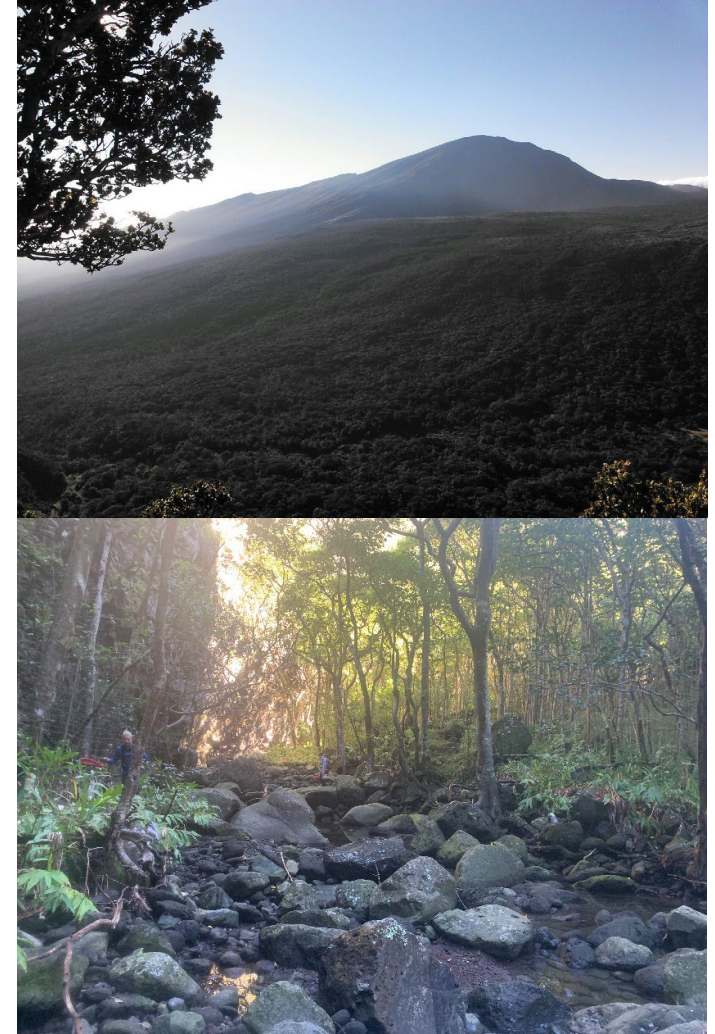




Priorities and Opportunities

The Watershed Protection Grants Program in FY 2027

- Encourage all grantees to standardize data collection methods for consistency
- Continue to encourage grantees to practice acceptable accounting practices
- Expand **before** and **after** photos of project areas to increase efficacy measurements
- As costs rise, hire a consultant to conduct an efficacy study evaluating the progress and effectiveness of grantee projects
- Establish a Watershed Protection Grantee Committee composed of program grantees
- Develop a competitive nationwide internship program with grantees to support watershed initiatives and maintain a steady pipeline of qualified candidates
- The Kula Community Watershed Alliance is preparing their compliance documents to qualify for Watershed Protection Grants Program to restore and mitigate wildfire risks
- Encourage grantees to establish endowments





**Thank
You!**



ADEPT Committee

From: Linda K. Kimura <Linda.Kimura@co.maui.hi.us>
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 12:10 PM
To: ADEPT Committee
Cc: John Stufflebean; James A. Landgraf; Eva M. Blumenstein; Robert C. De Robles; Jennifer K. Rivera
Subject: RE: ADEPT Committee Meeting-3/12/2026 at 9:00 am; ADEPT-1(5) Agenda Item
Attachments: ADEPT 030626_RD_Final.pdf

Attached is the revised Presentation.

Thank you,
Linda

From: Linda K. Kimura <Linda.Kimura@co.maui.hi.us>
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 10:24 AM
To: ADEPT Committee <ADEPT.Committee@mauicounty.us>
Cc: John Stufflebean <John.Stufflebean@co.maui.hi.us>; James A. Landgraf <James.Landgraf@co.maui.hi.us>; Eva M. Blumenstein <Eva.Blumenstein@co.maui.hi.us>; Robert C. De Robles <Robert.DeRobles@co.maui.hi.us>; Jennifer K. Rivera <Jennifer.Rivera@co.maui.hi.us>
Subject: RE: ADEPT Committee Meeting-3/12/2026 at 9:00 am; ADEPT-1(5) Agenda Item

The Presentation will be revised and re-submitted shortly.

Thank you,
Linda

From: ADEPT Committee <ADEPT.Committee@mauicounty.us>
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 10:19 AM
To: Linda K. Kimura <Linda.Kimura@co.maui.hi.us>
Subject: Automatic reply: ADEPT Committee Meeting-3/12/2026 at 9:00 am; ADEPT-1(5) Agenda Item

Subject: Submittal of testimony for the ADEPT Committee meeting on **03/12/2026 at 9:00 a.m.**

If you are submitting testimony for an Agriculture, Diversification, Environment, and Public Transportation Committee (ADEPT) meeting, please do not submit written testimony here. Instead, please submit testimony at <https://mauicounty.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>, select the ADEPT meeting, and click on the link entitled eComment (which will open another page), then click on a specific committee item, scroll down until you see the eComment box. When you're done, click on box entitled Submit Comment.

For general instructions on how to use eComment, please click on <http://mauicounty.us/ecomment>

If you have any questions, please contact ADEPT Committee staff at this email address.

Mahalo,

