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# Honolua Bay

Honolua Bay, in Maui Komohana (West Maui), is one of Hawai'i's cherished biocultural landscapes—rich in marine life, cultural sites, and generations of stewardship. After decades of advocacy, the north bank of Honolua Stream has been protected as a future State Park. Trust for Public Land (TPL) is now partnering with the Save Honolua Coalition (SHC) to protect the privately held lands along the south bank, bringing them into community-based stewardship.

This project extends conservation across the bay and advances a co-management vision that restores cultural integrity and ecological resilience to Honolua Bay.

## An Enduring Wahi Pana

Honolua Bay lies within Hono-a-Pi'ilani, one of the six sacred bays of Maui Komohana. For generations, it has been honored as a wahi pana (storied and sacred place) where extensive cultivation and the abundant bay supported a thriving community, with heiau (temples) and iwi kūpuna (ancestral burials) underscoring its ongoing spiritual importance.

Surfing has deep roots at Honolua, with traditional accounts of the ali'i, Kiha'a'pi'ilani, surfing its waves. Today, it remains an iconic break revered by surfers throughout Hawai'i and around the world. Honolua also holds a central place in the Hawaiian cultural renaissance: in 1976, the voyaging canoe Hōkūle'a launched from its shores, sparking the rebirth of traditional navigation.



### A Shelter for Marine Life

In 1978, Honolua Bay was designated a Marine Life Conservation District and continues to shelter a vibrant coral reef, supporting abundant and diverse fish populations, and providing habitat for protected species, including spinner dolphins, reef manta rays, and green and hawksbill sea turtles.

### Growing Impacts on a Beloved Bay

As one of Maui's most iconic and heavily visited coastal sites, Honolua faces increasing pressure from unmanaged visitor use. On peak days, up to 1,600 people visit the bay—about 1,200 by land and hundreds more by commercial boat. This has contributed to erosion, impacts to cultural sites, and declining reef health. Along the south bank, within the project lands, informal streamside trails channel visitors through sensitive riparian areas and cultural sites. In recent years, Honolua Bay has also experienced two damaging commercial vessel groundings. With no unified system to manage parking, access, or visitor conduct, the bay's cultural and natural resources absorb the impacts of overuse, while local families face overcrowding in a place central to community identity and practice.

### Restoring Honolua, Together

Once acquired, TPL will transfer the south bank lands to the Save Honolua Coalition (SHC), the community-based nonprofit that has led efforts to protect Honolua for nearly two decades. Community stewardship of these lands will establish dedicated space for reconnection and strengthening pilina (relationships) with Honolua and a more respectful and educational visitor experience.

Building on the State's area management plans, SHC is developing Pu'uhoŋua o Honolua, a stewardship and visitor management framework rooted in cultural and ecological values. If protected, lands on the south bank will become a gathering place for community and cultural reconnection, hosting school groups, cultural practitioners, mālama 'āina workdays, and restoring experiences long diminished by overcrowding and heavy tourist traffic.

On State lands along the north bank—where visitor pressure is greatest—SHC will work with State Parks to implement a community-based co-management model that sets appropriate carrying capacity limits, improves parking, delineates access ways, and creates culturally grounded interpretive programming for visitors.

Together, these efforts will extend protection across the full bay—prioritizing cultural and community use on the south bank while ensuring that visitor activity on the north bank is managed to protect resources, reduce overcrowding, and uphold the cultural integrity of Honolua Bay.

### Conservation Acquisition Funding

- \$2.02M State Legacy Land Conservation Program (*pending*)
- \$674K County of Maui (*pending*)

### About Trust for Public Land

Since 1979, Trust for Public Land has conserved over 78,000 acres throughout Hawai'i. Through our land protection efforts we partner with local communities to safeguard the lands and resources that are special to them.



#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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