



For Immediate Release
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Alakoko Fishpond (Menehune Fishpond) Permanently Protected for Community



(Photos, b-roll, and soundbites - download from [Dropbox](#))

LĪHU'Ē, KAUA'I – The Trust for Public Land and Mālama Hulē'ia successfully purchased and protected Alakoko Fishpond (also known as 'Alekoko or Menehune Fishpond), a 102-acre site of cultural and environmental significance.

The purchase will forever protect Alakoko, a 600-year-old fishpond with a 2,700-foot long *kuapā* (fishpond wall) and the largest remaining fishpond on the island of Kaua'i. In some legends, it is said to have been built overnight by the Menehune, who were among Hawai'i's earliest inhabitants. The fishpond is beloved by the Kaua'i community.

The pond lies in the *ahupua'a* (traditional land division) of Niumalu near Līhu'e, Kaua'i. The land has been on the market and at risk of development since January 2021.

Native Hawaiian fishpond systems are some of Hawai'i's most significant cultural resources and demonstrate Hawaiian ingenuity in food sovereignty and natural resource management. Alakoko Fishpond is adjacent to the Hulē'ia National Wildlife Refuge and is a model *loko kuapā* (walled fishpond) ecosystem that supports native fish, *limu* (seaweed), endangered Hawaiian water birds, and coastal vegetation. For four years, Mālama Hulē'ia, in partnership with the community, has been restoring the fishpond and its surrounding native wetland and estuary.

“To get to this point is truly a testament to the power of *'āina* (land, that which feeds) to bring community together, united in their aloha to protect Alakoko. The Kaua'i community stewarded this vision for many years fueled by hard work and faith. They are the reason we are here today celebrating community ownership of the fishpond through Mālama Hulē'ia,” said **Reyna Ramolete Hayashi, Aloha 'Āina Project Manager, The Trust for Public Land**.

The Trust for Public Land negotiated the deal, led fundraising, and purchased the Alakoko Fishpond property on November 17, 2021 and then conveyed it to the nonprofit Mālama Hulēʻia for community and cultural stewardship. The deed to the property ensures that Alakoko Fishpond will be used for conservation, education and community in perpetuity. The purchase was made possible through a charitable donation from Priscilla Chan and Mark Zuckerberg through the **Chan Zuckerberg Kauaʻi Community Fund of the Hawaiʻi Community Foundation**. The donors do not have any ownership interest in the property.

“It has been such a pleasure to partner with our community and The Trust for Public Land as we worked together to purchase and protect Alakoko for future generations. I am honored by the outpouring of support and so thankful that the stars aligned to make this collective dream a reality. A special mahalo to the Chan Zuckerberg family for their generous gift. Because of this amazing support, Mālama Hulēʻia will be able to continue to restore the fishpond, surrounding wetlands, and wildlife habitat. Alakoko will grow as an outdoor learning environment for students to learn the science of native ecosystems, Hawaiian culture and traditional fishponds. We look forward to continuing this work hand in hand with our community,” said **Sara Bowen, Executive Director, Mālama Hulēʻia**.

Since the fall of 2020, The Trust for Public Land had been meeting with elected officials and County, State, and Federal agencies to secure funding for the conservation acquisition. In early 2021, The Trust for Public Land and Mālama Hulēʻia applied for funding from the County of Kauaʻi’s Public Access, Open Space, & Natural Resources Preservation Fund. More than 5,500 people signed an online statement in support of protecting Alakoko and hundreds of community members and organizations submitted written testimony in support. In February, the Open Space Commission unanimously voted to support the project, yet this was the first of many steps needed to secure County funding. With the property for sale on the open market, the community was prompted to move quickly to secure the fishpond’s future.

Meanwhile, The Trust for Public Land also sought private philanthropic funding to protect Alakoko. The outpouring of community support inspired Chan and Zuckerberg to swiftly commit a \$4 million charitable gift that provided full funding for the conservation purchase, all expenses associated with the transaction, as well as support for The Trust for Public Land and Mālama Hulēʻia’s missions. This private gift allowed The Trust for Public Land to quickly make an offer to the landowner, while preserving limited County Open Space funds for other critical conservation acquisitions.

“Kauaʻi means so much to our family and we're humbled to be a part of efforts to protect and preserve Alakoko Fishpond. We're happy that Alakoko will continue to be a place for education, community gathering, environmental restoration, and cherished cultural traditions,” said **Chan**.

“A big mahalo to the Chan Zuckerberg ʻohana for their generous donation in support of our community effort to protect Alakoko. Because the Alakoko acquisition was fully funded through this private donation, our County Open Space Commission and County Council have the ability to fund the protection of so many other incredible *wahi kūpuna* (ancestral places) on Kauaʻi,” said **Mason Chock, County of Kauaʻi Councilmember and Mālama Hulēʻia volunteer**.

“This *wahi pana* (celebrated place) is an important part of our island’s cultural history. This is where countless generations of Kauaʻi’s people for over the past 600 years worked, played and fed our communities. We are honored to be able to continue that tradition and looking forward to one day have Alakoko feeding our community again mentally, physically, and spiritually while extending the *Hā* (breath of life) of this place for the next 800 years along with the future generations to come. We would like to send out a special aloha and mahalo to the Rego ohana for their blessings in us pushing forward with the

restoration of this intricate system,” said **Peleke Flores, cultural practitioner and Director of Operations, Mālama Hulē‘ia.**

“For more than six centuries, Kaua‘i residents have stepped up to care for this pond, to learn from it, and to draw inspiration and sustenance. In this century, it’s our turn. This is *kuleana*—it is our obligation and our honor. It took a village to get to this point, and we are deeply thankful to everyone who has helped us carry this tradition forward,” said **Jan TenBruggencate, board president, Mālama Hulē‘ia.**

"Mahalo to the Trust for Public Land, to Mālama Hulē‘ia, and all the volunteers and the ancestors who have stepped up in the spirit of *mālama* (caring, preserving) for this *wahi pana*. It is a valuable educational resource that can be utilized to assist our island community in learning about, and putting into place actions toward sustainability," said **Enoka Karratti, educator of Hawaiian studies.**

While purchasing the ‘āina was a huge success, it is only the first stage in what will be a multi-generational effort to restore, steward, and bring life back to Alakoko so that it can once again feed the community physically, mentally, and spiritually. To help make this vision a reality, invest in the fishpond’s future, and protect beloved places across Hawai‘i, please join our community fundraising campaign at www.RestoreTheFishpond.org to make a gift, volunteer, and learn more.

A 6th grade student and Alakoko volunteer recently wrote, “Alakoko is an important place for native Hawaiians. Our ancestors cared for this place, and in return they were cared for by this place. This place fed our ancestors and if we continue to care for it, it will feed future generations. We need to take action and care for this place. If we don’t, we lose our native fish, our native plants, and our traditions. The fishpond gives us intelligence. This is our land, our sacred place, our roots. We need to care for Alakoko!”

To download photos, B-roll, soundbites, and a map, please [click here](#). Credits noted in the file names.
To watch the 2-minute community story video, please [click here](#).

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About The Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. In Hawai‘i, The Trust for Public Land’s Aloha ‘Āina Program empowers communities to protect lands that perpetuate Native Hawaiian culture and returns these lands to Native Hawaiian organizations for community stewardship. www.tpl.org/hawaii

About Mālama Hulē‘ia

Mālama Hulē‘ia advocates, educates, and guides community efforts to remove red mangrove along the Hulē‘ia river, re- establishes native wetland ecosystems and creates an environmental stewardship program honoring Hawaiian values. The organization’s vision is a free-flowing, healthy and productive Hulē‘ia ecosystem perpetuating community pride. www.malamahuleia.org

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