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Mālama Maunakea Volunteers Help OMKM Fulfill Mission

Hilo, Hawai'i—Nearly 300 community members traveled up Maunakea and gave approximately 2,000 hours of volunteer time at 9 weed pull events this year. The result of this arduous high-elevation task? Four hundred bags of invasive species were removed as part of the Office of Mauna Kea Management's Mālama Maunakea campaign to protect the mountain's fragile resources.

These Saturday Mālama Maunakea weed pulls concentrate on removing fireweed and other invasive species from the Halepōhaku area, to help thwart its spread in to the upper elevations of Maunakea, to prepare for and restore the area with native species, and to prevent the establishment of other unwanted species such as invasive ants.

The Mālama Maunakea campaign helps the Office of Maunakea Management to fulfill its mission to achieve harmony, balance and trust in the sustainable management and stewardship of Maunakea Science Reserve through community involvement and programs that protect, preserve and enhance the natural, cultural and recreational resources of Maunakea while providing a world-class center dedicated to education, research and astronomy.

"The Office of Maunakea Management's overarching goal is to take care of the mountain. Stewarding 12,000 acres is no easy task, and with help from hundreds of dedicated volunteers and collaborative partnerships, we have made significant progress," said OMKM Director Stephanie Nagata. "We are so thankful for the individuals, school groups, business organizations, and families that volunteered their weekends to help us mālama Maunakea."

Groups participating in the Mālama Maunakea campaign included Hawaii Island Chamber of Commerce, Hawaii National Guard Youth Challenge Academy, Ke Ana La'ahana Public Charter School, Hawaii Academy of Arts & Sciences Public Charter School, various UH Hilo student clubs, Circle K (Kiwanis), Waiakea Interact (Rotary), Pacific Quest Hawaii, and numerous members of astronomy community.

A typical volunteer day begins at 9 am at Halepōhaku with a project orientation and high altitude acclimation. Volunteers fan out across Halepōhaku for several hours of pulling and removing invasive weeds. A brief tour of Maunakea resources, followed by lunch and a guest speaker complete this rewarding volunteer day on the mountain.

Program speakers in 2014 included: Dr. Grant Gerrish presenting on the vegetation of Maunakea (Emeritus, UH Hilo Biology); Dr. Jesse Eiben on the arthropods of Maunakea (UH Hilo College of Agriculture Forestry and Natural Resource Management); Dr. Ken Hon on the geology of Maunakea (UH Hilo Geology); Dr. Marianne Takamiya on the science of astronomy on Maunakea (UH Hilo Physics and Astronomy); Dr. Alton Okinaka on Maunakea visitor profiles and motivation (UH Hilo Sociology); Margaux Mellot and Darcy Yogi on erosion research and invasive species management (UH Hilo undergraduate interns); and Dr. Saeko Hayashi on Subaru Telescope's astronomy (National Astronomical Observatory of Japan).

The 2014 Mālama Maunakea campaign added to an equally successful volunteer effort in 2013 with nearly identical numbers of participants, hours and weed removal.

To sign up to volunteer in 2015 contact OMKM Natural Resource Program Manager Fritz Klasner at 808-933-3194 or email: fklasner@hawaii.edu

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About Office of Mauna Kea Management

The Office of Mauna Kea Management is charged with day-to-day management of Mauna Kea Science Reserve as prescribed in the Master Plan. The adoption of the Mauna Kea Science Reserve Master Plan by the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents in June 2000 marked a critical milestone in the management of Maunakea.

Meetings and public hearings spanning a period of nearly two years went into the formulation of the Master Plan, which established management guidelines for the next 20 years. The Master Plan reflected the community's deeply rooted concerns over the use of Maunakea, including respect for Hawaiian cultural beliefs, protection of environmentally sensitive habitat, recreational use of the mountain, and astronomy research.

It places the focus of responsibility with the University of Hawaii at Hilo (UHH). The UH-Hilo Chancellor established the Office of Mauna Kea Management and the Board of Regents established the Mauna Kea Management Board in the fall of 2000. The Mauna Kea Management Board in turn formed Kahu Kū Mauna, a council comprised of Hawaiian cultural resource persons to serve as advisors.

The mission of the Office of Mauna Kea Management is to achieve harmony, balance and trust in the sustainable management and stewardship of Mauna Kea Science Reserve through community involvement and programs that protect, preserve and enhance the natural, cultural and recreational resources of Maunakea while providing a world-class center dedicated to education, research and astronomy.

Note to editors: If you are interested in high-res images to accompany this media release or for additional assistance including subject interviews, contact Laura Aquino at 808-326-7820 or via email at laura@current-events.com