

# Environmentalists, Army join forces on preservation

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The U.S. Army Garrison Hawai'i and environmentalists getting along and cooperatively protecting more than 6,000 acres of land on O'ahu?

It seems unlikely, but the usual stereotypes do not apply to the successful cooperative partnerships catalyzed by the little known Army Compatible Use Buffer program, under the Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative. The ACUB program enables the Army to work with local conservation organizations and public agencies to conserve land surrounding existing military bases and training installations for habitat, agriculture, watershed, forests, or other conservation purposes. This program protects land important to local communities, prevents urban sprawl from spreading to the borders of military training areas and other military installations and conserves important habitat for species affected by Army activities elsewhere on the island.

Through the ACUB program, the USAGH contributed \$3.5 million to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' acquisition of Waimea Valley in 2006, more than \$3.3 million to the State Parks Reserve's acquisition of more than 1,100 acres of coastal bluff at Pupukea-Paumalu in 2007, and \$900,000 to the State Division of Forestry and Wildlife's protection of more than 3,500 acres of forest watershed at Moana-lua Valley also in 2007 — all successful collaborations with state and local public agencies, and conservation and community organizations.

This year, USAGH plans to contribute approximately \$2.6 million to protect more than 3,500 acres at the Honouliuli Preserve, located along the Wai'anae Mountain range from Makakilo through Kunia. USAGH is working with a diverse partnership including The Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, private landowners, the State Legacy Lands Commission, state Legislature, the governor, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Recovery Land Acquisition program, the City and County of Honolulu Clean Water & Natural Lands Commission, the Honolulu City Council, the mayor and the state Division of Forestry and Wildlife, which will add this important watershed and habitat for 35 threatened and endangered species of Hawaiian plants and animals to its Forest Reserve system.

The Army is also a conservation manager. Fifty-three Army Natural Resource Program staff work diligently to manage 73 federally-listed endangered species on seven Army installations across O'ahu — more than any other federal agency in the state.

Over the years, Army staff have worked tirelessly in the field to manage invasive weeds and predatory animals, conduct fire prevention and suppression activities, and provide essential field safety and management training to ensure that the species under their watch survive and flourish.

Army natural resources staff maintain three greenhouses where native plants are nurtured, then returned to the wild or stored to preserve genetic material. This program has already saved two endangered Hawaiian plants from extinction. Both plants have been re-introduced in the wild, and, with the attentive care provided by Army staff, will surely thrive.

USAGH has proved to be a reliable partner in conservation efforts, contributing millions of dollars to land acquisition and conservation on the ground — land that will be used and enjoyed by future generations of residents and visitors for generations to come.