

Kaunāmano

Ka'ū, Hawai'i Island

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On Hawai'i Island's Southeastern Coast, signs line the highway promoting the sale of almost the entire makai (seaward) portion of the historic ahupua'a (land division) of Kaunāmano. These 1,363-acres of stunning Ka'ū shoreline and pasture include four miles of the ancient Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail which once circled the island, and a web of traditional trails leading to the hundreds of ancient Hawaiian cultural sites throughout the property. The Trust for Public Land, the Ka'ū community, the Keanu Family, and the Ala Kahakai Trail Association are partnering to protect Kaunāmano as a living legacy of the storied district of Ka'ū.

Where Many Once Thrived

Kaunāmano means "multitudes are placed here," reflecting the thriving Hawaiian fishing community that once lived and trained in lua (traditional Hawaiian martial art) on those grounds. Reminders of that community still stand – including over 400 ancient Hawaiian cultural sites with more than 3,900 features, including Pā'ula Fishing Village, Puhī'ula Cave with its anchialine pool teeming with 'ōpae 'ula (Hawaiian red shrimp), heiau (sacred places of worship), burial sites, petroglyphs, and pictographs, all interspersed within a network of underground lava tubes. Preserving the land will honor the stately, resilient people that once lived at Kaunāmano and still make Ka'ū their home.

Native Shoreline and Cave Habitat

The Kaunāmano property is also a critical link for Hawai'i's unique and endangered species. The Ka'ū Coast is nesting grounds for 80-90% of the Honu'ea (Hawksbill Sea Turtle). Honu (Green Sea Turtles), 'Īlioholoikauaua (Hawaiian Monk Seals) and Koholā (Humpback Whales) depend on the clean waters off Kaunāmano. Native coastal plants blanket the shoreline, and Pueo (Hawaiian Short-Eared Owl), migratory birds, and native sea and shorebirds fish and live in Kaunāmano's rocky shoreline and caves.

Preserving the Ka'ū Coast

The Ka'ū community hopes that the entire 80-mile Ka'ū Coast will one day be protected. The current efforts at Kaunāmano build on historic community efforts and would create a protected 8-mile segment of the coastline – from the fresh water springs and black sands of Kāwā Bay and Honu'apo Fishpond to the North, through Kaunāmano, to the scenic rocky cliffs of Kawala to the South – all connected by the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail. Protection of Kaunāmano would preserve an essential coastal viewshed tract within the Ka'ū Scenic Byway – one of only four recognized State Scenic Byways in Hawai'i.

The Ala Kahakai Trail Association supports descendant-led, community-based trail management aimed at historic preservation and perpetuation of the culture of each community along the trail. With this opportunity to walk from one community to the next will come the chance to learn about the natural and cultural resources along the trail, as well as the stories called forth from the past.

Perpetuating the Paniolo Culture

1,336 acres of the property is leased for cattle ranching by Kuahiwi Ranch, which markets approximately 450,000 pounds of grass fed beef annually to Whole Foods, Foodland, and Foodland Farms, as well as restaurants such as, Town, Volcano House, and Kīlauea Lodge. Ala Kahakai Trail Association plans to work with Kuahiwi Ranch to continue the ranching lease.

Conservation Funds Needed: \$6.71M

The Trust for Public Land secured \$2.4M in funding from the State Legacy Land Conservation Commission in 2019, and funding from the County of Hawai'i PONC Program in 2014 (amount pending appraisal of a conservation easement).



Lava tube petroglyphs possibly showing familial relationships



Puhi'ula Cave in Pā'ula Fishing Village



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