

Growing and Strengthening the South Kohala Coastal Partnership

SUMMARY REPORT 2015-2017



Kai 'Ōpae Point, South Kohala, Hawai'i. Photo © TNC

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Growing and Strengthening the South Kohala Coastal Partnership Summary Report: 2015-2017

The South Kohala Coastal Partnership (SKCP) is the primary working group conducting conservation activities in the State and Federal focus area of South Kohala on Hawai'i Island. In 2016, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) re-convened the Partnership group after a five-month hiatus following the departure of a state-funded coordinator in 2015. With the support of the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, TNC's Hawai'i Island Marine Program staff and interns assisted the new South Kohala Marine Coordinator (hired by TNC through a separate NOAA-CRCP grant to the State of



South Kohala Coastal Partnership members with The Nature Conservancy staff. Photo © TNC

Hawai'i) in coordinating meetings, advancing the group's strategic communication goals, and implementing key strategies of the South Kohala Conservation Action Plan.

South Kohala Coastal Partnership Coordination

In 2016, TNC facilitated a workshop in Waimea for the SKCP to refine the process of implementing priority fishery strategies for South Kohala. At this meeting, the partners also decided to form a Marine Advisory Sub-Committee within the existing Partnership.

TNC helped to establish the new Marine Advisory Sub-Committee, and coordinated three meetings:

- Marine Advisory Sub-Committee initial strategy meeting, March 31, 2016
- Marine Advisory Sub-Committee meeting, June 15, 2016
- South Kohala Coastal Partnership meeting, August 1, 2016

TNC also identified and recruited seven new individuals and organizations to join the core working group and larger advisory group of the SKCP:

- Chris Hawkins, Ala Kahakai Trail Association
- Craig Anderson, Mauna Kea Beach Resort
- Jill Ficke-Beaton, National Resource Conservation Service
- Alyssa Fujii, Mauna Kea Soil and Water Conservation District
- Allen Tom, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary
- Anna-Lisa Okoye, The Kohala Center
- Katy Hintzen, NOAA Hawaiian Islands Sentinel Site Cooperative

Strategic Communications Planning

While the South Kohala Coastal Partnership group already had a basic communications plan in place, it was fairly broad and did not contain any specific action plans. Through discussions with TNC, partnership members decided that developing targeted plans for each member organization would be an effective next step, so that cohesive communications could be implemented on a more manageable scale. With the support of the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, TNC supported the development of strategic communications plans for five member organizations from the South

Kohala Coastal Partnership during a strategic communications workshop on February 22, 2017. TNC staff led the workshop, and each member organization of SKCP was invited to bring two representatives. Participants included Steve Cotton (State of Hawai'i Division of Aquatic Resources), Chris Hawkins and Alan Brown (Ala Kahakai Trail Association), Lisa Ferentinos (University of Hawai'i Sea Grant), Robby Robertson and Peter Hackstedde (Puakō Community Association), and Kekaulike Tomich (Ka'ūpūlehu Marine Life Advisory Committee).

With guidance from the TNC coaches, each set of participants developed a draft communications plan focused around a specific goal of their organization. The workshop format was a series of plenary presentations paired with individual activities, in which attendees worked in small groups with coaches to brainstorm and develop plans together. This environment of small groups in a focused peer-to-coach approach helped participants apply the learning concepts and think through the strategy for their projects. After the workshop, TNC's South Kohala Marine Coordinator followed up with partners on their communications plans and offered support to those who could not attend.



These are three examples of the plans developed at the workshop:

The Nature Conservancy led a training workshop in February 2017 for members of the South Kohala Coastal Partnership, resulting in the development of five strategic communications plans. *Photo © TNC*

- Staff representing the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) drafted a communications plan to build support within the West Hawai'i community for State rules following DAR's Coral Bleaching Recovery Plan. They identified key messengers, target audiences and action items for the upcoming process of sharing the Recovery Plan, developing rules, and conducting regional planning.
- The Ala Kahakai Trail Association (AKTA) developed a community engagement plan for the South Kohala portion of the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail, an important cultural resource that promotes stewardship of coastal systems and community well-being. This opportunity was well timed, since the AKTA had recently received funding to improve the safety and signage of this portion of trail, and was going to begin working with the coastal communities in South Kohala to identify locations for signage and routes.
- Members of the Puakō Community Association developed a plan to promote the sewage treatment upgrade in Puakō by engaging key stakeholders and residents. Previously, much of the communication surrounding the sewage treatment upgrade had been overseen by agencies and organizations in the area. The TNC-led workshop equipped these community leaders with communication tools to effectively convey the benefits of upgrading the Puako sewage treatment to their peers, as well as to decision-makers.

Conservation Action Plan Implementation

The Nature Conservancy also worked with the SKCP to implement the following key strategies from the South Kohala Conservation Action Plan:

1. Increase education and monitoring of coastal use via Coastal Naturalists program
2. Engage community partners in management through the Kai Kuleana Network

Coastal Naturalists Program

The CRCP Partnership helped to provide increased education and monitoring of coastal use along the South Kohala coastline by supporting the Kilo Kapakai Coastal Naturalists program. The idea of roving coastal naturalists was conceived of by a knowledgeable local fisherman who acknowledged that areas along the South Kohala coast were sufficiently remote that illegal activity could occur unobserved. He suggested that the presence of trained individuals in these areas could increase compliance with rules and regulations. His experiences informed the South Kohala Coastal Partnership as they evaluated this strategy, elevating it to the highest level of priority.

Through a separate NOAA-CRCP grant to the State of Hawai'i, the Nature Conservancy hired two part-time coastal naturalists for one year, from October 2015 to September 2016. The naturalists provided on-site education, shared rules and regulations, and handed out materials about coral reefs, fishing practices and protected species along the South Kohala coastline. They also made observations and collected data on human uses of the coastal area

and noted any sightings/behaviors of protected species. The CRCP partnership with TNC provided funding for interns and staff to enter the data collected, assist the naturalists with assembling materials for educational purposes, and compile the results into presentations for the local community and decision-makers (see *Figure 1: Coastal Naturalists Program Handout*).

In November 2016, TNC staff presented the results to the South Kohala Coastal Partnership. The coastal naturalists documented 105,360 individuals engaged in coastal activities during the one-year period. The number of observed nature resource violations declined over the course of the project. Notable results included high compliance rates with existing fishing regulations (99.3% compliance) and protected species rules (99.9% compliance). No correlation between uses such as camping and fishing and unemployment statistics was observed. In addition to constituting a baseline for coastal use that can inform future studies, results are being used by partners to design locations for interpretive and regulatory signage and to identify activity hot spots.



Two trained coastal naturalists, or Kilo Kapakai, hiked the 22 -mile South Kohala coastline weekly for a year to engage the public, record coastal use, and document any rule violations. *Photo © TNC*

Kai Kuleana Network

“Lack of community capacity” was identified as a threat to marine conservation targets in the South Kohala Conservation Action Plan, so a regional learning network was formed to help address this. The Kai Kuleana Network engages local community leaders to strengthen partnerships and build on-the-ground and in-the-water management capacity in West Hawai‘i. TNC staff organized and facilitated quarterly Network meetings during this period, with more than 15 community leaders from West Hawai‘i attending to identify shared priorities and needs, and learn from each other and other expert advisors.

The CRCP Partnership provided additional capacity to the Network through TNC staff who assisted with scheduling, preparation and logistics for meetings, and helped the Network identify internal and external expertise to achieve their prioritized learning objectives. Learning objectives identified by the Network during this period included strategic communications, fundraising, permitting, rulemaking, interpretive programs, education, and restoration.

These are the types of learning objectives addressed at the Kai Kuleana Network meetings:

- In October 2016, the network met at Pua Ka ‘Ilima, Kawaihae, with representatives from eight West Hawai‘i communities and state and federal agency partners. Attendees shared community updates focused on actions to maintain and improve the health of coastal and marine life. Topics covered at this meeting included planning for youth leadership camps, finalizing a network decision-making structure, considering comments on future coastal development in environmentally sensitive areas, and sharing resources for coastal monitoring. Following the meeting, participants presented to over 30 primary school aged attendees at the Na Kilo ‘āina youth camp, sharing the importance of working together to care for land and sea.
- In January 2017, the network met at Ho‘okena to share community updates and progress, and to discuss important upcoming events. Twelve communities were represented at the meeting. Discussion topics included final planning for the ‘Aha ‘Ula o Kekaha youth leadership camp at Kīholo, the need for network formalization, developing a template for public comments from the Kai Kuleana Network, and the need for an unaffiliated network to exist as a platform for advancing coastal stewardship.



The Kai Kuleana Network continues to meet quarterly to engage community partners in marine management, a priority strategy of the South Kohala Conservation Action Plan.

Photo © TNC

Figure 1. Coastal Naturalists Program Handout

HAWAII
~coral reef~
STRATEGY

South Kohala Coastal Naturalist Program

Chad Wiggins
8/1/2015 – 9/30/2016

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The South Kohala Coastal Naturalist Program was based on a strategy developed within the South Kohala Conservation Action Plan. The job description was co-developed by The Nature Conservancy, and the South Kohala Coastal Partnership (SKCP). From **August 2015-August 2016**, two trained observers hiked the **22 -mi** South Kohala coastline weekly. They documented **105,360** individuals engaged in coastal activities. The number of observed nature resource violations declined over the course of the project. **99.99%** of coastal goers in South Kohala are following natural resource rules.

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Quantify natural resource violations in South Kohala
Objective 2: Evaluate change in violations concurrent with coastal presence
Objective 3: Quantify coastal use levels and protected species habitat utilization
Objective 4: Distribute materials developed by management agencies and engage coastal users along the South Kohala coastline

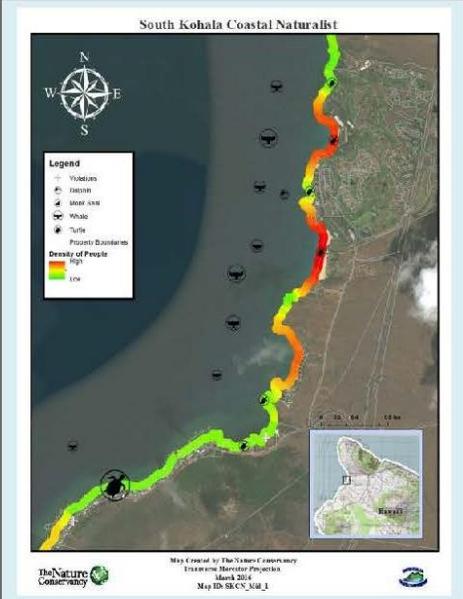
RESULTS



- Five natural resource violations were observed during the course of this project – all 5 were taking fish below the legal minimum size.
- Violations declined over the course of this program
- Hot spots where interactions with protected species occur at County Beach Parks and Resorts
- 529 engagements documented (materials and information shared)

MANAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Public education and knowledge of natural resource regulations in South Kohala is relatively high. Compliance with regulations during daylight hours is very good. Programs designed to educate ocean goers should continue. Hot spots for sea turtle interactions are focused on several resort areas and public beach parks and Naturalists provided information to prevent contact with turtles on multiple occasions warranting additional interpretation at these locations. Hot spots for interactions with marine mammals occur at Kawaihae Harbor and Puakō Boat Ramp, so posting approach rules at these locations should maintain low levels of violations. Coastal presence may increase compliance with natural resource rules and regulations.*



South Kohala Coastal Naturalist
 Map created by The Nature Conservancy
 Ecological Services Department
 March 2014
 Map ID: SKCP_2014_1

* too few violations were observed to statistically demonstrate an effect

More Information
 Chad Wiggins
 cwiggins@tnc.org