

NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program
Final Report

I. Project Information

- A. NOAA Grant Number: **NA11NOS4820006**
- B. Project Title: **West Maui Fire Mitigation Plan**
- C. PI and Staff: **Elizabeth Pickett**
- D. Award Period: **October 30, 2013 – September 30, 2014**
- E. Award Amount: **\$10,485.00**

II. Executive Summary

To better plan and prepare for wildfire at multiple scales and timeframes in West Maui and Wahikuli-Honokowai, Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO), worked with private land owners, the West Maui First Task Force, and local and state Fire Prevention personnel to: 1) Complete a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for West Maui to establish an understanding of fire threat and resources needed to address to enable community and agency preparedness in the event of a wildfire; and 2) Develop a pre-fire mitigation plan to a) reduce wildfire hazards and decrease likelihood of wildfire ignition and spread, and b) prepare ahead of time for a strong post-fire response (ultimately to reduce erosion and other post-fire damage).

III. Purpose

A. Management problem addressed

Stakeholders in the Conservation and Agricultural Units have uniformly agreed that wildfire threats are imminent and can have widespread damage that potentially affects all properties within the Honokowai and Wahikuli Watersheds. The danger of fire is related to the arid conditions and high fuel potential of vegetation. In the last decade, portions of the West Maui have burned every couple of years, due to the recurring fire cycle and unmanaged grass fuels. Wildfires strip the land of vegetation and render the soil susceptible to erosion through runoff, leading to sedimentation of streams and near shore waters. The development of post-fire restoration guidelines and fire prevention planning are identified as priorities in the Wahikuli-Honokowai Watershed Management Plan. Having a plan in place, increases the odds of rapid response and a reduction in the amount of sediment erosion negatively impacting near shore ecosystems.

B. Overarching goal(s) and objective(s) of the project

- 1) Complete a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for West Maui to establish an understanding of fire threat and resources needed to address to enable community and agency preparedness in the event of a wildfire;
- 2) Develop a plan that provides recommendations for how to reduce wildfire hazards and decrease likelihood of wildfire ignition and spread in Wahikuli-Honokowai.

- 3) Develop a plan to aid landowners and manager sin Wahikuli-Honokowai to prepare ahead of time for a strong post-fire response (ultimately to reduce erosion and other post-fire damage).

IV. Approach

A. Detailed description of the work that was performed (by objective)

- 1) The CWPP was completed after focus group meetings with the West Maui Fire Task Force, the West Maui Mountains Watershed Partnership, County Council members, Dept. of Hawaiian Homelands, and the public at 6 community meetings throughout Western Maui. It was signed and made official by federally required signatories (Maui Fire Department, State Forestry (DOFAW), and County of Maui Civil Defense) on June 5, 2014.
- 2) A pre-fire mitigation plan was developed after site visits, interviews with key Wahikuli-Honokowai land managers, and map/satellite imagery assessments of the area. Recommendations for pre-fire mitigation action steps and their associated background explanations and maps were provided as the first sections of the Wahikuli-Honokowai Wildfire Mitigation Plan.
- 3) Preparing and planning for a post-fire situation requires actions to be taken before a fire occurs. For this reason, the post-fire preparedness plan was integrated into the same document as part of the comprehensive Wahikuli-Honokowai Wildfire Mitigation Plan. The most cost effective and wildfire-mitigating measures deal more with prevention, so that is the focus of the plan. However, actions steps to prepare for a strong and informed post-fire assessment and planning process are detailed to cover the spectrum of pre-fire, during-fire, and post-fire activities that can be taken to reduce wildfire impacts.

B. Project management: List of individuals and/or organizations performing the work.

Elizabeth Pickett, Executive Director and Ilene Grossman, Planning Assistant of Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization coordinated and developed all deliverables based on input provided from focus groups, community meetings, partner expertise, and HWMO technical expert recommendations and review.

V. Results

All deliverables were developed and delivered on time and with great attention to detail. The plans developed as part of this project were reviewed and advised by wildfire and watershed technical experts who are part of the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization. The CWPP is already providing new opportunities for agencies and communities to address and fund their wildfire-related hazards and priorities. The Wahikuli-Honokowai Wildfire Mitigation plan (which includes both pre-fire and post-fire actions) was delivered in late September, and is a comprehensive wildfire action plan.

VI. Applications

How did your project benefit resource managers?

Resource managers now have both information, strategies, and tools to not only address wildfire issues and priorities, but also (due to the completion of the CWPP) to apply for federal sources of funding to achieve fire management and mitigation goals.

How has your project led to societal improvements, if any?

Community members who attended the CWPP meetings are still in contact with HWMO, and we have continued to follow up with them to aid their community-based efforts in becoming fire-safe.

What partnerships were established with other federal, state, or local agencies, or other research institutions (other than those already described in the original proposal)?

This was the first collaborative project between HWMO and the West Maui Fire Task Force and other partners. It both enabled this new partnership and assembling of expertise, but strengthened the partnership for years to come.

VII. Evaluation

Outputs:

No goals were modified in our implementation of the project. The only slight alteration was that we combined goals 2 and 3 into one single, unified, and coherent plan, since the action steps to achieve wildfire readiness before, during, and after fire are integrated and inseparable. All plans were delivered on time, are compliant with industry standards and the CWPP is now federally recognized and compliant with national standards.

Outcomes:

West Maui as a whole is now able to move forward on projects related to wildfire education, mitigation, and planning that has input from decision makers, landowners, community members, agencies, and other organizations. This is important for moving forward collaboratively, and in a grounded, informed manner. DOFAW and Maui Fire Department already applied for funding for a project in West Maui under the CWPP and have been recommended for funding at the federal level. This was the desired outcome of the CWPP! The anticipated outcome for the Wahikuli-Wildfire Mitigation Plan is for area landowners and land managers to be better informed about the full scope of wildfire issues and preparedness activities that need to be addressed, and for actions to be taken before, during and after fire that reduce the short and long-term impacts of wildfire for the area, ultimately leading to safer communities, and protected coastal and forest resources.

Final Report Prepared by: Elizabeth Pickett, Executive Director HWMO

Date submitted: October 8, 2014

Signature of Point of Contact:

