

## **Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

Virtual Meeting  
August 14, 2023

**Present:** Malia West (Chair), J.B. Friday, Kalena Blakemore, Bart Potter, Kirk Derasin, Scott Fisher, Natalie Kurashima

**Staff:** Tanya Rubenstein, Marissa Zhang, Brittany Lawton, Katie Friday (U.S. Forest Service)

**Guests:** Ulumauahi Keali‘ikanaka‘oleohaililani (Hawai‘i Land Trust), Jay Hatayama (DOFAW), Johannes Seidel (Terraformation)

### **1. Call to Order**

- The meeting was called to order at 9:10 am.

### **2. Review and approval of March 1, 2023, meeting minutes**

- The Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee (FSAC) reviewed the meeting minutes from the March 1, 2023, meeting.

**Motion to approve the March 1, 2023, FSAC meeting minutes. Moved by Member Potter; seconded by Member Blakemore.**

**Approve: West, J.B. Friday, Blakemore, Potter, Derasin, Fisher, Kurashima; Oppose: none; Abstain: none.**

**Motion passed.**

### **3. Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) Management Plans - Committee will vote to recommend approval of submitted management plans.**

#### **3.1 Kūkūau Community Forest Management Plan, Hilo, Hawai‘i**

- Staff Rubenstein introduced the project as a property that was donated to the Hawai‘i Land Trust (HILT). There are many challenges due to the invasive plant and animal threats affecting lowland wet forests and the lack of access to the parcel. The property has different state land use districts with the lower half agriculture zoned and the upper half conservation zoned. The plan includes silviculture (harvest of koa) to generate revenue to help support the management needs of the property, the community engagement goals, and the old-growth forest protection goals.

- Member Fisher stated he would be abstaining from the discussion and voting due to his employment with HILT.

- Guest Keali‘ikanaka‘oleohaililani shared the intention of the plan as completing the cycle for many of HILT’s projects, which are mostly coastal ecosystems. The forestry component of the Kūkūau Community Forest Management Plan contributes to the capture and flow of water that contributes to aquatic and agriculture systems. The Kūkūau Plan is HILT’s first investment in “forest culture” and creating a community forest that gives children access to that space near Hilo. He added that the silviculture practice is a way to generate revenue for the project but would not be the main source of funding.

- Member Potter inquired who would be receiving the harvested wood. Guest Keali‘ikanaka‘oleohaililani clarified that Siglo Tonewoods would be receiving harvested wood and the removal will mostly likely be done by local workers. During site visits and surveying, it was determined that skid steers and roads would need to be used at each site. The roads would also facilitate access for fence line construction and maintenance, and ungulate control. It is recognized that roads used for harvest and management would likely spread invasive species to the site.

- Member Potter asked for clarification on hunting and the ungulate goals for the property. Guest Keali‘ikanaka‘oleohaililani clarified that there would be two types of hunting. One would be for the

community to access areas outside the fence units to help with population control, which is approximately 900 acres. The second type would be contracted hunting with the goal of removing all ungulates within the fenced units, which are approximately 600 acres. Fencing is focused on the native-dominated areas with rare species, such as loulu (*Pritchardia* spp.), that need protection from ungulates.

- Member Potter inquired if the neighboring parcel was doing any forestry activities. Guest Keali‘ikanaka‘oleohaililani shared that the farm isn’t currently doing any forestry activities, but they have an access agreement with the neighboring farm that benefits both the neighbor and Kūkūau staff.

- Member Fisher added that this project is unique to HILT in that it is a higher elevation project that is working collaboratively with community groups and also includes extraction of resources.

- Member West recommended updating the plan map and information about endangered species. For example, the species of *Pritchardia* is not a federally listed species and the Hawaiian hawk has been delisted.

- Member Potter noted a drastic difference in the koa timber inventory that was done by the previous landowner and the updated inventory from Forest Solutions, questioning if the previous landowner overestimated the amount of harvestable koa to increase the property value. Guest Keali‘ikanaka‘oleohaililani agreed that while there are large koa on the property, there aren’t as many as the previous owner’s survey indicated.

- Member Potter inquired if koa harvests will result in an invasion of non-native plants or a rebound of native species regeneration. Guest Keali‘ikanaka‘oleohaililani said the project’s commitment to forest resiliency will determine the efforts that will be put into restoring the native forests in the harvest areas. They could incorporate canoe plants that are not invasive into the lowland wet forest communities as part of their restoration strategy in highly invaded forest.

- Member Potter noted that the neighboring Pū‘ā Foundation have similar goals of creating a community forest and whether they would be competing for the same resources (workers, volunteers, contractors, etc.). Guest Keali‘ikanaka‘oleohaililani sees this as an opportunity for collaboration and sharing of resources with neighboring properties working on similar goals. Ideally, smaller, local contractors with employees from the area would be utilized to keep money in the community.

- Member Friday mentioned that wherever machinery is used, it will kill ohia trees/roots by creating wounds for ROD (Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death). He also suggested looking at an old koa growth plot on Flume Road, which is near the property, to get an idea of how koa plantings do. The quality of the koa may also be higher in old growth compared to younger growth. Whether the monetary value varies with age may impact the market and harvest revenue.

- Member Potter commented that from a woodworker's experience, there are variations in wood between neighboring trees rather than based solely on age. There are likely exceptional trees on the property, and it might be useful to collect genetic material from those individuals before harvesting. Potter also mentioned a project on Maui that was heli-logging, which would have a lower impact on the forest.

- Member Friday suggested having a professional representation of HILT with buyers in the market to ensure the land managers get the best deal in negotiations.

- Member Derasin questioned the koa harvest volume tables and how much HILT was relying on those numbers for what could realistically be extracted, especially given the lack of roads, access, and wet conditions. Guest Keali‘ikanaka‘oleohaililani stated that he was not relying on the koa harvest to get the money at the start of the project. Planting will need to be done before koa harvests begin. The koa silviculture revenue will be utilized as a backup plan in the event funding falls short to carry out management practices. There is no intention of harvesting koa at the full capacity that is outlined in the volume tables.

- Guest Keali‘ikanaka‘oleohaililani pointed out that HILT does not have funding for the management of the project. Rather, funds from philanthropy, fundraising, and other external grants will provide funding for the project. - Member Kurahshima asked for clarification on the brush management

acreage in the budget table, since it doesn't account for follow-up weed control in subsequent years. Kurashima also noted that the seedling per acre densities were quite low compared to other restoration projects which use higher densities for understory plantings. Guest Keali'ikanaka'oleohaililani clarified that the primary canopy plantings would be at lower densities and the understory plantings would be at higher densities. Clarification and more detail will be added to the budget table to reflect weed control follow up and planting densities.

- Member Kurashima inquired why rare plant surveys were not included in the budget table and what actions would be taken to protect those populations. Member West clarified that rare plant surveys were not a FSP funded practice. Guest Keali'ikanaka'oleohaililani added that small enclosures would be built around rare plant populations.

- Member Kurashima asked if the silviculture practice will be done primarily through scarification or outplanting. Guest Keali'ikanaka'oleohaililani said outplantings will be performed and carried out with community engagement outside of the conservation area. The roads made for harvests will better facilitate community groups in the area. Member Kurashima recommended that koa plantings be incorporated into the overall outplanting practice in the plan.

**Motion to recommend approval of the Kūkūau Community Forest Management Plan contingent upon comments from the committee being addressed. Moved by Member Blakemore; seconded by Member Kurashima.**

**Approve: West, Kurashima, Potter, Blakemore; Oppose: none; Abstain: J.B. Friday, Derasin, Fisher.**

**Motion passed.**

**4. Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee (FSAC) – Committee will review and vote to recommend approval of applicants to be on the FSAC.**

**4.1 Cheri Mardon**

- Staff Zhang introduced Cheri Mardon's application and reminded the committee that members should be comprised of representatives from a variety of backgrounds and islands and that there was no particular area of need for representation at this time.

- Member Friday reiterated Mardon's background and experience as it relates to forested land management. He added that Mardon offers the perspective of being a private landowner doing work but without coming from a conservation background.

**Motion to approve recommendations for Cheri Mardon for the FSAC. Moved by Member Fisher; seconded by Member Blakemore.**

**Approve: West, J.B. Friday, Blakemore, Derasin, Kurashima, Potter, Fisher; Oppose: none; Abstain: none.**

**Motion passed.**

**5. FY25 Forest Legacy Program (FLP) Projects – Committee will review and vote to recommend approval of proposed FLP projects.**

**5.1 South Kona Forest, Hawai'i**

- Staff Lawton introduced the South Kona Forest parcel that is situated between two sections of the South Kona Forest Reserve. The parcel is valuable in that it would facilitate access to one of the landlocked forest reserve sections and help facilitate management by staff. There is also a cabin on the parcel that would be useful for staff doing multi-day trips in the South Kona Forest Reserve. There is a total of 12 federally listed endangered species that are known from the surrounding area, many of which have populations within a few hundred yards of the property boundary.

- Member Potter inquired about the type of forest that is on the parcel and whether a lot of management would be needed. Staff Rubenstein reported that while she had not seen the parcel, the district forester said it had a nice old growth 'ōhi'a canopy. Because surveys have not been done, it is

unknown if endangered species are present on the parcel. Given connectivity to the forest reserve it could lead to fencing schemes and larger scale management in the area. Guest Hatayama commented that there is *Clidemia hirta* in the understory throughout that elevation and a lot of feral cattle in the area. Due to a lack of access to the Kaohe sections, he noted that not much can be done in terms of dealing with weed and cattle threats. Eventually, the parcel would be added to the South Kona Forest Reserve.

- Staff Rubenstein added that one of the state's highest priorities for access is acquiring the lands above the South Kona Forest Reserve to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. While the parcel is small, it is a small piece of the overall puzzle. The Yee Hop parcels above would have higher-quality native forests, but there is currently no willing landowner looking to sell.

- Member Friday noted that the forest in the area is not considered a "wet forest" but closer to mesic given the annual rainfall rates of 50 inches a year. He also noted that 'i'iwi are rare at elevations under 4,000 feet, therefore the proposal shouldn't indicate presence of 'i'iwi on the parcel. Friday also noted the complexities of groundwater recharge on the Kona side due to topography and lava flows. He suggested getting a GIS dataset from USGS for mapping proposed watershed recharge benefits on the parcel.

- Member Potter asked theoretically if the upper parcel owned by Yee Hop ever went for sale, would the acquisition of the parcel be essential to the overall goal of management of the area. Guest Hatayama explained that in his experience, landowners are more willing to allow management access over public access. Acquiring the parcel would secure public access in addition to management access.

- Staff Rubenstein mentioned that the parcel can only be bought at fair market value. The value of the property may be impacted due to recent discoveries of conservation district violations on building the cabin without a permit. This complication that needs to be sorted out before the purchase.

- Member Kurashima added that including the Capital Improvement Project fence and other infrastructure improvements occurring in the adjacent forest reserve could strengthen the need for access for management work. She recommended adding the fence units on the map to support the access argument. Kurashima also reiterated Member Friday's comments about the importance of the 'ōhi'a forests on that side of Hawaii island. She noted that the presence of tall 'ōhi'a is a good indicator that there is active groundwater recharge.

- Member West asked about the readiness of the stewardship plan that is listed on the proposal. Staff Rubenstein added that a stewardship plan is not required by the U.S. Forest Service for a land acquisition application. She also mentioned that a management plan for the South Kona Forest Reserve was a priority for the Hawaii Island district forestry program.

- Member West noted that since a lot is being discovered about the parcel, would the strategy of waiting to submit the proposal for late funding versus having the national committee review the same proposal multiple times be beneficial? Staff Friday said the worst-case scenario would be submitting the proposal, it scores well, and then it gets pulled if something makes it unviable. The earlier the better if it gets pulled to avoid the loss of opportunity for other proposals. Staff Rubenstein added that there is another opportunity for funding through the Inflation Reduction Act later in the year, so the proposal can be refined for that application.

**Motion to recommend approval to proceed with the South Kona Forest FLP application. Moved by Member Blakemore; seconded by Member Potter.**

**Approve: West, Fisher, Blakemore, Derasin, Friday, Potter, Kurashima; Oppose: none; Abstain: none.**

**Motion passed.**

- 6. Forest Stewardship Program Plan Implementation Funding – Committee will be provided with an update on the proposed Request for Proposals (RFP) competitive procurement process**

**for providing implementation funding for approved Forest Stewardship plans. Committee members will be invited to serve on the RFP Review Committee.**

- Staff Rubenstein reminded committee members that when funds are available to implement projects, FSP would like to have an RFP competitive funding process for approved Forest Stewardship plans. Interested FSAC members and state employees would be sought to be on an RFP committee to rank plans based on prioritization criteria and determine which projects get funded. It is still unclear how much money will be available for implementing new plans.

- Member Friday inquired about how many approved plans there were that would be eligible for funding. Staff Zhang commented that 14-15 plans would be eligible. Staff Rubenstein commented that some larger projects that have not received FSP funding have been working with staff to find other means of funding to implement some portions of their management plan.

- Member West volunteered to be on the committee and suggested that staff from NRCS, watershed partnerships, and city and county should also be involved. Having various funding organizations involved to help piece together funding for projects would help strategize management plan implementation.

- Member Friday asked if the NRCS member on the FSAC will automatically be filled once that position is filled. Staff Zhang added that NRCS is currently in the process of filling the state forester position and the individual would still need to be approved by the FSAC for membership.

- Member Friday volunteered to be on the committee if it occurs within the calendar year.

**7. Forest Stewardship Program Forest Stewardship Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) – Committee will be provided an update on the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Notice of Funding Opportunity for underserved landowners and communities.**

- Staff Friday shared that the IRA is providing a lot of resources for social justice and climate mitigation and adaptation purposes. A non-competitive offer was made to DOFAW as well as competitive funding opportunities that will be opened to DOFAW and others. The non-competitive opportunity for DOFAW is to identify and increase service to rural landowners who are underserved in the state. DOFAW is being asked to write a plan in collaboration with the Forest Service and through consultations with its partners on what needs to be done and how to implement it. “Underserved” is characterized by factors such as socio-economic status, veteran status, and first-time land managers. The aim of this initiative is to figure out how to connect underserved private landowners with market opportunities (carbon, water, ecosystem). In the context of Hawaii, the opportunity to figure out other ways to serve landowners in traditional markets could also be done. This initiative could help set the stage for other larger competitive opportunities for funding.

- Staff Friday shared that a competitive notice for proposals with a rolling time frame will be released soon for smaller proposals under \$1 million for organizations (national, regional, local, or community) that can support small landowners (fewer than 2,500 acres of forested land).

- Staff Friday also shared that there will also be later opportunities for cost-share assistance to carry out climate mitigation and forest resiliency for underserved landowners. This opportunity could tie into the FSP and their 20 years of experience with delivering cost-share.

- Staff Friday also shared that another opportunity would be a competitive program that would provide payment to any rural private forest landowner for carbon sequestration. It may be a good opportunity to support reforestation projects on mauka lands.

- Staff Rubenstein shared that collaborations with DOFAW’s Urban and Community Forestry program and the Forestry program are occurring since there are a lot of opportunities for local groups and community management of state parcels. Committee members are encouraged to contribute ideas or recommend groups that qualify as “underserved landowners” that should be included in the planning process. The Urban and Community Forestry program already has a good analysis of what is considered “underserved” so planning will be built on that and possibly integrated into the rural sector.

**8. Forest Legacy Program and Projects Update – Committee will be provided with status updates on the following programs and ongoing projects.**

- Due to time constraints, updates to Forest Legacy Program and projects were not given.

**9. Announcements**

- Staff Rubenstein was pleased to announce that the Board of Land and Natural Resources approved the draft FSP Handbook and the process for revisions to the Forest Stewardship rules. She requested committee participation during public hearings and to provide additional comments on the rule revisions. This is a big step for the program since the rules had not been updated since its establishment in 1999 and the handbook for over 10 years.

- Staff announced that the next meeting would likely be remote and via Zoom in the beginning of December.

**Motion to adjourn the meeting. Moved by member Friday; seconded by Member Kurashima.**

**Approve: West, Friday, Kurashima, Fisher, Potter, Derasin, Blakemore; Oppose: none; Abstain: none.**

**Motion passed.**

**10. Adjournment**

- The meeting was adjourned at 11:07 am.