

Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting

August 14, 2024

Present: Kalena Blakemore (Chair), Bart Potter, Kirk Derasin, Scott Fisher, Timothy Flynn, Cheri Mardon, Daniel Bowman, Natalie Kurashima, Adam Laeha, Malia West, Jennifer Grimm (Ex-Officio)

Staff: Tanya Rubenstein, Marissa Zhang, Brittany Lawton

Guests: Aliza Gebin, Jen Lawson (Waikoloa Dry Forest Initiative), Sarah Tekula (Kula Community Watershed Alliance), Daniel Goldeen (U.S. Forest Service (USFS)), Melissa Kunz (USFS), Kamuela Ka'apana (Trust for Public Land (TPL)), Aka Wedemeyer (TPL), Lori Walker (Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Land Manager)

1. Call to order

- The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM.

2. Review and approval of April 19, 2024, meeting minutes

- The Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee (FSAC) reviewed the meeting minutes from the April 19, 2024, meeting

Motion to approve the April 19, 2024, FSAC meeting minutes. Moved by Member Potter; Seconded by Member Fisher.

Approve: Fisher, Flynn, Blakemore, Bowman, Derasin, Mardon, Grimm, Potter; Oppose: none; Abstain: West, Laeha

Motion passed.

3. Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) Project Proposals - Committee will be reviewing and voting to recommend approval of submitted project proposals.

3.1 Papa Forest Project, Captain Cook, Hawai'i

- Guest Gebin shared that the property was purchased in 2017. They have begun to do some management work through invasive species removal and planting of native species. Some of the project's goals are to fence out ungulates, remove invasive species, outplant native species, create trails for access and management, and incorporate community engagement with the organization Root and Rise.
- Root and Rise is a 501c3 organization with the main goal of providing mental health support with an integrated holistic lens that is accessible to adults with serious mental illness and low income. Connection to place and 'āina is a fundamental piece of the organization. They also cultivate mamaki (*Pipturus albidus*) to raise funds and plan to expand workforce development and integrate it into the management plan.
- Member Blakemore inquired about experimental forestry and conservation techniques

mentioned in the proposal. Guest Gebin clarified that the phrasing was supposed to be removed from the proposal. Most of the methods they plan to use on the property have been tested and tried by the Nature Conservancy. They are open to learning and trying new techniques as well.

- Member Flynn asked about the species listed in the proposal as some are not found on Hawai'i island. Guest Gebin noted that she listed Aileen Yeh and Root and Rise as potential plant sources. Kealakekua Mountain Reserve could also be a partner and plant source. The species list is still under development and not finalized. Member Flynn reiterated that whatever is being planted should be sourced from the area.
- Member Potter inquired about using woodchips from trees treated with Milestone and if residual herbicide in the chips can kill vegetation when applied. Guest Gebin replied that they have not chipped anything on the property but will investigate it while drafting the management plan.
- Member Potter noted the rock features mentioned in the proposal and the archaeological assessment that indicated agricultural features that might have fallen from earthquakes. Potter inquired if any archaeological survey had been done on the property. Guest Gebin walked the property with an archaeologist, and they determined most of the rock features were likely livestock agricultural walls. Piles of rock were likely mounds built for the cultivation of sweet potatoes. They plan to leave the rock wall features in place. NRCS did not survey the property due to the low impact of proposed management practices on the rock features. They plan to incorporate the archaeology into the plan.
 - o Staff Rubenstein added that the committee was invited to join a site visit to the property on September 10, 2024.
- Member Fisher noted that features on the property like lava blisters might have trapped pollen. Analyzing preserved pollen could be a helpful tool to track chronological species composition over time and understand what was previously there. It has been a helpful tool for various restoration projects, and he would be willing to assist with methodology and techniques.
- Member Derasin asked about the planting density of 50 seedlings per acre and if the forest structure on the property is already dense or if there will be plans to increase the density of plantings and diversity. Derasin also recommended using local seed stock for planting as genetics makes a difference in plant success. Guest Gebin noted that the planting density was chosen because it is a realistic goal that can be completed. They are also seeing natural regeneration from the existing soil seed bank, which would contribute to the overall tree density.
- Member Flynn wondered if the project was considering scarification to encourage the regeneration of the seed bank. Guest Gebin noted that they are not interested in bulldozing but interested in low-impact soil scarification techniques to encourage natural regeneration.
- Member Potter noted that the listed endemic species in the proposal are known to produce beautiful and valuable wood. Potter also noted that neighboring ranches, such as Yee hop, have large kolea (*Myrsine* sp.) on their property so it is possible for the project to achieve similar growth. Guest Gebin added that wood harvests will not be part of the management plan.

Motion to recommend for approval of the Papa Forest Project Proposal. Moved by

Member Fisher; Seconded by Member West.

Approve: Blakemore, Flynn, West, Fisher, Bowman, Derasin, Laeha, Mardon, Grimm, Potter; Oppose: none; Abstain: none

Motion passed

3.2 Pulehu 2 – Chevalier, Kula, Hawai'i

- Staff Rubenstein introduced the Kula Community Watershed Alliance and described the impact that the 2023 wildfire had on the community. The Alliance's post-fire response focuses on erosion control in areas that completely burned. Rubenstein noted that they hope to use this project as an efficient process for multiple small landowners in the alliance who want to do similar work on their properties. The project has received funding and support from post-fire emergency funds and the Landscape Scale Restoration grant.
- Member Fisher noted that the project area was where the 2023 Kula fire had the biggest impact in the upcountry area. The landowner is committed to conservation and Guest Tekula and her partner are dedicated and knowledgeable in land stewardship and restoration techniques. Fisher added that lion's ear (*Leonotis leonurus*) is also a fuel load concern in addition to black wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*).
- Member Grimm inquired about fencing for the project area. Guest Tekula noted that the project's first stage would be installing deer-proof fencing a little beyond the burn area to do post-fire recovery work in the first 1-2 years. Funding for the gulch fence has been secured through the Clean Water Branch and the Hawai'i Community Foundation. They will likely do paddock fencing instead of one single large fence unit.
 - o Member Potter inquired about the fencing plan that follows geologic features and how it will alter deer movement into other areas. Guest Tekula added that the deer come from the north from approximately 70 properties. The alliance wants to work with DOFAW on the fencing strategy to avoid creating deer problems in surrounding areas. The proposal's fencing is only for the gulch section.
- Guest Tekula noted that the landowner's long-term goal for the land is to put it into a trust for conservation with a perpetual conservation easement
- Member Flynn inquired how long the project is expected to go and how realistic it is to convert burned alien forest into a native forest. Guest Tekula noted that the project will be long-term. Tekula and her partner have been involved with Skyline Conservation Initiative, which has restored the former eucalyptus forest into a koa (*Acacia koa*)-dominated forest for 12 years. They have seen invasive species management significantly decrease due to the establishment of a native canopy. Skyline has been using the eucalyptus on-site for mulch, erosion logs, and biochar. They have observed that the removal of eucalyptus has shown better water retention in the soil following flash flooding. Member Flynn recommended doing transects and surveying to document and quantify the effects of eucalyptus removal and restoration on soil health. Tekula noted that it is currently being done at Skyline and the landowner (Chevalier) expressed interest in this type of monitoring. Conducting scientific surveys and methodology is included in the plan with Department of Health and Clean Water funds but the alliance would be interested in working with the University of Hawai'i to facilitate a research project.

- Member Grimm inquired about the soil amelioration techniques used at Skyline and what metrics are used to track and quantify results. Guest Tekula noted that biochar is very effective for water retention and soil microbial cultivation. This is a great technique to remove invasive species on the land and use them to build soil health.

Motion to recommend for approval of the Pulehu 2 Proposal. Moved by Member Flynn; Seconded by Member Fisher.

Approve: Blakemore, Potter, Derasin, Mardon, Fisher, Flynn, Laeha, Bowman, West, Grimm; Oppose: none; Abstain: none.

Motion passed.

3.3 Waikoloa Dry Forest Initiative Expansion, Waikoloa, Hawai'i

- Guest Lawson introduced the Waikoloa Dry Forest Initiative (WDFI), which was formed in 2011 as a grassroots organization that worked with the Waikoloa Village Outdoor Circle to do restoration work. WDFI had a forest stewardship management plan that was approved in 2009 and completed in 2019, which encompassed 275 acres. The proposal is an expansion of the project to include 86 additional acres for dryland forest habitat protection and restoration. WDFI is currently waiting on the local landowner (Homeowners Association) to start the next phase and work on the partnership. The 86-acre project is severely degraded with a handful of uhiuhi (*Mezoneuron kauaiense*) and wiliwili (*Erythrina sandwicensis*). They are confident that WDFI can make positive changes to the land.
- Member Potter noted that kauila (*Colubrina oppositifolia*), 'aiea (*Nothocestrum sp.*), and maua (*Xylosma hawaiiense*) were not on the planting list but are known to exist within a few miles of the area. Guest Lawson commented that 'aiea and maua were planted in the previous project area with mixed success. They saw great germination but outplantings after one year resulted in very low success. In the new project area, WDFI plans to replace fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*) by planting and seeding workhorse native species first, then add more biodiversity. 'Aiea would do well in established outplanting sites. Kauila is not on their list since it is a Threatened and Endangered species and they do not currently have the appropriate permits.
 - o Member West questioned if the T&E permit for the area needed to be updated. Guest Lawson replied that it would since it was a different parcel. A lot of the species would transfer over to this parcel, but they haven't put all the species in the proposal since they are not yet on the permit.
- Member Potter asked about the lease terms pending landowner approval. Guest Lawson added that the homeowner's association owns that land and that WDFI must go through the board of directors and community feedback for the project. The project goes to the board for approval of the lease, which can be approved for up to 25 years. The next phase of the WDFI will be then be put on the 2025 ballot.
- Member Grimm asked about the homeowner relationship and if there were any reservations or concerns from the community. Guest Lawson noted that there are 7,000 residents and 7 members on the board of directors with different backgrounds and visions

for the village. They typically have a lot of support for the WDFI, although some board members want to monetize the land as much as possible. WDFI does a lot of outreach and site visits with residents and the board, which helps gain more support for the WDFI's goals.

- Member Derasin asked about the timeframe to irrigate seedlings and tampering off, and the strategy for direct seeding. Guest Lawson shared that the WDFI plants during the wet season (November to March), connect most seedlings to irrigation with a water flow rate of 1 gallon/week post-planting for the dry season, and disconnect when the wet season occurs. The end goal is to have sustainable seedlings that can handle the climate. They use seed broadcasting in areas with weed and fire management in a "plant and pray" method. The seed broadcasting method is cheaper, faster, and uses local seed.
- Member Flynn asked if the project had problems with rat predation on seeds. Guest Lawson shared that WDFI does have a rat problem but has not measured it. The native seed bank in the area is gone mainly due to rodents. Small-scale rodent control is conducted in the original project area.
- Member Flynn asked if scarification was being done since dry forest species likely have dormant seeds. Guest Lawson added that they are seeing natural regeneration post-fire of pili, but there isn't a lot of surface soil since it is mostly a'ā lava. Scarification would be a useful practice in areas with deeper soil.
- Member Bowman asked how often fuel breaks are checked and maintained. Guest Lawson shared that WDFI keeps fuel breaks vegetation free year-round and maintains a 60-80 foot clearing. This practice also allows for good community relations, as it is a benefit to the residents to reduce wildfire threats. Bulldozing fuel breaks are not part of the plan due to the site.
- Member Potter asked about seed broadcasting and if the needed volume of seeds on site is enough. Guest Lawson shared that there are enough seed resources in the project area and that volunteer labor allows for mass collections. Currently, the project collects seeds in the summer and banks it. WDFI has been sharing banked seeds with partners. Seeds are then manually broadcasted using the "flower girl method" which allows seeds to be spread on more specific spots that cannot be achieved with machines. Member West shared that the US Fish and Wildlife Service has funding for seed projects.

Motion to recommend for approval of the WDFI Expansion Proposal. Moved by Member Fisher; Seconded by Member Flynn.

**Approve: Blakemore, Flynn, West, Fisher, Bowman, Laeha, Mardon, Potter, Grimm;
Oppose: none; Abstain: Derasin.**

Motion passed.

4. Forest Legacy Program FLP Projects – Committee will review and vote to recommend approval of FLP project proposals for submission to the Forest Service

4.1 FY25 Ho'oulu Wao Kele O Puna - Committee will review and vote to recommend approval of the proposed project for submission for FLP IRA funding.

- Member Blakemore introduced the importance of acquiring the parcel since it would allow better access to the Wao Kele O Puna (WKOP) property. There is a contrast in

the high quality native forest habitat of the parcel and the adjacent area that has been mined for cinder. The property likely has endangered species on it.

- Member West asked how the evaluation of the property and the landowner's expectations may impact the movement of the project. Guest Ka'apana added that the Trust for Public Land (TPL) has been talking to the family and they maintain their interest in preserving the land. TPL is currently working on the market analysis for cost per acre.
- Member Flynn asked about the pu'u on the property and the potential habitat for threatened and endangered species. Member Blakemore shared that the neighboring parcel has a dense population of *Cyrtandra*, *Gardenia remyi* and 'A'o (Newell's Shearwater, *Puffinus newelli*) are also likely to be found on the property. The parcel is in better condition than WKOP. Access to the property is done through an easement with the landowner and other entry points. Guest Wedemeyer added that TPL has a relationship with the landowner and an easement to access the property. There have not been talks with the landowner to do biological surveys on the property, but internal discussion can be done. Member Flynn added that surveys may help bolster the argument for the area's conservation and what's at stake.
- Member Bowman asked if forest farming or leasing degraded areas to non-profit groups or gathering of forest items would be incorporated into the project. Guest Walker added that the priority is to protect the forest and native species but also extends to native Hawaiian beneficiaries. Member Derasin commented that the OHA parcel has community and educational groups, but access is a major issue. The property would provide more access points to the OHA project area. Since the parcel is zoned agriculture, there is the potential for food production or native seed orchards. It could provide water resources for lowland aquifers and foster the connection of "mauka to makai" with other land management partners.
- Member Flynn asked about how OHA balances increased access with an area of preservation. Member Blakemore added that OHA does not have staff on the ground at WKOP and is limited by their capacity to host volunteer/community groups. Due to the lack of access to the WKOP project area, helicopter transportation is required for many management projects. Acquiring the parcel would mainly facilitate access for community engagement and beneficiaries. It would not be open to the general public. Member Derasin added that OHA heavily regulates who can go to the WKOP property. Staff Rubenstein noted that the main preserve area is expansive and difficult to traverse due to the terrain, active volcanic features, and lava tubes.

Motion to recommend for approval of FY25 Ho'oulu Wao Kele O Puna for submission to the Forest Service. Moved by Member Flynn; seconded by Member Bowman.

Approve: West, Bowman, Flynn, Fisher, Laeha, Mardon, Grimm, Potter; Oppose: none; Abstain: Blakemore, Derasin.

Motion passes.

4.2 FY26 East Maui Rainforest – Nahiku Tract - Committee will review and vote to

- recommend approval of the proposed project for submission for FLP LWFC funding.
- Staff Zhang reminded the committee that the East Maui Rainforest project background and phases were presented to them at the previous meeting. The committee approved the project, so staff are bringing the proposal to the committee for feedback and recommendations. The parcels in the project are a high priority for DOFAW to add to the Ko'olau Forest Reserve.

Motion to recommend for approval of FY26 East Maui Rainforest – Nahiku Tract to the Forest Service. Moved by Member Fisher; seconded by Member Bowman.

Approve: Mardon, West, Blakemore, Derasin, Fisher, Kurashima, Boweman, Flynn, Potter, Grimm, Laeha; Oppose: none; Abstain: none.

Motion passes.

5. Announcements.

5.1 Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) through the Inflation Reduction Act – Committee to discuss and provide feedback on potential Division of Forestry and Wildlife proposals for NOFO #3 cost share payments for climate mitigation and/or forest resilience and NOFO #4 financial compensation to private forest landowners for the implementation of practices that provide measurable increases in carbon sequestration and storage.

- Staff Rubenstein discussed plans for DOFAW NOFO #3 application. Funding would be used for the implementation of approved FSP management plans that have not received funding and payments to DHHL and OHA for management practices on their lands. There will be a preapproval process since a state forest agency needs to provide approval to applicants. FSP intends to tie in underserved landowners to make the application process more competitive. DOFAW is applying for \$5 million and looking for a match waiver, potentially using funds from the State or Federal Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) sources.
- Staff Rubenstein mentioned that NOFO #4 was challenging and competitive to apply for since it requires more carbon measurements. It also provides less funding. Member Grimm mentioned that NOFO #4 is geared towards payments for carbon that are more quantified. It is open to non-profits as well. Grimm is seeing who else in Hawai'i is applying to determine if it is strategic for the state to pursue. Member Kurashima added that the funding could be tied into the State's carbon project.

5.2 Assessment of Need (AON) Update for Forest Legacy Program – Discuss process, timeline, and Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee role.

- Staff Rubenstein briefly mentioned that AON update is intended to be done in 2028. Funding was received from the USFS for an RCUH position that will be working ½ time as a planner for Forest Legacy Program management plans.
- Staff Rubenstein also mentioned the Forest Action Plan is due for an update since the last one was in 2016.

6. Forest Legacy Program Project Updates – Committee will be provided with status updates on the following ongoing land acquisition projects.

- FY18 Kamehamenui Forest, Kula, Maui

- Waiting on a draft management plan for public review
- Management is occurring on the property (fence completed, land removed from grazing lease, upper parcel fence complete, ungulate control happening soon)
- FY22 Hana Highway Rainforest, Hana, Maui
 - Phase 1: Funding secured, approved by the Board of Land and Natural Resources, waiting on appraisal, and hoping to close the sale this fall.
 - Phase 2: Parcels have broken titles, still doing due diligence, and getting an appraisal.
 - Phase 3 (Pa'akea parcel): Funding proposal pending. Still have to do due diligence.
- FY23 Kaneohe Pali, Kaneohe, O'ahu
 - Trying to get appraisals started, wanted to close by the end of the year but unlikely.
- FY24 Maunawili Forest, Kailua, O'ahu
 - Trying to get appraisals started.

7. Discuss upcoming Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee meeting dates and location.
 - Planning to do the next meeting in December/January on Hawai'i island.

8. Adjournment

- Meeting was adjourned at 11:50 am.