

## Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee



**DATE:** Tuesday, March 24, 2026  
**LOCATION:** In person at Kula Sandalwoods Café and Inn  
**TIME:** 12:25 pm

**ATTENDANCE: Present:** Jenna Masters (Ex-Officio), Kalena Blakemore, Kirk Derasin, Scott Fisher (Vice-Chair, filled in for Member Kurashima), Timothy Flynn, Jordan Jokiel, Adam Laeha, Ashley McGuigan, Malia West, Aileen Yeh, Daniel Bowman. **Absent:** Natalie Kurashima (Chair), Cheri Mardon

**Staff:** Tanya Rubenstein, Brittany Lawton, Skye Haraga, Kristina Estrada, Katie Friday (U.S. Forest Service)

**Guests:** Joe Imhoff (Kula Community Watershed Alliance), Sara Tekula (Kula Community Watershed Alliance), Johanie Rivera-Zayas (Hawai'i Agriculture Research Center (HARC)), Jennifer Grimm (DOFAW), Jeremy Gooding (U.S. Forest Service).

### AGENDA

**1. Welcome and introduction of members, guests, and member news.**

- The meeting was called to order at 12:25 PM.

**2. Review and approval of December 9, 2025, meeting minutes.**

- The Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee (FSAC) reviewed the meeting minutes from the December 9, 2026, meeting.

**Motion to approve the December 9, 2025, FSAC meeting minutes. Moved by Member Fisher; seconded by Member Flynn.**

**Approve: Blakemore, Derasin, Fisher, Flynn, Jokiel, Laeha, West, McGuigan, Bowman, and Yeh; Oppose: none; Abstain: Masters.**

**Motion passed.**

**3. Summary of current and pending Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) plans and other projects receiving FSP cost-share assistance, overview of FSAC review and ranking process for approval of FSP management plans and cost-share assistance for implementation of plans.**

- Staff Rubenstein reviewed the responsibilities of the FSAC members for agenda items 4 and 5
  - o Agenda item 4: Committee members review FSP management plans and provide recommendations and feedback.

- Members can recommend approval of FSP management plans with the caveat that committee comments be incorporated before being finalized.
    - Agenda item 5: seeking advice from the committee to approve financial assistance for the FSP management plan being reviewed (item 4.1), pending recommendations for approval. The committee can also defer item 3 to the next FSAC meeting.
  - Member West noted that previously, the FSP program used a ranking approach to select approved FSP management plans to fund. However, the scope of FSP projects has changed significantly (agroforestry, timber, and upland watershed projects), and the broader vision and priorities of the FSP have shifted. FSP projects selected for funding should have public benefits.
    - Staff Rubenstein noted that procurement issues have complicated the program's current process of awarding funds. She suggested a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to award financial cost-share assistance moving forward (including the presented project, Kunia Village Gulch Forest)
  - Staff Rubenstein gave an update on considerations for funding future projects and current funding for projects:
    - U.S. Forest Service grant funds for FSP – \$1.5 million awarded, spent \$942,000
    - Watershed partnership grant program – \$5 million
    - Department of Hawaiian Home Lands – allocated \$1.5 million for 2 projects in watershed grants, Mauna Kea projects pending
    - Office of Hawaiian Affairs – allocated \$500,000 for Wao Kele o Puna and Kūkaniloko
  - Staff Rubenstein mentioned several approved FSP management plans that are eligible for funding and could potentially apply for the next Request for Proposals in July or August.
4. **Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) Management Plans** - Committee will be reviewing and voting to recommend approval of submitted management plans.
- 4.1 Kunia Village Gulch Forest, Waipahu, O'ahu**
- Guest Riveras-Zayas provided background history on HARC, the Kunia Village community, the relationship between HARC and the residents of the Kunia Village community, and the long-term goals and vision of the project.

#### Agroforestry

- Member McGuigan asked about the species list for the agroforestry portion of the management plan, as a list of food crops was not provided.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas mentioned that HARC will be working with the residents of the Kunia Village community to determine what species they would like to grow and harvest from.
- Member Bowman recommended using a grid for agroforestry plantings and asked what planting spacing will be used and if there will be nitrogen-fixing cover crops incorporated.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas mentioned that clover cover crops would be used and that the project will follow the NRCS code for recommended planting spacing.
  - Member Fisher recommended *Vigna marina* as an indigenous cover crop.

- Member Flynn asked about the history of groundwater and soil contamination on the property (which is near an EPA Superfund site) and how agroforestry plantings will be done safely for consumption by the residents.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas noted that soil testing will be done for soil toxicity.
- Member McGuigan asked what the ratio of native species to food plants will be and what densities those will be planted at.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas added that diversity plantings would be done along “pockets” where curves in the zones don’t facilitate row plantings. Species being considered include mango (*Mangifera indica*), avocado (*Persea americana*), and jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) for the residents of the community.
  - Member Bowman recommended gridding out the planting scheme for the community garden and spacing out larger trees instead of dense overstory plantings.
  - Member Flynn recommended HARC reach out to the Breadfruit Institute for various varieties of breadfruit that would be desired for the diversity of tenants with Pacific Island ethnicities.
  - Member Flynn recommended palms to be considered in overstory plantings (i.e. coconut (*Cocos nucifera*), loulou (*Pritchardia* spp.), betel nut (*Areca catechu*), etc). Flynn also recommended kukui for oil production and biofuels.
  - Member Yeh noted that māmakī (*Pipturus albidis*) berries were used by early Hawaiians for Alzheimer’s prevention
  - Member McGuigan noted that considerations should be made regarding indigenous data privacy and piracy when publishing research on indigenous traditions and practices.

#### Seed Orchard

- Member West inquired about where seeds will be collected for establishing the seed orchard.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas responded that the project will grow seeds sourced from the Waianae mountains. HARC currently has Waianae genetics in their nurseries, with nowhere to plant them.
- Member Masters inquired about who will have access to the seeds being produced in the orchard and how the various storage requirements for species and seed types will be addressed.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas shared that HARC will be working on a seedling production project at Kūkaniloko, where there will be lab facilities that can process and store seeds long term. There is also a long-term vision with DOFAW to create a corridor of seed production from Schofield to Kunia.
  - Staff Rubenstein added that HARC has an existing Memorandum of Agreement with DOFAW for wilt-resistant koa trees, which can be amended to include language about payback provisions and seed sharing with the State.

#### Riparian Forest Buffer

- Member Bowman inquired about what species would be planted to reduce erosion and increase moisture content in the riparian corridors.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas noted that the species to be selected for the area will be appropriate to match the habitat and needs. It was also noted that the riparian zone does not have flowing water year-round.

#### Fencing and Ungulates

- Member Laeha questioned why there were no plans for ungulate proof fencing and if there were any feral ungulates present in the project area.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas noted that there are no ungulate present in the project area.
- Member Laeha inquired about animal grazing that was mentioned in the plan and how the livestock will be managed to prevent damage to plantings.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas shared that they plan to conduct trials with virtual fencing to control where animals are allowed to graze in the various zones.

#### Irrigation

- Member Derasin inquired about what water source will be used and if there are any restrictions on usage that could impact the projected irrigation densities.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas noted that the property has a well and municipal water from the village that would be used for the forestry area.

#### Threat Mitigation

- Member West questioned why there were no mitigations for the wildfire threat despite the history of fire near the residents and the surrounding area.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas noted that the agroforestry zone would act as a greenbreak and windbreak.
- Member Laeha questioned what mitigation measures would be in place for Coconut Rhinoceros Beetles (*Oryctes rhinoceros*; CRB) and if HARC intends to deploy netting over mulch piles to prevent breeding sites.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas noted that mulch would be spread no more than 2” thick, which is the recommended practice to prevent encroachment of breeding CRB.
- Member West mentioned that sanitation protocols should be in place to check for Little Fire Ant (*Wasmannia auropunctata*; LFA) in planting materials grown outside of the project site.
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas noted that there is a temporary nursery on the property that will be used to isolate planting material and screen for various incipient pests.

#### Other

- Member Fisher recommended utilizing Stephen Athens research on pollenology at Ordy Pond for historical species composition to guide the planting list.
- Member Flynn asked which plants will be selected for plant composition
  - Guest Riveras-Zayas added that the species list will be determined in collaboration with residents of the community, professors at the University of Hawai'i who specialize in lā'au lapa'au, and other experts.

Plants will be selected for lei making, and other selected with suggestions from the partner, Malama Learning Center, and for watershed enhancement.

**Motion to approve Kunia Village Gulch Forest FSP management plan with committee comments. Moved by Member Flynn; seconded by Member Laeha.**

**Approve: Blakemore, Derasin, Fisher, Flynn, Masters, Jokiel, Laeha, West, McGuigan, Bowman, and Yeh; Oppose: none; Abstain: None.**

**Motion passed.**

5. **Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) Management Plans Cost-Share Assistance** - Committee will be reviewing and voting to recommend approval of FSP cost-share assistance funding to implement submitted management plans.

**5.1 Kunia Village Gulch Forest, Waipahu, O'ahu**

- Staff Rubenstein opened the discussion and asked for feedback on potentially funding the Kunia Village Gulch Forest project after the management plan is finalized with incorporated committee comments.
- Member West added that historically, even when the state had consistent funding, FSP still had priority considerations that were taken into account when selecting projects to financially support. West also noted hesitation in approving the Kunia Village project for funding without seeing a final management plan and budget table, especially when three other FSP projects with approved management plans were not funded previously.
- Member West noted that the FSP never reviewed just one plan for funding. There were always multiple plans to review and approve. West suggested the committee could make a motion to approve the management plan and review the budget table at a later meeting date.
- Member Jokiel recommended continuing with the RFP process for approving projects for funding. Jokiel noted that it is still good to have a finalized budget to review when deciding what projects and management practices to approve with available funds.

**Motion to defer the agenda item with recommendations to redefine the RFP process. Moved by Member West; seconded by Member Flynn.**

**Approve: Blakemore, Derasin, Fisher, Jokiel, Laeha, West, Flynn, Masters, McGuigan, Bowman, and Yeh; Abstain: none; Oppose: none**

**Motion passed.**

6. **Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee (FSAC)** – Committee will vote to recommend approval of applicants to be in the FSAC.

**6.1 Scott Fisher**

**Motion to approve: Member Jokiell; Member West seconded**

**Approve: Blakemore, Derasin, Flynn, Laeha, West, Jokiell, McGuigan, Bowman, Yeh, and Masters; Oppose: none; Abstain: Fisher**

**Motion passed.**

#### **6.2 Timothy Flynn**

**Motion to approve: Member Jokiell; Member West seconded**

**Approve: Blakemore, Derasin, Fisher, Laeha, West, Jokiell, McGuigan, Bowman, Yeh, and Masters; Oppose: none; Abstain: Flynn.**

**Motion passed.**

#### **6.3 Aileen Yeh**

**Motion to approve: Member Jokiell; Member West seconded**

**Approve: Blakemore, Derasin, Fisher, Flynn, Laeha, West, Jokiell, McGuigan, Bowman, and Masters; Oppose: none; Abstain: Yeh.**

**Motion passed.**

#### **6.4 Natalie Kurashima**

**Motion to approve: Member Jokiell; Member West seconded**

**Approve: Blakemore, Derasin, Fisher, Flynn, Laeha, West, Jokiell, McGuigan, Bowman, Yeh, and Masters; Oppose: none; Abstain: none.**

**Motion passed.**

- 7. Development of a Strategic Outreach Plan for the Hawai'i Forest Stewardship Program –** the Permitted Interaction Group (PIG), which was established at the FSAC meeting on June 18, 2025, will provide an overview of their meeting.
- Staff Haraga gave background information on the Strategic Outreach Plan, which is funded by the USFS for 5 years to improve technical assistance and outreach efforts to private landowners. The main objective of the plan is to define underserved landowners, who they are, and how to expand outreach efforts to those target groups.
  - Member West (PIG chair) reported on what the PIG discussed in their meeting:
    - Evaluation of how “underserved” is defined in Hawai'i compared to the continent: Use the same language as other state agencies? What is underserved in Hawai'i? Does supporting the underserved mean supporting smaller landowners?

- Spatial mapping: What could be excluded? What should be included? Is it an accurate tool to determine underserved communities?
  - Discussed the previous landowner assistance workshops that were done by FSP and the observations made on attendees and effective outreach. Also discussed different types of communication methods for certain demographics. Learned that we need to get the right people and new people to attend workshops
  - Strategic actions:
    - Participate in TELE (Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively) outreach workshop again
    - Potentially pursue REPI (DOD- Sentinel Landscape) funds to expand technical assistance
    - Work with county programs
    - Collaborate with organizations that are already servicing landowners (i.e. Māla 'Ōiwi)
  - How to understand gaps: Different types of challenges for landowners who don't qualify for FSP and how to provide technical assistance to those landowners. Conduct evaluation of outreach strategies and program gaps.
  - Next steps: draft strategic plan, update spatial maps, and hold meetings with the PIG.
- Staff Friday: USFS Landowner Assistance grant began with IRA funding a couple of years ago
- Federal parameters were specific with USDA definitions of underserved
  - Within the USDA definition of underserved, who is actually underserved here in Hawaii?
    - Current FSP-funded projects show that they are owned and/or managed by institutions and nonprofit organizations, not individuals)
  - Strategies for outreach: Peer-to-peer communication, TELE workshops
  - Member Bowman clarified that the purpose of the agenda item was to report on what the PIG discussed and key takeaway points for future actions in accordance with Sunshine Laws. Bowman added that Item 7 did not require a committee vote

**8. Forest Legacy Program (FLP) Project Updates** – Committee will be provided with an update on the status and timeline for FLP applications for new projects, as well as updates on the following ongoing land acquisition projects.

- FY22 Hana Highway Rainforest, Hana, Maui
  - Phase 2- closed in February (600 acres using cost-share donation funds)
  - Phase 3A- currently in appraisal process (parcels have clear title, fully funded through federal and state funds, scheduled to close in September)
  - Phase 3B- awarded \$3 million in FY26 Legacy Land funds
- FY24 Maunawili Forest, Kailua, Oahu

- Maunawili FLP project- moving along, going to the Board of Land and Natural Resources at the end of May, needs to close by the end of the calendar year before REPI funds expire
- Other FLP Discussions
  - Next committee meeting will potentially in August in anticipation of USFS FLP applications due in September. Staff Rubenstein reminded the committee of their role with FLP (recommending for approval of FLP applications).
  - Currently, there are no acquisition projects with a readiness that makes them competitive on a national level. Two potential acquisition projects on Kaua'i with Nudsen Trust and Grove Farm. Two potential conservation easement projects on Hawai'i island.
  - Staff Rubenstein informed committee members that they should communicate with staff of any potential acquisition or easement projects. Members should share TMKs and other pertinent information.
  - Staff Friday clarified that the lands eligible for FLP funding must either have 75% forest cover or have 75% forest cover within 10 years.
  - Member Flynn asked what the definition of a forest is. Staff Rubenstein noted that the State Forest Action Plan (FAP) would provide a definition of forest in Hawai'i.
  - Staff Rubenstein outlined criteria for ideal FLP projects: a willing seller, involvement with DOFAW district managers and land trust organizations (i.e. Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy), clear title, and a competitive project (i.e. watershed protection/benefits, threat of commercial activity or development, presence of threatened and endangered species, landowner that is ready to sell, etc).
  - Staff Friday clarified that the FLP caps funding for individual projects at \$10 million. The USFS technical definition of forest is defined by forest use, which cannot be threatened by cattle. 75% forest cover could be harvested for timber in the future and 10% canopy cover can be either existing vegetation or anticipated through reforestation.
  - Staff Friday also noted that the Community Forest and Open Space Program is smaller and caps funding at \$600,000 per project, is more flexible, and acquired lands would be owned by the county or land trust organizations. Silvopasture is allowed, but cattle need to be actively managed and not contribute to habitat degradation.
  - Member Jokiell commented that large landowners with pastures may be interested in easements for timber production to financially supplement cattle ranching and maintain ranching culture.

9. Discuss upcoming Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee meeting dates and location.
  - Staff Rubenstein noted that the next meeting would be virtual via Zoom.
  - Member Fisher proposed the next meeting to be mid-to-late August (11th or 18th)

## 10. Adjournment

**The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 pm.**