

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stakeholder consultations were conducted in August 2024 to solicit community input that will help inform guiding principles in the development of a Stream Restoration Program. Community meetings included:

- 8/12 meeting with 2 ranchers who lease land in Ha‘ikū
- 8/14 meeting with 34 people at Roots School
- 8/16 meeting with 23 people at “Laf’s Barn”
- Individual meetings with State senator and representative, and Maui County Council representative for this region

Forty-six people participated in group meetings, 11 of whom came to both meetings in Ha‘ikū and offered different comments at each meeting. Many expressed appreciation to be able to meet and share their views. In addition, 8 people provided comments only via email and voicemail. In all, 62 people participated in providing input.

Most participants were long time residents and shared their observations over the decades. The younger participants learned from their kūpuna that stream conditions were much better in the past, and that they are left with the effects of long-time and increasingly low or no water in the streams. Without exception, all wanted to see stream flow restoration to the maximum extent possible. Several offered to help move this effort along, including cleaning gulches, collecting data, and testifying.

Three questions were posed:

1. What activities do you conduct and have observed in and around the Phase 4 streams and gulches?
2. What problems with current experiences and conditions do you feel should be addressed in coming up with a stream restoration program?
3. What suggestions do you have for us in developing a Ha‘ikū stream restoration program?

### Activities in and around Phase 4 streams and gulches

- **Sense of place:** The primary appreciation for the streams is that they define a sense of place for long-term residents, including lineal descendants. Participants noted that a significant portion of Ha‘ikū residents live adjacent to a stream and care deeply about the health of the streams, which are literally in their backyards.

- **Stream and ditch water is valued on many levels:** Participants reported using stream water to grow crops such as kalo, fruit trees and vegetables, as well as general irrigation. When flowing, the streams support recreational activities such as swimming and provide habitat for ducks and other water birds. A healthy stream flow supports traditional and cultural practices, as well. It supports kalo cultivation, the growth of traditional herbs used for healing, and habitats that support food gathering and recreation. The value of stream and ditch water is also appreciated at a larger environmental level. Sufficient water flows support native flora and fauna, recharge the aquifer and provide the right balance of fresh and sea water to sustain nearshore benthic species, such as ‘opae, juvenile fish and limu.
- **From mauka to makai:** Participants tended to describe their activities as a continuum, from the land to the streams and ditches to the ocean. They talked about various types of farming and followed up with ocean activities, such as recreational swimming, picking ‘opihi, catching Tahitian prawn, catching ‘opae for bait, thrownet, shore and boat fishing and diving.

### **Problems With Current Experiences and Conditions that Should be Addressed in a Stream Restoration Program**

- **Significant decrease or loss of agricultural irrigation and water for native plants:** The lack of water for agriculture threatens food security for those who grow their own food and raise animals, and for those who conduct commercial agriculture such as ranching and selling vegetables, fruit and kalo. Participants reported that water needed for lo‘i kalo, vegetable gardens and fruit trees is dwindling. Likewise, water supplies for cattle and horses are becoming scarce, and stream-related recreation is significantly dwindling or gone.
- **Increase in invasive species:** Participants cited several examples relating the lack of water to an increase in invasive species. They said that invasive flora is taking over habitat previously occupied by native species and believe that the roots of invasive flora are negatively affecting aquifer water recharge. Water scarcity is also related to feral pigs and boars destroying the environment. When streams are dry, these animals eat crops and dig for water, and hunters cannot keep the feral pig and boar population down.
- **Degradation of stream ecosystem and nearshore benthic environment:** It was noted that gathering ‘opae in streams has been affected by climate change and decreasing water. Participants said they need to hike further mauka to gather. Along the shoreline, the decrease or lack of water flowing from streams and ditches has significantly impacted the nearshore benthic environment. Reefs, limu, fish and other benthic species that thrive in a mixture of fresh and sea water are not supported as in previous times, and participants noted a significant decrease in these resources.

- **Polluted and excess waters:** Participants reported that cars, appliances and general waste are dumped into streams and ditches. This creates pollution and affects water quality both on land and in the streams. It was further noted that when the streams and ditches dry up and there are heavy rains, runoff into the ocean is muddy and silt settles on the ocean floor. The same occurs when excess ditch water is released into ditches.
- **Large corporations are not held accountable:** Participants expressed strong concern that for-profit agricultural corporations and developers are controlling the water supply. It was felt that corporations should not be deciding when and where to divert water, and when to release water.

### Suggestions for Developing a Ha'ikū Stream Restoration Program

- **Restore the stream water flow:** Based on concerns and problems previously identified, participants unanimously wanted to see full stream restoration. They suggested that the streams and ditches be inspected so that all waste that was previously dumped is removed prior to flow restoration, and wanted to make sure that flow restoration is done in such a manner as to ensure that the watershed is managed and that rain forests are restored.
- **Keep restored water in the Ha'ikū region and within the source ahupua'a:** Participants wanted to make sure that water restored in Ha'ikū is distributed to residents in this region and not transported to resorts and private development.
- **100% transparency:** Participants suspected that East Maui Irrigation (EMI) and Mahi Pono have not been forthright in reporting their use of water and management of the ditch system and that Maui County is allowing them to do whatever they want. They called for full transparency from these entities and suggested easily accessible maps that show the entire ditch system, including diversion locations, and the installation of surveillance cameras at key diversion locations with 24-hour coverage and whose videos are available live on a County-sponsored website.
- **Resource and information hub:** Participants wanted to see the County establish a resource and information hub that allowed the public to easily access to information such as water studies, and data on water availability, diversion and distribution.
- **Revise management and public policies:** Participants suggested that management of the ditch system be under the control of a non-profit agency whose major purpose is to ensure fair distribution of water, best management practices and other mechanisms that promote optimal use of water resources. Further, there should be clear public policy that prioritizes water distribution for farmers, cultural practitioners and affordable housing. It was also suggested the County use eminent domain to establish public access to streams and the ditch system so that the community can observe conditions first-hand.

- **Increased communication:** Participants wanted to see more community meetings in which to share their mana‘o. They recommended informing the community via mailed fliers in addition to emails and social media.