

# PROFILE: University of Hawai'i Sea Grant

## A Coastal Adaptation Case Story: The Kūlana Noi'i and Community-Research Partnerships

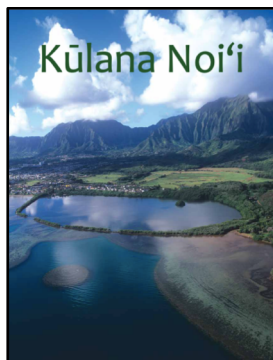


### BACKGROUND:

**'Āina, Pilina, Kuleana.** Land, Connection, Responsibility. In the Hawaiian Islands, the relationship between people and the natural world is strong. As a biodiversity hotspot, the islands are host to various research projects that aim to better understand and protect valuable species, habitats, and ecosystem services.

However, the community stewards of these resources are too often not engaged in research processes. In an effort to support more meaningful partnerships between researchers, natural and cultural resource practitioners, and the communities who care for and rely on local resources, the University of Hawai'i, He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve, and Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo (KUA) spearheaded the formation of guidelines to promote collaborative, mutually-beneficial knowledge exchange.

**For many years**, grassroots efforts to restore the local environment and preserve traditional management practices have been underway in the Hawaiian Islands. For example, Paepae o He'eia stewards the ancient He'eia loko i'a (fishpond) for the local community. As a unique site of natural and cultural importance, the fishpond has long been the subject of research and restoration projects. Insights from these efforts and the overlapping interests from academia and government officials provide firsthand examples that partnerships can be mutually beneficial.



**Without meaningful and reciprocal community relationships**, however, some efforts can be harmful. The Kūlana Noi'i, or research standards, serve as guidance on how researchers can build and sustain more effective partnerships and long-term relationships with communities. While representing a uniquely Hawaiian perspective, these standards address a common disconnect between institutional research initiatives and the local communities in which they occur. The guidelines address challenges faced by research institutions, resource managers, and community stakeholders.

The guidelines include a summary of best practices and patterns that have been successful at the community and research levels collected from insights of the KUA Research Committee, Moloka'i Climate Change Collaboration, and a literature review of other collaborative research efforts in Native Hawaiian, Native American, and Aboriginal Canadian communities.

The Kūlana Noi'i standards include: respect for people and place, reciprocity between researchers and community members, self-awareness of intentions and power of individuals and institutions, transparent and inclusive communication, maintaining a long-term focus, community engagement and co-production of knowledge, community ownership and access to knowledge, and accountability to the Kūlana Noi'i.

### PARTNERS:

Kua'āina Ulu Auamo (KUA)  
He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve  
Hawaiian Islands Sentinel Site Cooperative  
Paepae o He'eia  
University of Hawai'i Student Equity, Excellence, and Diversity (SEED)  
University of Hawai'i Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access, and Success (IDEAS) Program

*"It boils down to storytelling. The researchers are helping to tell our stories. Them coming into community work days helps them to tell their research stories better."*

*– Hi'ilei Kawelo, KUA*

## IMPLEMENTATION

**Pilot phase:** A workshop was held in 2017 with local stewards, principal investigators (PIs) from the University of Hawai'i, and staff working in He'eia Fishpond to discuss guiding questions for the Kūlana Noi'i and how these guidelines could be applied in the Hawaiian Islands.

**Taking off in the academic community:** The team started conducting trainings and workshops for students and PIs funded through Hawai'i Sea Grant and other centers at the University of Hawai'i with ~500 people trained to date. The Kūlana Noi'i have also been incorporated into University of Hawai'i student course and faculty professional development curricula.

**Sea Grant:** Hawai'i Sea Grant has adopted these guidelines in its requests for proposals. In addition, funding recipients (PIs and graduate trainee fellows) are required to participate in Kūlana Noi'i trainings. The Kūlana Noi'i was designated as a best management practice by the Sea Grant federal re-accreditation review team in 2018.

## NEXT STEPS:

Lessons learned will be added and edits will be made to the Kūlana Noi'i document based on implementation outcomes.

## REFERENCES & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

University of Hawai'i Sea Grant:  
<https://seagrantsoest.hawaii.edu>

Paepae o He'eia : <https://paepaeoheeia.org>

Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo (KUA): <http://kuahawaii.org>

Kūlana Noi'i: <https://seagrantsoest.hawaii.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Kulana-Noii-low-res-web.pdf>

Campbell HV, Campbell AM. 2017. Community-Based Watershed Restoration in He'eia (He'eia ahupua'a), O'ahu, Hawaiian Islands. Case Studies in the Environment  
<https://doi.org/10.1525/cse.2017.sc.450585>

Gregory R. 2015. He'eia Fishpond and Watershed. The EcoTipping Points Project: Models for Success in a Time of Crisis. <http://ecotippingpoints.org/our-stories/indepth/usa-hawaii-heeia-fishpond-watershed.html>

Kanaka 'Ōiwi Methodologies – Mo'olelo and Metaphor:  
<https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/title/kanaka-oiwi-methodologies-moolelo-and-metaphor/>

Moloka'i Climate Change Collaboration Lessons Learned:  
<http://piccc.net/piccc/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/MCCC-Lessons-Learned.pdf>

Research that Benefits Native People – A Guide for Tribal Leaders: <https://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/NCAIModule1.pdf>

Traditional and Local Knowledge – A Vision for the Sea Grant Network: <https://alaskaseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Traditional-and-Local-Knowledge-A-vision-for-the-Sea-Grant-Network.pdf>

Community-based Participatory Research Relationships with Aboriginal Communities in Canada: An Overview of Context and Process:  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235413126\\_Community-based-participatory-research-relationships-with-Aboriginal-communities-in-Canada-An-overview-of-context-and-process](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235413126_Community-based-participatory-research-relationships-with-Aboriginal-communities-in-Canada-An-overview-of-context-and-process)

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**Citation:** Braddock K, Gregg RM. 2021. A Coastal Adaptation Case Story: The Kūlana Noi'i and Community-Research Partnerships. Product of EcoAdapt's State of Adaptation Program.

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