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## **For Immediate Release**

### **OFFICE OF MAUNA KEA MANAGEMENT HONORED WITH ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD**

**Hilo, Hawaii (June 24, 2016)** — The Office of Mauna Kea Management (OMKM) is this year's recipient of the Kona Kohala Chamber of Commerce Pualu Award for Environmental Awareness. This award recognizes organizations that exhibit sensitivity and concern for the environment through innovative environmental practices.

"Pualu means to work together. The Kona Kohala Chamber of Commerce bestowed this environmental award on the Office of Mauna Kea Management for its longstanding and ongoing stewardship commitment on Maunakea. We were not only impressed with OMKM's environmental initiatives and actions, but also with its collaboration with the community on volunteer programs and innovative efforts to make substantive changes in behavior by starting to educate young people in elementary schools across the island," said Kona Kohala Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Kirstin Kahaloa.

The Office of Mauna Kea Management was established to provide dedicated Hawaii Island community based management of the natural, cultural and scientific resources on 12,000 acres of managed lands on Maunakea. Its mission is to "achieve harmony, balance and trust in the sustainable management and stewardship of the Mauna Kea Science Reserve through community involvement and programs that protect, preserve and enhance the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of Maunakea while providing a world-class center dedicated to education, research and astronomy."

Achieving harmony, balance and trust is challenging given wide-ranging environmental, cultural, research and community interests coupled with the turbulence witnessed over the

past year. Through it all, OMKM continued to initiate and execute management programs to protect and preserve the unique biological and geographical resources under the University of Hawaii's care.

One example of why the Office of Mauna Kea Management was selected for the Pualu Award for Environmental Awareness is illustrated by its sensitivity and concern for the wekiu bug.

Prior to OMKM's establishment in 2000, little information existed on the wekiu bug, a species found only on the summit region of Maunakea, that was listed as a candidate for federal protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1999.

OMKM, in coordination with other researchers, began annual wekiu surveys to learn more about its habitat range and biology, and with support from the Maunakea observatories funded a five-year study to learn about the biology and genetics of the bug. Other studies included an evaluation of weather patterns, wind flow patterns and how terrain might affect distribution of the wekiu bug food source.

These efforts, that resulted in considerable knowledge about the bug, combined with OMKM's Comprehensive Management Plan and Natural Resources Management Plan led the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to remove the bug as a candidate species. USFWS cited ongoing monitoring, expanded knowledge of the bug's habitat range and management plans "has precluded the need to list this species."

OMKM continues to demonstrate its commitment through documented actions in the implementation of programs and management actions to preserve and protect the unique resources under its care.

Innovative stewardship initiatives include a multi-year botanical survey of all UH managed lands and the development of a climate modeling program to help OMKM with future outlooks of climate change and potential impacts to the summit ecosystem. The Office of Mauna Kea Management is also undertaking an erosion study to better understand how

and where erosion takes place on the summit, and a permafrost study to determine whether permafrost still exists on the mountain.

### **Maunakea Invasive Species Management Plan**

Most notable among implemented actions is the development of the Maunakea Invasive Species Management Plan. Invasive species are a major threat to the native flora and fauna and ecosystems on Maunakea. The plan's objectives are to prevent the introduction of new invasive species and the establishment of invasive species populations. The plan includes measures for prevention, early detection, rapid response, and control to curtail the establishment of invasive species. The comprehensive plan includes a policy guide, a series of standard operating procedures and also addresses monitoring and educational outreach.

The plan is actively implemented, especially with respect to the inspection of telescopes, construction and vendor equipment and vehicles. The Maunakea Invasive Species Management Plan was developed in cooperation with the UH Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit and the Hawaii Ant Lab and serves as a model for other agencies to follow in the prevention and control of invasive species.

### **Positive Impacts**

OMKM launched its volunteer program in 2012 by inviting the community to participate in the stewardship of Maunakea by spending a Saturday pulling weeds. Volunteers pull weeds, are given a short natural history tour, followed by lunch and a lecture about Maunakea.

Nearly 1,000 individuals have volunteered during 37 weed pulls culminating in over 7,000 volunteer hours and 1,523 bags of invasive weeds pulled. Community volunteers have also helped with replanting the endangered ahinahina (silversword) in the adjacent Mauna Kea Forest Reserve.

“Ensuring that the rare and often fragile natural resources found within the Mauna Kea Science Reserve are protected will have a profound and positive effect on the community today and for generations to come,” said OMKM’s Director Stephanie Nagata.

## **Educational Outreach**

The Office of Mauna Kea Management understands that substantive changes in behavior start with educating young people. OMKM is doing educational outreach into elementary schools and communities island-wide. OMKM learning stations at educational events include endemic and endangered flora and fauna coloring station, a match the bug with larvae game, put the bug where it belongs on the mountain (similar to pin the tail on the donkey) and a bug box showcasing Maunakea arthropods.

The protection of natural resources is an OMKM priority. The OMKM natural resources program manager oversees the implementation of the Comprehensive Management Plan including the Natural Resources Management Plan and developing outreach and community programs.

OMKM has made incredible strides since 2000 and is well on its way to achieving harmony, balance and trust in the sustainable management and stewardship of Maunakea.

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## **About Office of Mauna Kea Management**

The Office of Mauna Kea Management is charged with day-to-day management of Mauna Kea Science Reserve as prescribed in the Master Plan. The adoption of the Mauna Kea Science Reserve Master Plan by the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents in June 2000 marked a critical milestone in the management of Mauna Kea.

Meetings and public hearings spanning a period of nearly two years went into the formulation of the Master Plan, which established management guidelines for the next 20 years. The Master Plan reflected the community's deeply rooted concerns over the use of Mauna Kea, including respect for Hawaiian cultural beliefs, protection of environmentally sensitive habitat, recreational use of the mountain, and astronomy research.

It places the focus of responsibility with the University of Hawaii at Hilo. The UH-Hilo Chancellor established the Office of Mauna Kea Management and the Board of Regents established the Mauna Kea Management Board in the fall of 2000. The Mauna Kea Management Board in turn formed Kahu Ku Mauna, a council comprised of Hawaiian cultural resource persons to serve as advisors.

The mission of the Office of Mauna Kea Management is to achieve harmony, balance and trust in the sustainable management and stewardship of Mauna Kea Science Reserve

through community involvement and programs that protect, preserve and enhance the natural, cultural and recreational resources of Mauna Kea while providing a world-class center dedicated to education, research and astronomy.