HAWAIIAN ISLANDS LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

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A well-filled calabash, a well-filled mind

WEX Interns Penina Matau, MacKenzie Plunkett, and Makani Walker visit Kahumana Organic Farms in Wai'anae, O'ahu.

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'Umeke Kā'eo is the newsletter of Hawaiian Islands Land Trust, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization committed to land conservation in Hawai'i.

As a Hawai'i organization, we encourage our entire community to learn more about the Hawaiian language. Should you come across a Hawaiian word or term you don't understand in our newsletter, please visit wehewehe.org or email info@hilt.org for more information.

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Hawaiian Islands Land Trust

Letter from the Chief Executive Officer

Laura H. E. Kaakua



Aloha HILT 'Ohana,

The land heals. In this time of isolation and uncertainty, I urge you to find connection and healing by spending time at a HILT preserve or your favorite natural space. HILT's Waihe'e Educator Denby Freeland recently texted me a photo of two women at Waihe'e Refuge, one in a wheelchair. As we keep the front portion of Waihe'e Refuge mowed, they were able to easily wheel up to the coastline where they sat in the shade of a tree for a long time quietly gazing out over the ocean. Denby shared that she was so touched to be a part of HILT and provide these opportunities to our Hawai'i community. At Māhukona on Hawai'i Island, a place HILT is working to protect, families come down every day after school and work to swim in the clear waters and wash the stress away.

Eating from the land heals. As the front cover shows you, our interns faces were full of joy and curiosity as they walked through Kahumana Farms in Wai'anae, O'ahu, getting to pick and taste fresh carrots, lettuce, peas and citrus. We want every person in Hawai'i to have that experience – to know where your food comes from, who grew it, and that it is grown in the healthiest way possible. When we eat from a place, we become more of that place. We build pilina or closeness to that place. Kahumana Farms practices regenerative agriculture, and we are working to forever protect their land under a conservation easement. I've now signed up for a weekly CSA box of produce from Kahumana and think of the rich soils of Lualualei and the friendly farmers of Kahumana with every meal.

Caring for the land heals. Though we are keeping group sizes small and socially distanced, our volunteer days continue. What we have heard from volunteers is how refreshing and healing it is to work up a sweat and get their hands dirty. In a time of uncertainty, there is a certain satisfaction that comes from definitively pulling up an invasive weed with all the roots! To help those out of work due to COVID, often coming from the tourism industry, we are using CARES Act funds to hire and provide job training to 40 temporary workers on our Kaua'i, Maui and O'ahu preserves. After working with one of the temporary Maui crews, HILT's Dr. Scott Fisher reported that they are having a ton of fun while also working incredibly hard removing invasive species. Scott shared, "they are literally singing while they work!" Much joy comes from giving to the land and we hope conservation jobs can be a big part of the new economy.

Protecting the land heals. When community comes together to protect a beloved place; to accomplish the seemingly impossible - hope, healing and happiness abound! In these last months, together we have protected treasured places from the Hāna coast, to the slopes of Haleakalā, to ancient lo'i in East O'ahu. And we aren't stopping. Mahalo nui for caring so fiercely about Hawai'i and the health of our lands, waters, and people. Mahalo piha for your support. As we enter ho'oilo (the wet season), and celebrate Makahiki and the holidays, I am wishing for healing for all of you and all of Hawai'i's lands.

Aloha 'Āina,

Jamo HE Kaster

Laura Kaakua, President and CEO

Kuahaua

HILT Celebrates Three Land Protection Wins in 2020!

Even through COVID, three special places have been forever protected because of

your support. When it is safe to gather, we will invite you to visit and participate in their care.

Quietly, on March 31, 2020, while our world seemed to turn up-side-down, 27 acres of coastal ranchland in Hāna, Maui was protected forever. This land, above Hāmoa beach, formerly owned by Hāna Ranch Partners, LLC was purchased using Maui County Open Space and Hawai'i State Legacy Lands funds by Ke Ao Hāli'i, a nonprofit led by lineal descendants and community members in Hāna. Hawaiian Islands Land Trust and the County of Maui now hold a conservation easement over the land that prohibits subdivision and development, forever protecting this irreplaceable part of Hāna.

Beyond its proximity to Hāmoa beach, Mokae provides access to ancestral fishing and limu gathering areas, and includes numerous cultural resources such as ancient house sites and agricultural terracing, and 'iwi kupuna. According to historical accounts, Mokae's Pu'u Hele is a place where the spirits of men, after death, were believed to plunge into Pō. The Hāna community, including Mokae's lineal descendants, are now the land stewards once again, and have created a management plan for the property ensuring it is responsibly cared for in all generations to come. The protection of Mokae builds on HILT's first conservation easement as Maui Coastal Land Trust down the coast at Maka'alae. We are excited to partner with Ke Ao Hāli'i in the coming years in an ambitious plan to protect over 400 acres of mostly coastal lands along the Hāna coast, ensuring this beloved shoreline remains forever in community care.

On July 28, 2020 we proudly announced the protection of 1.5 acres in Oʻahu's Koʻolaupoko ahupuaʻa called Hakipuʻu Loʻi Kalo. Hawaiian Islands Land Trust joined The Trust for Public Land, Hoʻāla ʻĀina Kūpono, and the Fukumitsu ʻOhana who have worked for more than a decade to negotiate and raise the funds needed to complete the project. Funding came from the City and County of Honolulu's Clean Water and Natural Lands Program, and the State of Hawaiʻi Department of Land and Natural Resources' Legacy Land Conservation Program, H. K. L. Castle Foundation, and dozens of individuals from around the world. These loʻi kalo sit at the foot of the Koʻolau mountains, Kāneʻohe Bay, and neighboring Mōliʻi Fishpond. These loʻi have been in active cultivation since ancient times, and are some of the last loʻi in Hakipuʻu; a place once overseen by Hawaiʻi's kahuna, and revered to this day for its traditional navigators.

The land is now owned by the community nonprofit Hoʻāla 'Āina Kūpono, and the conservation easement protecting the land and requiring it is always in kalo cultivation is co-held by Hawaiian Islands Land Trust and the City & County of Honolulu. Hoʻāla 'Āina Kūpono will work in partnership with the Hakipu'u community, area schools, and kuleana descendants to steward this 'āina as a kalo farm and an outdoor classroom where students and the public can learn about traditional regenerative agriculture, watershed and natural resource management, a living Hawaiian culture, and aloha 'āina values.

Finally, just this month, 'Ulupalakua Ranch on Maui, donated a conservation easement to HILT protecting 1,752 acres on the slopes of Haleakalā. The conservation easement permanently restricts the land to native habitat and agriculture that complements that native habitat. In partnership with 'Auwahi Wind, it will result in the planting of native trees and shrubs to create additional habitat for the 'Ope'ape'a (Hawaiian Hoary Bat), one of only two mammals endemic to Hawai'i. Protecting the lands that sustain Hawai'i is imperative. We are incredibly thankful for the HILT 'Ohana's support, and incredibly proud of our small team – who seem to find extra hours in the day – for accomplishing three tremendous land protection projects this year.





Upright põhaku at Koʻa Holomoana heiau at Māhukona provide guidance to traditional navigators.

HAWAI'I

HILT began working toward the permanent protection of the 642-acre Māhukona Navigational & Cultural Complex on Hawai'i Island's Kohala Coast early this year. Over the summer, we prepared County, State, and Federal funding applications and are also finding creative ways to engage the broader community. In August, we launched an online support petition that gathered over 3,000 support signatures in only three days! Supporters came from all over the world – an indication of the importance of this place beyond Hawai'i's shores. We shared each and every signature and message of support with the Hawai'i County's Public Access, Open Space, and Natural Resources Commission (PONC) as they work diligently to rank the nominated lands projects submitted this year. HILT will be keeping the support petition open, so mahalo to those have already signed on, and feel free to check it out to learn more and share with your



Children work with Kaninau Villanueva, Kāhili 'Āina Educator to plant native Lehua Papa at Kāhili Beach Preserve. 'ohana and friends: www.change.org/protectmahukona. Securing County, State, and Federal funding is the first step toward a protection effort that we anticipate will take several years to complete.

KAUA'I

HILT monitoring for 2020 started out on Kaua'i this year with visits to Waiakalua on the North side of the island, and Wai'oli, in Hanalei where acres of lo'i kalo thrive. Annual monitoring allows for HILT to ensure that conservation values are still in alignment, and gives us the opportunity to check back with landowners and on-site stewards. Continuing to nurture these relationships proves fruitful as we discuss future protection opportunities and ongoing stewardship practices.

On-site stewardship at Kāhili Beach Preserve has taken a huge step in the right direction as HILT brought on three part-time Kāhili Stewards! The team consists of Tim Asuncion, Ann Eu, and Kaninau Villanueva. Mahalo to the G.N. Wilcox Trust, Hawai'i Life Real Estate Brokers and Kōloa Rum Company as well as numerous individuals who supported the effort to hire our stewards! Though they started just as the Coronavirus pandemic hit Hawai'i, they've managed to make

impressive impacts building relationships with community members, enforcing on-site expectations and practices, and hosting monthly community workdays! The Kāhili team is working to remove invasive species, nurture young native plants popping up on-site, and bring in other native plants from sites in close proximity to Kāhili. In September, the first formal on-site education program started with Kamali'i Kāhili. This once-a-week gathering of keiki from Kīlauea is the first in what HILT looks to grow in educational offerings on site. If you're interested in learning more, please contact Kaninau Villanueva at kaninau@hilt.org.

Discussion continues around run-off on the Wailapa side of Kāhili as we near the rainy months of Makahiki season and we hope to work with community partners and government agencies to mitigate the erosion that has increased in the last couple of years.

MAUI

Now that Mokae in Hāna is protected, HILT staff is eager to begin working on the next phase of our Hāna Coast Protection Program, in partnership with Ke Ao Hāli'i (see feature article). Protecting the coast to include the land around Maka'alae, particularly near the popular pond at Waioka, will bring us one step closer to perpetual protection for a large part of the Hāna coast. Our success in protecting these lands relies on the support of hundreds of individuals in the community and the partnerships we form. We are stronger together when unified by a common vision and purpose.

Through a generous grant from the County of Maui, HILT staff and volunteers are also working in partnership with the Save the Wetlands Hui in Kīhei to begin the process of restoring the Lā'ie wetlands, a culturally and ecologically significant wetland located near the heart of Kīhei. Work began in earnest on Friday morning August 21st when, on an exceptionally hot day, a group of 12 volunteers gathered to remove highly aggressive, and ecosystem modifying, invasive species from the wetlands. In preparation for restoring the health and integrity of these wetlands, over 500 seeds of the native sedge, Kaluhā, were collected nearby and are growing at our Waihe'e Refuge nursery for future outplanitng, probably during the ho'oilo, or wet season.



Volunteers work to clear and restore Lāʻie wetlands in Kīhei, Maui

(MAUI CONTINUED)

Connecting students to the land remains a critical part of our work with our education coordinator, Denby Freeland leading our efforts to teach adults and young people the necessity and importance of 'aina. On August 12th 30 parents and students from the Montessori School of Maui's middle school visited the Nu'u Refuge to learn about the history of this wahi pana. For several Fridays over the next four months, some of these students will join the HILT staff and volunteers and work alongside us to clear invasive species and restore the health of the Nu'u pond. We are tremendously grateful to the Montessori school for their willingness to collaborate with us, and to help us care for these special places.



MOLOKA'I

HILT has partnered with The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Moloka'i Land Trust to ensure the conservation purchase, and permanent protection, of a 1,824-acre watershed at Mapulehu, Mana'e, Moloka'i. The \$4,000,000 purchase funding was secured through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Land Acquisition Program, Hawai'i Legacy Land Conservation Program, Maui County, and other private funders. TPL is continuing to negotiate with the current landowner. Once complete, the land will be owned in fee by Moloka'i Land Trust. HILT, along with Maui County will manage the conservation easement. This project is exciting for HILT as it will provide protection of important cultural sites including 'Ili'ili'õpae heiau, the largest heiau on Moloka'i and the second largest across the islands; important subsistence trails for Moloka'i families; protection of the watershed in Mapulehu and six other intermittent streams running through the property; the protection of quality habitat for federally listed endangered bird and plant species found in the upper forested areas; and opportunities for agricultural production of the land.

O'AHU

ʻIliʻiliʻōpae heiau, Mapulehu, Molokaʻi This summer at the Maunawila Heiau Complex we were very fortunate to have two groups of 'Õpio with us. The first was the Maunawila Lima Hana Program. Fourteen high school students and three college students earned a five week paid internship.

Each intern was assigned a group project including planting mea kanu for our māla with plants gifted bu Ho'oulu 'Āina in Kalihi Valley, that are used in traditional healing practices. It was a pleasure to watch them learn and grow as they completed their projects. The interns also heard from Kaile Luga from Huliauapa'a who introduced the interns to 'āina research management skills. Huaka'i to other sites included Huilua Loko I'a in Kahana, and Waimea Falls Park and Botanical Gardens where the interns learned about future career opportunities. We were very grateful to Hawai'i Tourism Authority and many individuals who supported this program.



WEX Interns Penina Mata'u, MacKenzie Plunkett, and Makani Walker at Maunawila Heiau Complex, Hau'ula.

A second program in partnership with Alu Like's WEX program, allowed us to hire three educational interns. Unfortunately, their program was cut short due to spikes in COVID-19 on O'ahu, but their time on-site had great impact on our interns and at Maunawila. Participants in the program were Penina Mata'u, MacKenzie Plunkett and Makani Walker. All three of them are displaced college students sent home due to COVID-19. They cleared brush near archeological features, worked on a water catchment system for our new māla, learned lashing with Mahea Keo and learned a lot about Maunawila. They were also able to visit Kahumana Organic Farm and see how our local farmers are helping to feed our communities by getting more local produce into homes.

We feel very fortunate to be able to work with youth in the community of Hau'ula and connect them to their wahi kupuna and at the same time be able to give back to the local economy.

"I enjoyed working at Maunawila under ALU LIKE and HILT. Although I'm Native Hawaiian, I was never directly involved with my culture. Even with my short time in Hawaiian immersion as a kid, I eventually lost the language upon going to elementary. That being said, my understanding of the Hawaiian culture comes from the bare minimum. My time at Maunawila expanded my knowledge of not only the Hawaiian culture, but provided me with a more personal connection by working the land, at a heiau within my own community! I'm saddened by the program being cut short due to COVID, though I'm happy to have had the opportunity I did."

- PENINA MATA'U

HAWAIIAN ISLANDS LAND TRUST 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Protecting Public Recreational Access and Food Security in 2019

2019 was a year of change and building momentum. We moved into January with the protection of more than 1,600 acres of koa forest on Hawai'i Island with our sights set solidly on the conservation of a walking trail in Kīlauea, Kaua'i. In February, the transaction was completed, and with the generosity of Joan Porter, owner of Wai Koa Plantation, the 4-mile Wai Koa Loop Trail will forever be available for the community's enjoyment. The trail meanders through the 500+ acre Wai Koa Plantation and includes the 100-year old stone dam. The trail is the first perpetually protected trail easement on the island of Kaua'i.

Moving on to March and HILT took on new leadership. Laura Kaakua, HILT's President and CEO, came to us from a nearly decade-long career with The Trust for Public Land. With an abundance of land transaction and community building experience, Laura hit the ground running, tremendously enhancing the HILT team.

In December, in partnership with MA'O Organic Farms, HILT completed the conservation of 21 acres of farmland in Wai'anae, on O'ahu's west side. The project, which was facilitated by The Trust for Public Land, brings the total acreage owned and farmed by MA'O to 281 acres, making it one of the largest organic farms in Hawai'i. The State Legacy Land Conservation Program, and the Freeman Foundation provided the funds for MA'O to purchase the land. The Joseph & Vera Long Foundation provided HILT with the stewardship funds that will ensure our ability to monitor the perpetual easement. HILT is proud to work with organizations like MA'O Organic Farms to provide feasible ways to make farming in Hawai'i more sustainable. MA'O's approach to food production is grounded in the empowerment of local youth, as new leadership is imperative to the future of both the sustainable food movement and the broader community. As a nonprofit, MA'O Organic Farms has been serving the youth of Wai'anae, since 2001, through a series of educational programs, including an on-farm to college two-year internship that provides a stipend and full tuition support for students at the University of Hawai'i Leeward Community College, UH West O'ahu or UH Mānoa.



2019 Highlights and Accomplishments

IN 2019, HILT ESTABLISHED NEW LEADERSHIP AND CAPITALIZED ON THE SOLID FOUNDATION BUILT IN 2017 AND 2018 TO READY THE ORGANIZATION FOR A NEW DECADE. WE ARE PROUD OF OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE YEAR, AND ARE THRILLED BY THE BUILDING MOMENTUM THAT WILL ENSURE THE PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP OF EVEN MORE OF HAWAI'I'S MOST CRITICAL LANDS. SUPPORT FROM OUR DONORS DIRECTLY IMPACTS OUR CONSERVATION, STEWARDSHIP, AND CONNECTION WORK. EVERY SPECIAL PLACE PROTECTED BEGINS WITH YOU – MAHALO!

BY THE NUMBERS



PROTECT (Conservation Purchases and Easements):

- Partnered with MA'O Organic Farms to protect **21** acres of agricultural land in Wai'anae, O'ahu. The Palikea parcel is farmed for organic produce that feeds our local communities. Our community partner, MA'O Farms, is a nonprofit that provides learning and wage-earning opportunities for youth in Wai'anae.
- Signed a conservation easement with Joan Porter protecting public access to the **4-mile** Wai Koa Loop Trail in Kīlauea,

Kaua'i. The trail meanders through the 500 acre Wai Koa Plantation and includes a 100-year-old stone dam. The trail is now the first perpetually protected trail easement on Kaua'i.

- Total projects completed: 2
- Total Acreage protected: 21.14
- Significantly advanced 5 conservation projects to close in 2020 and 2021

STEWARD (Stewardship Practices on HILT's Preserves and Conservation Easements and Annual Monitoring):

- Made significant advancement toward finalizing HILT's Climate Change Resiliency Plan for Waihe'e Coastal Dunes & Wetlands Refuge, Maui
- Planted over 1,500 native plants at Maunawila Heiau Complex, Hau'ula, O'ahu and Waihe'e Coastal Dunes and Wetlands Refuge, Maui

CONNECT ('*Āina Engagement and Education*):

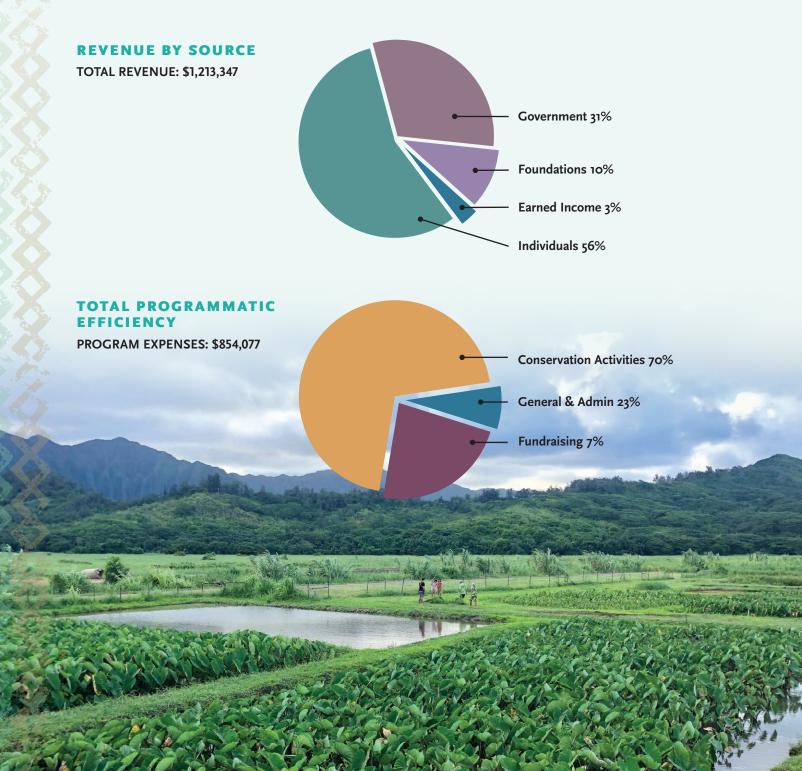
- Led **42 Talk Story on the Land Hikes** across the islands, sharing the importance of mālama 'āina with over **870 participants**
- Hosted nearly 3,500 school children ages pre-K through post-secondary school for 'Āina-Based Education experiences at Waihe'e Coastal Dunes & Wetlands Refuge and Maunawila Heiau Complex
- Provided paid internships to **13 teens** from Hau'ula in our Maunawila Lima Hana program

- Installed **interpretive signage** and **cleared half an acre** of overgrown brush at Maunawila Heiau Complex in Hauʻula, Oʻahu
- Opened **2** additional camping sites at Nu'u Refuge, Maui
- Continued cultivation of over 50 different rare kalo speices through a partnership with E Kapu Ka 'Āina's Maka'aka Lo'i at Waihe'e Coastal Dunes & Wetlands Refuge
- Conducted outreach to landowners across the state to share land conservation options
- Engaged with more than 2,500 volunteer participants in restoration work at our public preserves, contributing 6,250 volunteer work hours to HILT and land conservation
- Welcomed more than **5,000 visitors** to our 7 public preserves across the state
- Hosted more than 2,000 campers at Waihe'e Coastal Dunes & Wetlands Refuge and Nu'u Refuge on Maui

Financial Summary

COMBINED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2019

In 2019 our income exceeded expenses and we raised \$1,213,347 for operations and stewardship, enabling HILT to protect and steward over 20,000 acres of land across the state. HILT's efficiency is further demonstrated by the fact that 70 cents for every dollar raised is used directly to advance our conservation mission. The financial results depicted here are from HILT's audited December 31, 2019 consolidated financial statements.



2019 Featured Supporters

NĀ KOA 'ĀINA

Nā Koa 'Àina are a group of supporters whose generosity, long-term vision, and leadership has enabled HILT to fulfill its mission to protect the lands that sustain us. These steadfast supporters have made generous multi-year commitments to ensure HILT's success as we strive to protect even more of Hawai'i's most special places.

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NŌPILI MONTHLY GIVING CLUB

The nōpili is a freshwater goby known to climb waterfalls by clinging to the wet stones. The unwavering determination of the nōpili has become synonymous for showing steadfast love through small, persistent acts. We equate that with the dedication of donors who make recurring monthly gifts to HILT. These Nōpili empower HILT to take a more proactive role in protecting critical land across the State.

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The 'Āina Ho'oilina Society is a committed group of loyal supporters who have included HILT in their estate planning. If you are interested in learning more about leaving a legacy to HILT through a gift in your will, visit hilt.org/support/planned-giving.

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2019 'Ohana

Mahalo for your support of Hawaiian Islands Land Trust. On behalf of our Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers, we wish to thank those who contributed to HILT between January 1 and December 31, 2019

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HAWAIIAN ISLANDS LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER VOLUME 10 • NUMBER 2 FALL 2020



HILT and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) executed a five-year Program Agreement in August 2020, opening the door for federal agricultural conservation easement funding to benefit farmers and ranchers directly. Lands that produce healthy foods for our local people is one of HILT's three land protection priorities. We mahalo NRCS for this partnership as the time is now to support Hawai'i's food security and sustainability. We look forward to supporting local agriculture, ranching, and farming here in Hawai'i, and ensuring our agricultural lands are forever protected. If you are, or know of, a local farmer or rancher, growing food on privately-owned land, feel free to reach out to our Director of 'Aina Protection, Shae Kamaka'ala at shae@hilt.org.

Jill Ficke-Beaton (left) and Paul Lake (right) of NRCS and Shae Kamaka'ala (center) got together for social distanced approved photo to commemorate the execution of HILT and NRCS' Program Agreement in front of the Hilo federal building.

