



## Case Study

# WATERSHED PARTNERSHIPS MAUI, HAWAII, U.S.A

*A shared goal of water protection creates a large-scale partnership in the Hawaiian Islands.*

In the early 1990's, The Nature Conservancy's Hawaii chapter realized that their efforts to protect biodiversity in Hawaii would fail if they continued protecting isolated nature preserves without paying attention to the larger landscapes neighboring them. They also knew that the financial resources and a public constituency for the protection of biodiversity protection on the scale that they envisioned did not exist. They needed a wider constituency with more economic resources to shape the future of the large landscapes of Hawaii.

Discussions began about what would be the ideal partner to bring to their work on the island of Maui. It became clear that partners involved with the protection of water would be the most beneficial. Water protection remains one of the most unifying of environmental themes, and crosses all kinds of divides, public and private, individual and organizational. There was no pre-existing public/private group focusing on water, so they began exploring the concept with trusted external colleagues. There was a great deal of receptivity and, to test the idea, TNC created the East Maui Watershed Partnership. The Partnership was a voluntary alliance of public and private landowners and others working collaboratively to protect forested watersheds.

In creating the partnership, the Conservancy sought ways to establish shared goals among the members of the partnership, which included state and municipal water managers and conservation entities as well as private landowners. Through their own internal process, they were clear about which areas they felt should be restored and protected. They discussed common threats, actions and a vision of success. They made sure that they kept their goals clear by measurably advancing the Conservancy's mission within this new context. Both groups found that there was great overlap between critical native habitat and the vital water recharge regions that fed Hawaii's underground aquifers and above ground streams. Much of Hawaii's water comes from fog condensation in its upper forests, which are also home to native plant and animal species found now where else on earth.

The clear overlap in one high-leverage goal – sustaining a healthy water supply for people and nature – was mirrored in a shared vision with public and private water and wildlife management entities and private land owners of how to best combat threats to watershed habitat health, including:

### 3.A.2. Establish Shared Goals

- Managing and removing feral ungulates (non-native hoofed animals such as goats, deer, sheep and pigs) through fencing and hunting;
- Controlling invasive weed species;
- Restoring habitat to prevent erosion and run-off into streams and coral reefs; and
- Keeping wildfires from the upper forests.

Because of shared goals and successes, over time the Partnership grew to involve seven partners and four associate partners, and encompasses 100,000 acres. The Watershed Partnership concept has been endorsed and adopted by eight other Watershed Partnerships on six islands across Hawaii now coordinated by an overarching organization, Hawaii Association of Watershed Partnerships (HAWP). Together, these partnerships involve over 45 private landowners and 24 public agencies that cover over 1.6 million acres of land in the state. There is no model like it in the state with respect to watershed management breadth, scope, and efficacy.

For more information about the East Maui Watershed Partnership and the Hawaii Association of Watershed Partnerships, visit <http://eastmauiwatershed.org> and <http://www.hawp.org>.