

## For Immediate Release

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### **The Kohala Center receives \$8 million in land gifts** ***‘Āinaho‘i Program aims to transform privately held land into productive community assets***

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—March 21, 2016—A new program created by The Kohala Center encourages landowners who are contemplating selling their properties, but are concerned about future use, to consider donating them to the Waimea-based nonprofit.

In the last 18 months The Kohala Center has received two significant gifts of agricultural land on Hawai‘i Island worth a combined \$8 million: a 60-acre ranch at Keawewai on Kohala Mountain in 2014-15, and a 48-acre coastal property in Niuli‘i was completed in January. The donations inspired the organization to create its ‘Āinaho‘i Program, to encourage the transfer of privately held lands to The Kohala Center for long-term protection, compassionate stewardship, and community resilience.

“The idea is to return lands that were once productive, that sustained the people who lived on and near them, to abundance, so that they may nourish the cultural, spiritual, and nutritional needs of today’s island communities,” said Dr. Kamanamaikalani Beamer, president and chief executive office of The Kohala Center. “Landowners who are looking to ensure their lands are not only protected, but restored and managed in a way that benefits our island communities, honors cultural traditions, and respects the natural world might find this program fulfills all their goals.”

‘Āinaho‘i, which The Center interprets as “it is indeed that which feeds us” and “land gifted or returned,” focuses on conserving and protecting natural landscapes, and transforming them from personal to community-focused assets, making them agriculturally and culturally productive once again.

Waimea resident Jim Posner donated the first of the two properties, now known as ‘Āinaho‘i at Keawewai, based on the determination of The Center’s Kohala Watershed Partnership program to restore native forests on Kohala Mountain. The tangible impacts of the program’s ecosystem protection and watershed restoration work demonstrated the organization’s capacity to operate efficiently and deliver results, moving Posner to propose donating his 60-acre ranch on the mountain to The Center. The Keawewai site will eventually serve as the hub of The Center’s

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agricultural and educational initiatives, and offer community organizations a natural and peaceful environment for personal and professional growth. An existing structure on the property will be converted into a certified commercial kitchen available for use by community food producers.

“The spirit of my gift represented a convergence of vision from the ancient and recent past onward into the future, outward to the world at large, and beyond what we imagine today,” Posner said. “I wanted the land to be a productive and welcoming place for the purposes of conservation, propagation, education, expression, communion, and ‘funion’...I felt that The Kohala Center was ideally suited to steward the ranch to the next level.”

Posner's story, in turn, inspired Allene Wong and David Eckles to consider donating a property they owned in Niuli‘i, North Kohala, to The Center for long-term stewardship. They had purchased the property, consisting of approximately 25 acres of agricultural and 25 acres of conservation lands, more than a decade ago. Unfortunately, their plans to relocate to North Kohala changed.

“Regardless, we remained hopeful that the land would find its new rightful owner who would appreciate and embrace its unique history,” Wong said. “The ag parcel was once the home of the Niuli‘i Sugar Mill, and bits of the mill’s foundation remain intact. The conservation parcel hides a magical hala grove and there are moi ponds below its cliffs. We are excited to know that the property will thrive under the stewardship of The Kohala Center, realizing its full potential for the benefit of Hawai‘i’s communities.”

The Center plans to transform ‘Āinaho‘i at Niuli‘i, in partnership with the community, into productive agricultural land that will support a thriving native food forest, production of traditional Hawaiian crops, and a venue for cultural practice and spiritual rejuvenation.

For more information about The Kohala Center's ‘Āinaho‘i Program, contact Keawe Liu, Vice President and Chief Advancement Officer, at [kliu@kohalacenter.org](mailto:kliu@kohalacenter.org) or (808) 887-6411.

### **About The Kohala Center**

Founded in the year 2000, The Kohala Center (<http://www.kohalacenter.org>) is an independent, community-based center for research, conservation, and education. We turn research and ancestral knowledge into action, so that communities in Hawai‘i and around the world can thrive—ecologically, economically, culturally, and socially.

***Dr. Kamanamaikalani Beamer selected to lead The Kohala Center, page 3***

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[Hala cutline]

Part of North Kohala's historic Nā Hala O Naue hala grove remains on the 'Āinaho'i at Niuli'i property recently gifted to The Kohala Center. The Center plans to restore the grove and provide cultural practitioners and weavers with access to this precious resource. Photo courtesy of The Kohala Center.

[Niulii cutline]

'Āinaho'i at Niuli'i comprises 48 acres of historically significant conservation and agricultural land on the North Kohala coast. Photo courtesy of The Kohala Center.

[Keawewai cutline]

Kawaihae and Pelekane Bay as seen from The Kohala Center's 'Āinaho'i at Keawewai property on Kohala Mountain. Photo courtesy of The Kohala Center.