

Grant could preserve heiau

OHA land manager behind effort to protect ancient area

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Just above the edge of a tidy cul-de-sac in Hawai'i Kai stands a series of ancient stone and earth platforms, some of the last remaining evidence that this area may once have been a thriving agricultural center and fishery.

Pahua heiau, at the end of Makahuena Place, is a small piece of Hawaiian history sitting right in the middle of what is arguably one of the most developed communities in the state.

Office of Hawaiian Affairs conservation land manager Kevin Chang believes that the site can be a vehicle for community dialogue about sustainable land use and stewardship over a culturally significant resource.

That's why Chang applied for — and received — a \$10,000 national conservation grant from Audubon and Toyota. The Together-Green Fellowship is meant to engage local residents in conservation and environmental health practices at the community level.

"My view is that teaching people about Hawaiian and island cultural values is an important part of the discussion on sustainability that addresses climate change," said Chang. "Organizations like Audubon and Toyota are teaming up to include the idea that people are also part of the environment, and that we need to be more involved in integrating people and environment into the community."

The structure, estimated to be about 600 years old, is thought to have been an agricultural heiau or fishing shrine used by ancient Hawaiians planting sweet



Photo courtesy Kevin Chang

Hawaiian cultural practitioner Kamo'a Quitevis overlooks Pahua heiau in Hawai'i Kai. The structure is believed to have been an agricultural heiau or fishing shrine.

potatoes and dryland kalo (taro) or harvesting from fishponds that once lined the coast.

"It's an ironic and interesting conservation piece," said Chang. "Pahua is a property OHA has had for almost 20 years. We've just managed it but there's so much more that can be done with it."

Pahua heiau sits on land gifted to OHA by Kamehameha Schools in 1988. The heiau was partially restored by the Outdoor Circle in the mid-1980s, but remains relatively obscure to any but Hawaiian cultural practitioners and hikers, who reference the heiau as the starting landmark of the Kamiloiki Ridge Trail.

"Among OHA's goals for real estate is this idea of bridging the ancient use of land with future land use

patterns," said Jonathan Scheuer, land management director for OHA. "As Hawai'i continues to change and develop, we want to do so in a way that the historic presence of Hawaiians is not obliterated from the landscape."

Chang hopes to engage the community in dialogue about how Hawaiian agricultural and land use practices can be applied to today's conservation efforts, hopefully involving area schools and organizations in other educational activities surrounding the heiau.

"Besides having a tremendous amount of experience on land management issues, (Kevin) has a history of working in the grassroots community," said Scheuer. "He has a really good way of working with people, and an attention to

people's thoughts and interests. He also has a strong knowledge and appreciation of the Hawaiian culture with an eye to having things benefit not just Native Hawaiians, but everyone."

Chang is working with OHA to assess the full historical relevance of Pahua heiau and the best way to revive the site's cultural significance within the surrounding community.

"I'm going about it slowly. We want to be good neighbors and also culturally appropriate," said Chang. "It's balancing the past and the present and also breathing life into something we tend to see as only existing in the past."

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