

## Forest Recovery Project

**Statement of Suzanne Case, Executive Director, The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i  
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Few places on Earth can rival Hawaii's spectacular natural diversity. Our islands host ten thousand species of plants and creatures found nowhere else on Earth.

They form the foundation of our native Hawaiian culture, woven deeply into cultural practices.

Our native forests, with their many layers of trees and ferns and mosses, capture moisture, form our watersheds, trickle down into our aquifers, and give us water. Water is the life blood for all of us in Hawaii. When you get a glass of water from the tap, you can thank the forest for that water. Protecting our native forests ensures we will all have water to drink.

But Hawaii's unique native forests are exceptionally fragile. Half of Hawaii's original native forest cover has been lost. Only 15% of Moloka'i's native forest remains. More species face possible extinction in Hawai'i than anywhere else in the nation – half of our native birds are extinct. Our future water supply is at risk. Our streams are muddy. Our reefs are silted over. Our fisheries have declined 75%.

Nevertheless, our remaining native forests can be saved. The Nature Conservancy's Forest Recovery Project is part of the Conservancy's continuing efforts to preserve Hawaii's best remaining native forests and reefs.

We have a deep commitment to our home, our culture, and to future generations. We want a beautiful Hawai'i with healthy forests and reefs that sustain our native culture. We want to see Moloka'i's South Slope green again, Kamakou stream running year round again, our reefs clear and filled with fish. In the rest of Hawai'i, we want to see native forests flourishing, clear water running in streams and into our watersheds, and healthy reefs and oceans. We want to see our friends and families able to continue their Hawaiian cultural practices, continue subsistence and recreational hunting and fishing, and enjoying all that Hawaii's natural beauty has to offer us.

As part of preparing for the Forest Recovery Project, we've had more than 3 dozen meetings statewide – with 27 on Molokai. We have received much valuable public input and we have refined and improved our project with it. Our contractors, Prohunt, are getting set up now. We'll be starting operations this fall.

For those of you unfamiliar with our project, let me walk you through the details. We are doing a short-term research and demonstration hunting project in remote areas on private lands, mostly in our own preserves. We are planning to work on three islands: Maui, Molokai and Kauai. In total, these projects will cover much less than 1% of all the land in Hawaii. Our goal is to evaluate our own animal management strategies and test the model of contract animal management in Hawaii.

Specifically, on Maui, we are conducting monitoring and demonstration hunting on private land, including our own Waikamoi and Kapunakea preserves. We are also conducting a research project in Kahakuloa Natural Area Reserve on West Maui to monitor animal movement.

On Kauai, we are conducting only a research project on public and private land. There is no demonstration hunting on Kauai.

On Molokai, we are conducting monitoring and demonstration hunting on private land, including our Pelekunu (upper portion only) and Kamakou preserves. We have also been asked by private land owners to address the terrible goat problem faced by the South Slope, which is a barren landscape. We will be doing ground hunting there, above 1500 foot elevation, to minimize impact on residents in the area. All our projects are being conducted in remote areas, where few people go, to minimize impact on hunters, residents, and others.