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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Hawai'i Forest Institute Awarded Hawaii Life Charitable Fund of the Hawai'i Community Foundation Grant

**Hawai'i Island, March 3, 2022** – The Hawai'i Forest Institute (HFI) has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from Hawaii Life Charitable Fund (HLCF) at Hawai'i Community Foundation through the Mealoha Kraus People's Choice Award Program.

Mealoha Kraus was a well-loved Hawai'i Life broker and the HLCF's first Board Chair. She lost her battle with breast cancer in late 2019. Mealoha was a leader in every sense of the word, and under her leadership, the HLCF raised and distributed more than \$200,000 in 2018 to help with recovery efforts from the flooding on Kaua'i and O'ahu, and the volcanic eruption on Hawai'i Island. Mealoha remains a guiding light for the HLCF and they honor the contributions she has made to this profession, her community, family, and Hawai'i Life.



Site Manager Wilds Pihanui Brawner gives a planting demonstration for students at Ka'upulehu Dryland Forest.

Each year, Hawai'i Life agents and brokers collectively choose a giving focus for the grant program. The HLCF Board of Directors makes grants available to eligible 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations across the state whose programs align with both their mission and giving focus for that calendar year.

"Our forest restoration and education projects fit nicely with Hawaii Life Charitable Fund's focus for 2022 – Hawaiiana - Perpetuating the culture, traditions and history of our first ancestors who settled these Hawaiian Islands", said HFI Executive Director Heather Simmons.

The Ho'ola Ka Makana'a o Ka'upulehu project includes forest restoration and education at Ka'upulehu Dryland Forest and Kalaemanō Cultural Center in North Kona on Hawai'i Island. The Ka'upulehu Cultural Ecology Team shares stories of place, ancestral connections, and natural history of these rare dryland ecosystems, intertwining a homeland perspective into 'āina-based learning.

The Keauhou Bird Conservation Center (KBCC) Discovery Forest involves outplanting native seedlings in a endemic forest canopy with Acacia koa and 'Ōhi'a Lehua as the pioneer species. Twenty different native species have been outplanted at the Discovery Forest since 2014. KBCC Caretaker Ulumauahi Keali'ikanaka'ole coordinates student volunteer events and inspires youth to bond with their environment through service-learning activities connecting science with culture. Birds being cared for at KBCC are the 'Alalā (extinct in the wild), Palila, 'Akeke'e, and 'Akikiki.

The Honolulu Zoo Children's Discovery Forest demonstrates culturally significant plant and tree

species that once grew near traditional shoreline villages of O‘ahu. HFI recently produced a [Docent Workbook Interpretive Guide](#), [New Plant ID Pages](#), and a [Forest Friends Coloring Book](#) featuring native animals and their habitat. This year HFI is developing “Symphony of the Hawaii Forests” educational materials for students and teachers.

The Go Native: Growing a 'Native Hawaiian Urban Forest includes producing a video series and a quick reference guide encouraging people to plant native and Polynesian-introduced seedlings.

In 2003, the Hawai‘i Forest Industry Association (HFIA) formed the Hawaii Forest Institute, a 501c3 nonprofit organization. HFI’s mission is to promote the health and productivity of Hawaii’s forests through forest restoration, educational programs, information dissemination, and support for scientific research.

HFIA is a 501c6, nonprofit organization established in 1989. HFIA programs promote healthier forests, increased business in Hawaii’s forest industry, and more jobs within the sector. HFIA has 250 members including individuals and public and private businesses and corporation.