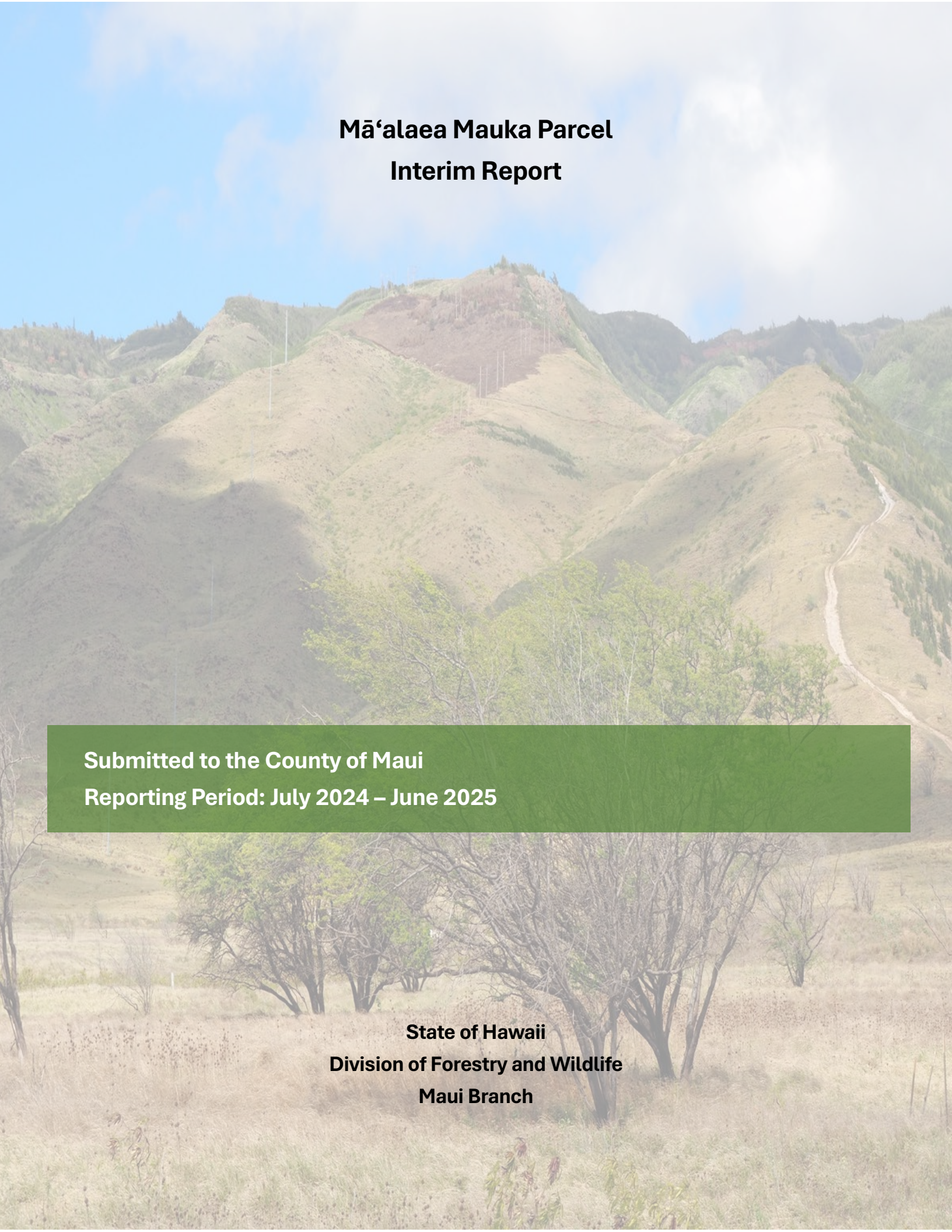
Māʻalaea Mauka Parcel
Interim Report



Submitted to the County of Maui
Reporting Period: July 2024 – June 2025

State of Hawaii
Division of Forestry and Wildlife
Maui Branch

Introduction

In June 2024, the State of Hawai‘i, through the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), acquired a 257-acre parcel at Mā‘alaea Mauka (TMK # 3-6-001:018), Maui in partnership with the County of Maui and the Trust for Public Land. As a condition of the County's support for the acquisition, DOFAW is required to submit annual reports for the first three years documenting progress toward implementation of a long-term management plan. This document is the first of three interim reports.

Site Overview

The Mā‘alaea Mauka parcel is a 257-acre coastal plain located at the base of the West Maui Mountains, mauka of Mā‘alaea Harbor and adjacent to Honoapi‘ilani Highway. The parcel is classified as ALISH “Prime” agricultural land with deep, well-drained soils and lies directly makai of 3,414 acres of state-owned Conservation lands. This parcel is a critical component of landscape-scale conservation efforts due to its:

- High wildfire risk and its role as a potential firebreak buffer;
- Significant erosion problems affecting marine ecosystems in Ma‘alaea Bay;
- Habitat value for native species such as the Hawaiian hoary bat, sphinx moth, and wiliwili;
- Cultural and scenic importance, including the Lahaina Pali Trail and regionally significant open space.

Overview of the Maalaea Mauka parcel, view looking south.

The Mā‘alaea Mauka parcel lies within a broader collaborative framework for watershed, fire, and habitat management in West and South Maui. The parcel complements the following regional plans, which provide guidance for its management:

- Mauna Kahalawai Watershed Management Plan: Protects native ecosystems and freshwater resources.
- West Maui and South Maui Community Wildfire Protection Plans: Identify fire risks and establish prevention and suppression actions.
- Pohakea Watershed Management Plan: Addresses sedimentation and runoff impacting nearshore marine ecosystems.

Integration with these plans enables DOFAW and partners to address fire, erosion, and habitat restoration at landscape scales, improving ecosystem resilience from the uplands (mauka) to the sea (makai).

Management Strategy and Progress

1) Designation and Legal Status
    a) The lands are currently in the Department's inventory, with management and uses regulated under Chapter 13-221, Hawaii Administrative Rules.
    b) DOFAW is preparing documentation to designate the parcel as a Forest Reserve under Chapter 183, HRS. The Executive Order for the designation is in preparation.
    c) Forest Reserve status will place the lands under Chapter 13-104, Hawaii Administrative Rules and formalize conservation management and support for long-term protection and restoration efforts.
2) Infrastructure
    a) Regraded and 'touched-up' approximately 2 miles of access and internal roads. ***Work completed May 2025***.
    b) Procured contractor to repair all three (3) well pumps to ensure that all well pumps work properly. ***Work to begin July 2025***.
    c) Procured contractor to upgrade pump control unit to allow for remote monitoring of pump and water delivery system. ***Work to begin July 2025***.
    d) Procured contractor to retrofit warehouse facility unit to accommodate masticator excavator machine and skid steer masticator machine. ***Work to begin July 2025***.
    e) In-process to install starlink internet services for the area to better support security cams and communications for the area.
3) Security
    a) Installed lock system on four access gate entrances
    b) South gate – new gate and combo lock installed. ***Work completed March 2025***.
    c) North gate – new gate and combo lock installed. ***Work completed March 2025***.
    d) North Paddock gate – new gate and combo lock installed. ***Work completed March 2025***.
    e) Main highway gate
        i) Electric automatic gate installed with two cameras for increased security measures. ***Work completed May 2025***.
        ii) Gate is set on automatic open/close schedules daily
4) Fire Management
    a) Procured contractor to install approximately 6 miles of irrigation line that will deliver water from the wells to the parcel. Irrigation line system includes main lines and lateral lines. Purpose is to

deliver water to the parcel to support fire suppression and pre-suppression management efforts. ***Work to begin July 2025***.

b) Procured contractor to install three (3) water tanks, two (2) of which will be used primarily for helicopter dip access during fire suppression activities. ***Work to begin July 2025.***
   i) 1 x 30,000 gallon tank (on-site storage tank)
   ii) 2 x 10,000 gallon tanks (helicopter dip tanks)

c) Procured contractor to install ungulate fences throughout the parcel to create 'grazing' fuel break paddock units that will be grazed to keep fuel loads to a manageable height that is favorable to breaking up the horizontal continuity and vertical arrangement of fuels. ***Work completed July 2025***.
   i) Issued two (2) grazing permits to local livestock permittees. ***Issued in 2024***.
   ii) Will issue a third grazing permit to local livestock permittee for remaining two paddocks. ***July 2025***.

d) DOFAW fire mitigation crews continue to maintain approximately 2.5 miles of firebreak network.

e) Collaboration with Hawaiian Electric is ongoing to identify and mitigate potential ignition points along power lines.

f) Incident Response: On November 14, 2024, a wildfire from an adjacent parcel spread into the property. Rapid response by DOFAW and MFD contained the fire to 95 acres. DOFAW provided 32 personnel and engines, tankers, and equipment support to control the fire by November 17, 2024.

DOFAW water tanker establishing containment line along south flank of the Pohakea fire.

5) Soil Erosion Mitigation
   a) Procured ungulate (8’ high) proof fence along the base of the mountain to keep axis deer and other ungulates from accessing the unit to prevent further vegetation loss and soil erosion. ***Work completed March 2025***.
   b) DOFAW staff continue to conduct aerial control work mauka of the ungulate proof fence line to reduce population numbers to zero tolerance. Staff removed approximately 1200 axis deer to date.
   c) Initiated outplanting of wiliwili and kukui to begin establishment of green break areas.
   d) Discussions underway with community groups to begin under contract vegetation management to restore riparian corridors in support of reducing soil exposure and runoff potential.
   e) Plans for the necessary internal fencing in support of riparian corridor restoration are in progress
   f) Water from irrigation system will enable revegetation with less fire-prone native species.
6) Volunteer Program
   a) Five (5) volunteer work trips – removed approximately 15-20 cubic yards of materials and debris from site.
   b) Discussions in progress to increase volunteer trips.
7) Public Use and Cultural Access
   a) Public access, including to the historic Lahaina Pali Trail, remains available.
   b) Future planning may consider improvements such as trailhead parking if identified as a community priority.
   c) The property’s scenic value and open space contribute to the region’s cultural and recreational landscape.

Lahaina Pali Trail is maintained to support public access for cultural and recreational activities.

8) Funding and support
    a) Secured six new DOFAW civil service positions and equipment for fire prevention and suppression district-wide. Those enhancement will provide significant benefits to the parcel.
    b) Secured state CIP funding in the amount of $1.75M for the parcel and adjacent lands to address fire and erosion issues.
    c) Secured $2M CIP to address fire and erosion issues in West Maui, a portion of which may be used on the subject parcel if needed.
    d) Submitted a $5.5M grant proposal to the FEMA Habitat Mitigation Grant Program for fire and erosion control on the subject parcel with Governor's support. Decision on award is pending.
9) In the coming year, DOFAW will:
    a) Finalize Forest Reserve designation
    b) Complete installation of firefighting infrastructure
    c) Secure funding for erosion control improvements
    d) Expand habitat restoration and firebreak efforts
    e) Respond to and suppress wildfires
    f) Deepen engagement with community partners
    g) Continue monitoring wildfire, erosion, and habitat conditions
    h) Begin erosion control design and planning

Conclusion

The first year of management has laid a strong foundation for achieving the long-term conservation, fire prevention, and watershed protection goals for the Mā'alaea Mauka parcel. Continued collaboration with the County, conservation partners, and the community is essential to protect the region's natural and cultural resources and reduce threats from wildfire, erosion, and environmental degradation.