



NOAA's Habitat Focus Area in Hawai'i



Background

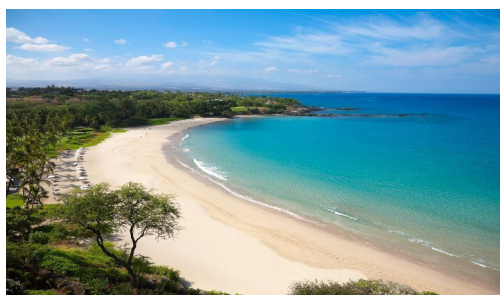
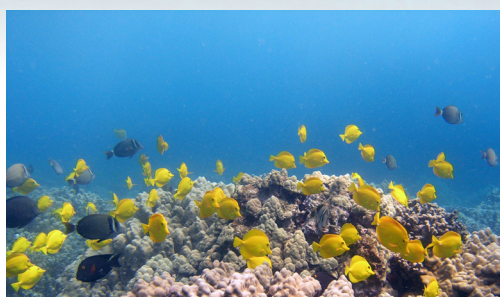
Habitat Focus Areas are targeted places where NOAA is collaborating with communities to measurably improve the environment through NOAA's mission of science, service, and stewardship.

Ten Areas for Action

NOAA selected ten Habitat Focus Areas (HFAs) nationwide to help communities protect and restore valuable natural resources that support local economies. Experts in the HFAs design and implement solutions to address threats to coastal habitats, working with partners to achieve shared conservation goals within a 5-year period. Using habitat science and best practices, HFAs demonstrate a concrete application of NOAA's mission.

NOAA Habitat Blueprint

Habitat Focus Areas are part of the Habitat Blueprint: a framework for NOAA to address the growing challenge of habitat loss. Visit the Habitat Blueprint website at <https://www.HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov>.



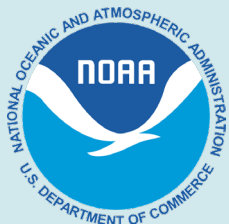
West Hawai'i is home to abundant marine life, significant cultural sites, and a thriving tourism economy. In Hawai'i, connections between people and land, fish and seasons, mountain and sea are inherent in traditional natural resource management. As pressures on the area's resources increase, management attuned to these connections is increasingly important. NOAA is working with many partners in the region to create a more resilient landscape around shared goals of abundant fisheries, healthy reefs, and thriving communities.

Places ▶

Known for its clear waters and coral reefs, the West Hawai'i Habitat Focus Area is located on the northwestern coast of Hawai'i Island in South Kohala and North Kona. The region boasts one of the state's longest contiguous coral reefs, supporting an abundance of fish and corals of which nearly a quarter are found nowhere else in the world. The area is also home to several protected species, including Hawaiian monk seals ('ilio holo i ka uaua), humpback whales (koholā), and green sea turtles (honu), as well as hundreds of anchialine pools and culturally important fishponds.

West Hawai'i is one of ten NOAA Habitat Focus Areas across the U.S.

Tour all ten online at
[HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov](https://www.HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov)





Coral reef surveys are conducted in the West Hawai'i Habitat Focus Area.



The Habitat Focus Area is located on the west side of the Island of Hawai'i.



West Hawai'i has one of the longest contiguous reefs in the state.

Issues ▶

West Hawai'i's coral reef ecosystem is vulnerable to a host of threats including:

- Erosion causing sediment run-off and coral smothering.
- Increasing ocean temperature and sea level rise.
- Elevated nutrients causing algal blooms and coral disease.
- Recreational and commercial overuse.
- Rapidly growing coastal development and tourism.

Priorities ▶

The West Hawai'i HFA team aims to coordinate NOAA efforts and work with local communities to restore and maintain critical marine ecosystems and their function through the following goals:

- Improve coral health by reducing the delivery of land-based sediments and nutrients.
- Reduce vulnerability of communities and natural resources to the localized effects of climate change.
- Ensure that communities are informed and engaged in the sustainable use and restoration of natural resources.
- Provide better management tools and easily accessible information to promote informed decision-making.



Volunteers clear invasive plants in Kiholo fishpond.



The West Hawai'i HFA is seeking to reduce the input of land-based pollutants into areas such as Pelekane Bay, which has elevated turbidity and sediment accumulation. Photo credit:Yuko Stender

Partners ▶

A central team of partners coordinate on-the-ground and in-the-water efforts in West Hawai'i, and those partners include:

- The Nature Conservancy
- State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources
- United States Geological Survey
- The Kohala Center
- South Kohala Coastal Partnership
- University of Hawaii
- National Park Service
- Pacific Islands Ocean Observing System
- SymbioSeas
- Kai Kuleana Community Network and Hui Loko Fishpond Network

Plans ▶

For more background and resources about this Habitat Focus Area, connect with our page on the Habitat Blueprint website: [HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov](https://www.HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov).

Visit the story map for a visual tour of the HFA. For details about its goals, download the Implementation Plan.

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