

November 2025 PMKCA Newsletter

A “Work-and-Learn” Day in Kalōpā State Park with the Park Team and a local troop of Scouts

Sarah Brown, Kalōpā Park team lead
Ruth Bennett, PMKCA

Maintaining the Native Forest Trails and Polynesian “Canoe” Garden in Kalōpā State Park has been the joy - and the burden - of a small group of dedicated residents of mauka Kalōpā and Pa’auilo, members of our local community association, Pa’auilo Mauka Kalōpā Community Association (www.pmkca.org). At times, the tasks in the park (clearing paths, weeding out invasives, and encouraging the native plants) would seem daunting to the team’s elderly members. Some on them had been working to preserve Kalōpā Park for more than 20 years.

On a recent Saturday, the Kalōpā Park team got a boost from a group of youngsters from a local Scout troop – Troop 1, based in Waimea. The six Scouts, five boys and one girl, with troop leaders, Doug McDowell and Margarita Chilla, had come to spend a few hours with the Park Team clearing invasive plants and maintaining the “Dry Forest Trail” in the park. For some scouts, it was their first experience in an upcountry forest environment, offering them a chance to learn about



L to R: Scout master, Dustin DeVera, Scout, Lilliana Kothbauer, Botanist, Chuck Chimera, Scouts, Tonakan DeVera, Jameson Hawes, Peter Chilla, Micah McDowell, Kai Nathaniel, Kalōpā Park Team lead, Sarah Brown, and Scout masters, Doug McDowell and Margarita Chilla.

threatened native plants and the invasive species that are attacking them.

Here's a proud bit of history about Scout Troop 1: This troop was founded on the Hāmākua Coast in 1931, chartered by Paʻauilo School and supported financially by the Hāmākua Sugar Company. Today, the troop is a chapter of Scouts BSA – the new organization for all scouts (boys and girls, ages 11 to 17). The troop is chartered by the Hāmākua Lions Club. Its membership has widened in recent years to include scouts from Hāmākua, Waimea and beyond. The troop meets weekly at the Calvary Hillside Church in Waimea and will be celebrating its **95th anniversary** in February 2026. For more information about this troop and Hawaii scouting, see www.scoutinghawaii.org.



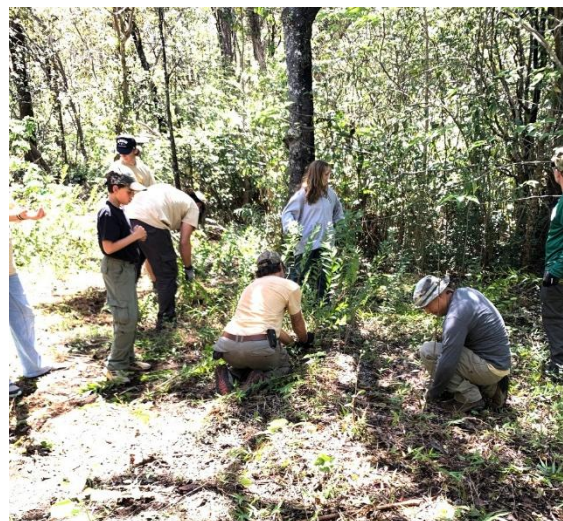
The scouts were assisted by members of the Park Team, led by Sarah Brown of mauka Kalōpā, and by Hawaii plant specialist, Chuck Chimera, of the Hawaii Invasive Species Council, who has loved and cared for the park for years. The scouts learned about the damaging impact of invasive weeds which overwhelm the native plants.

Alahe'e, a native Hawaiian plant with fragrant flowers, just restored to Kalōpā Park by Scout troop 1 and the Kalōpā Park team.

Behind a sad old sign which pointed to a bare spot once occupied by the fragrant native **Alahe'e** (*Psydrax odorata*), the scouts planted and watered new Alahe'e and **A'ali'i** (*Dodonaea viscosa*) plants. Later, the troop waded into a dense, smothering mass of invasive plants, ripping out wireweed and thimble berry, and cutting back night-blooming jasmine, leaving room for native species to return.

After some hard work, the scouts enjoyed a light snack before Chuck took them on a hike along the Native Forest Trail, pointing out both native plants and the invasive weeds that threaten them.

It was a perfect day, full of sunshine and fresh air, new insights into our precious 'aina, some good work, and new friendships. The work of the Kalōpā team and Scout Troop 1 improved the chances for Kalōpā Park to remain a beautiful, accessible demonstration of what Hawaii's native forests once were.



Members of Troop 1 planting Alahe'e and A'ali'i

On some future Saturday, the Kalōpā Park team of volunteers might be found working alongside a troop of some of the best young folks in Hawai'i.

The Kalōpā Park Team invites all lovers of Hawaii forests and haters of invasive species to join them for a few hours in the park. The team meets REGULARLY twice a month...

FIRST THURSDAY and THIRD SATURDAY

9:00 am in the Park

At the KIOSK (near the cabins)

Call Sarah Brown, 317 474-3498

Email: appleworksorchard@gmail.com

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