



Pa'auilo Mauka Kalopa Community Association

Photo courtesy of Karl Backus

Monthly News & Updates

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March 2023 Newsletter



A rainbow over Pa'auilo Mauka.

Ups and Downs of 2022

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Hopes and Dreams for 2023

Ruth Bennett
PMKCA VP

On the last day of January, the Pa'auilo Mauka Kalōpā Community Association (PMKCA) held its annual meeting – *the first in-person January gathering in 3 years* – at the Pa'auilo School. It was a joyful event, celebrating our members' cautious emergence from the pandemic, talking story about our communities, greeting guests and new members, and exchanging aloha.

The meeting gave us an opportunity to look back at the trials and successes of 2022 and to consider what our association might be able to accomplish in 2023. This article will summarize the past and give a window into the future for our communities.

2022 – A year of ups and downs.

While we all felt the welcome release of most pandemic restrictions, many of our residents faced new challenges from increases in the expense and availability of essential goods – gasoline, food, construction materials. The cost of returning to normal life – driving to a distant job, providing healthy meals, or doing needed household repairs – threatened to outweigh the advantages. In the balance, 2022 was a difficult year.

Still, members of PMKCA kept up their **volunteer activities**, both on our committees and sponsored groups and in the community at large. Members continued to volunteer and support the **Honoka'a Hongwanji's "Feeding our Keiki and Kupuna" weekly meals program** which saw no reduction in the need for nutritious food in our communities. (Every Friday, 300-400 prepared dinners and bags of groceries are handed out or delivered.)

Members of **CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)** in Pa’auilo continued to develop and maintain their skills in first-response rescue and medical support in the event of a disaster. The CERT team implemented and fine-tuned communications technology (hand-held and internet-enabled ham radios) necessary in coordinating activities when normal lines were disrupted.

PMKCA has continued to support the **Pa’auilo Volunteer Fire Company (“Eight Alpha”)**, certified by the Hawaii County Fire Department to assist in fire suppression and recovery. The company was called into service often in 2022 to put out residential fires and to assist in major wildfires.

Efforts continued during 2022 to inform the community about **invasive species** which were attacking or posing a future threat to the well-being and economic security of our communities. **Rapid ‘Ohi’a Death (ROD)** continued to kill our ‘Ohi’a trees, but not at the rate that many had projected, giving some hope that solutions may be found before we lose every tree. **Little Fire Ants (LFA)** are known to have established a few colonies in our mauka areas and we have encouraged our members to be on the lookout for infestations, so that they can be exterminated before spreading. The **Avocado Lace Bug (ALB)** made its appearance in force in 2022, infesting many residential and commercial avocado trees in our community. The **Two-lined Spittle Bug (TLSB)**, an insect that has caused disastrous damage to pasture grasses and hardship for ranchers around Kona, has as not yet been seen in the rich rangelands of Hāmākua, and we remain vigilant for signs (brown patches in our pastures – and our lawns!!

A member of PMKCA, Ruth Bennett, was one of two Hawaii Island residents to be recognized by the Hawai’i state legislature for her efforts to inform her community about the threats imposed by invasive species. The award certificate was presented to her at the July 2022 PMKCA meeting in Kalōpā Park.

Speaking of the Park, PMKCA’s **Kalōpā Park team** continued to maintain trails and gardens in our treasured park, facing challenges from invasive species and damage from fallen trees brought down in December’s severe winds. Working with the two park employees and other volunteer groups, they help keep the park a marvelous place to learn about Hawai’i Island’s native forest ecosystem, its unique species, and the challenges our native forests face.

Our PMKCA committees, often not celebrated, continued to monitor the well-being of our community. The **Roads, Traffic & Safety committee** looked after our roads and bridges and maintained a communication line to the County Public Works Dept. for planned road work or unplanned blockages. The **Water, Health & Utilities committee** welcomed a new leader in 2022, Fred Alexandre, who is immersing himself (a pun?) in the community’s concerns about the delivery of these important services. The **Publicity & Advertising committee** maintained the PMKCA.org website and produced the monthly newsletter articles and other bulletins to the PMKCA general mailing list.

When we look back on 2022, it does seem like PMKCA served its communities as well as might be expected as we lived through an unpredictable year. We look forward to what we might accomplish in 2023 as more of the unstable issues of 2022 settle down.

Looking forward to PMKCA’s Activities in 2023

Many of our association’s objectives don’t change from year to year. We will always work to monitor the infrastructure in our communities – the roads, water lines, electrical grid, communication and internet services – and to assist the many residents who live off the grid – depending on solar power generation, catchment water systems, satellite-based or cellular communications. We will continue to support our close partners, CERT and the Pa’auilo Volunteer Fire Company, as they fulfill their important missions for our communities.

We will pay attention to the **welfare of small businesses** operating in our communities and to the needs of the farmers and ranchers who bring meaning to the word “self-sustaining.” And we will celebrate the **musicians, artists, and craftspeople** among us who bring creativity to our lives. Through our **PMKCA publications and bulletins**, we will

continue to keep our residents informed about events and issues of concern to them. We also intend to pay more attention in 2023 to emerging concerns or ones to which we have not been able to devote resources in the past:

The presence and threat of **invasive species** remain an important concern for PMKCA. In 2023, we plan to conduct a **survey for Little Fire Ants**, testing our roadsides, gulches, and other public areas to assess the risk in our communities. We will also encourage our residents to perform the simple “peanut butter” test around their homes and contribute to the survey. With more knowledge we can help residents take action to keep LFAs out of their living spaces.

We will continue to follow the research into protections against and treatments for other invasive species like **ROD**, the **Two-lined Spittle Bug**, the **Avocado Lace Bug**, and **mosquito-borne pathogens** that endanger our remaining native birds. As helpful information is available, we will inform our members and the general readership. Our rural communities are often the last to receive the advantages of new technologies like **telecommunication and internet services**. Our keiki are at a disadvantage in school when families lack affordable internet access and phone service in their homes. We intend to keep our local providers (Hawaiian Telecom and others) focused on improving reliability, speed, and bandwidth at affordable rates to our local families.

Our island, its people, landscapes, and oceans are suffering from a lack of **effective waste management, recycling, and safe reuse of green waste**. While this issue extends far beyond our own communities, we want to be a “bee in the ear” of our governmental agencies, advocating for solutions. At the same time, we plan on holding one or more “**community clean-up**” events in 2023, to remove harmful, toxic, and unsightly garbage from our Pa’auilo Mauka and Kalōpā roadsides.

We have been pleased to see that there is some interest at the county level **in improving guidelines for water catchment systems and household septic/cesspools**. We have been participating in surveys of catchment systems and hope that the results will provide better guidance to residents without county water services. The threat of pathogens getting into our water supply, either through poorly designed catchment or improperly managed sewage is of concern to all communities.

And maybe, on a lovely fall day in 2023, if we have the spirit and energy for it, we will hold a community “play day,” with good food and local music, and games for the keikis and keikis-at-heart. Our July picnic meeting in Kalōpā Park fits some of that bill, but I’m thinking – ***EVEN MORE FUN!***

All of this may seem like a tall order for one small community organization with a membership that tends to be more kupuna! We may fail to accomplish much, it’s true. Still, dreaming big on behalf of our beautiful rural communities and their deserving residents isn’t a wasted effort, even if the successes might be limited.

If you live in the mauka Pa’auilo or Kalōpā communities and would like to contribute to the activities, events and accomplishments that PMKCA is considering for 2023, please become a member and participate in whatever way suits your fancy. On our website, www.pmkca.org, look under “Home” for our “Membership/Dues” page, and tell us about your interests. We will reach out to you with aloha.

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## ***PMKCA Meetings & Events***

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Thursday, April 6, 2023, 6pm, location TBD

Open to all members. Contact a Board Member for details and location.

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# **Join PMKCA or Renew Your Membership for 2023!!**

***PMKCA dues are only \$20 per calendar year and help support so many great community activities. Click the "Visit our website" link below and choose Membership/Dues.***

***We offer a PayPal option, or mail a check made out to PMKCA, PO Box 408, Pa'auilo, HI 96776.***

***Easy-peasy - and important!***

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