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Governor signs community-driven “Year of the Limu” proclamation, acknowledges critical role of seaweed in Hawai‘i’s culture and environment

“As an indicator of healthy ecosystems, a food-source for many species, and a connector between Ma Uka, or the uplands, and Ma Kai, the ocean, limu has the potential to teach us so much about the health of the places we live,” says Malia Heimuli.

Heimuli is the Limu Hui Coordinator at Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo (KUA), a local nonprofit coordinating the ‘Year of the Limu’ initiative, a statewide effort created by the [Limu Hui](#) network to raise awareness about the importance of [limu \(seaweed\)](#) to Hawai‘i’s cultural identity and the health of our nearshore marine environment.

“The goal of the Year of the Limu is to recapture, retain, share and preserve traditional ‘ike (knowledge) about limu for the benefit of the people of Hawai‘i and all those who love our island home,” says Heimuli.

A resolution proposed by members of the Limu Hui during the last state legislative session called on legislators to designate 2022 as the *Year of the Limu*. While the resolution [stalled in the legislature](#), community members and limu advocates with the help of KUA and the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Aquatic Resources (DLNR-DAR), petitioned Governor David Ige to make the designation through executive order.

Signed by Governor Ige on January 28, the [Year of the Limu](#) proclamation acknowledges the work of loea limu (limu experts) such as the late Henry Chang Wo Jr. of 'Ewa Limu Project and the “[First Lady of Limu](#),” Dr. Isabella Aiona Abbott, and organizations such as KUA, the Limu Hui, and others who have worked to preserve limu traditions and knowledge.

“This proclamation affirms that the State of Hawaii recognizes the importance of our work as limu advocates and limu educators in passing on traditional ecological limu knowledge to make our home a better place for future generations,” says Wally Ito, who along with ‘Uncle Henry’ was one of the founders of the Limu Hui in 2014 and continues to carry on the work of ‘Ewa Limu Project today.

KUA and the Limu Hui will be working with DAR and other community and organizational partners across the pae'āina (archipelago) to plan and promote a variety of monthly Community Limu Events throughout the year where folks can connect with limu practitioners, share limu stories, memories and living limu traditions. “We are excited to celebrate and showcase the collective efforts of limu practitioners, community stewards and limu advocates across Hawai‘i,” says Heimuli.

The year-long designation will bring together partners, families, friends, residents, and visitors around mālama 'āina (environmental stewardship) workdays, invasive limu clean-ups, limu plantings, educational shoreline walks, “show-and-tell” events, and workshops on limu pressing and cooking that seek to raise interest in limu as an important facet of our environment and communities.

Heimuli also sees the Year of the Limu as an opportunity to continue the work of “*Gathering the Gatherers*.” During the coming year, KUA plans to safely connect Limu Hui members to each other

through small inter-island exchanges and virtual programs that nurture productive spaces for growth and pilina (connection) and promote deeper knowledge sharing of limu practices, stories, and lessons learned. Ito, who retired as Coordinator at the end of 2021 and organized annual gatherings of the Limu Hui prior to the pandemic agrees that these types of gatherings are so important in preserving ‘ike and raising the next generation of limu practitioners.

In addition to the activities planned for 2022, KUA has also partnered with the University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant College Program to republish “The Limu Eater” by Heather J. Fortner. First published in 1978 and scheduled for release in May 2022, this classic publication includes oral histories, recipes, and information on cultural uses of limu in Hawai‘i. “We hope it will [spark interest and culinary appreciation of limu](#) as a local, sustainable, nutritious, and ‘ono (delicious) food resource for our island community,” says Heimuli.

Limu Hui members also plan to propose another resolution this legislative session that calls for the designation of limu kala (*Sargassum spp.*) as the State Limu. An important habitat for marine creatures and used as a traditional medicine in the treatment of minor cuts and scratches and in cultural ceremonies including in the conflict resolution process of ho‘oponopono, limu kala is just one example of the significant role limu has and still plays in Hawai‘i lifeways. For more updates or info about Year of the Limu activities, folks should follow KUA on Instagram or Facebook or visit go.kuahawaii.org/yearofthelimu.

[Kua‘āina Ulu ‘Auamo](#) (KUA) means “grassroots growing through shared responsibility.” KUA is a movement-building non-profit organization that works to empower communities across Hawai‘i to mālama (care for) their environmental heritage and work toward a shared vision of ‘āina momona—abundant, productive ecological systems that support community well-being. Founded in 2012 by grassroots indigenous and local community-based natural resource management initiatives, KUA employs a community-driven approach that provides backbone support and facilitation for three statewide networks: [E Alu Pū](#), [Hui Mālama Loko I‘a](#), and the [Limu Hui](#), a network of limu practitioners, educators, researchers and community stewards from across Hawai‘i who are committed to the protection, perpetuation, preservation and restoration of limu knowledge, practice and ancestral abundance of limu throughout our islands.

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Linked Media:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/occxo4x518jblhx/AABioc0bTaX1jZvaVYXV46Ora?dl=0>

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Online Resources:

Year of the Limu Website - go.kuahawaii.org/yearofthelimu

KUA Website - www.kuahawaii.org

KUA Facebook - www.facebook.com/KUAhawaii

Instagram: [@kuaainauluauamo](https://www.instagram.com/kuaainauluauamo)

Limu Hui - www.kuahawaii.org/limu-hui

Limu Hui Facebook - www.facebook.com/LimuHuiKUAhawaii

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