



Vol. 21, No. 11

About Kohala, For Kohala

November 24, 2022

## ClimbHI Recognizes Leading Hawai'i Schools, Educators and Businesses



*Hawai'i schools, educators and businesses were honored at the first-annual ClimbHI Bridge Awards Brunch on Oct. 11, 2022, at the Prince Waikiki.*  
*Left to right: Fern White, West Hawai'i Complex Area Career and Technical Education District Resource Teacher; Maurea Walsh, James Campbell High School, both honored as 2022 ClimbHI Bridge Outstanding Educators; with Julie Morikawa, President of ClimbHI. (Courtesy ClimbHI)*

By Jennifer Sudick

Hawai'i nonprofit ClimbHI, in partnership with community, business and education leaders statewide, honored Hawai'i schools, educators and businesses at the first-annual ClimbHI Bridge

Awards Brunch in October at the Prince Waikiki. Fern White, West Hawai'i Complex Area Career and Technical Education District Resource Teacher, was among the educators honored.

## Broadband Comes Big Time to Kohala

By Toni Withington

Have you seen the big white trucks and workers stringing new wire on our highway poles? It's fiber optics coming to Kohala, one of several selected rural areas chosen by Hawaiian Telcom to get the latest, fastest telecommunication access.

When that new wire is strung by your house, you can get phone, internet and television at a quality up to 10 times higher than many places on O'ahu and up to seven times faster than cable company streaming.

Why Kohala? Because Hawaiian Telcom decided to put Hawaii's remote places at the head of the line to get state-of-the-

art "fiopics," as they call it. Also, because Kohala is one of the favorite places of the man in charge.

"We've known since COVID that rural areas have felt the greatest need for broadband," said Jason Thune, Vice President of Fiber Strategy and Deployment, who is spearheading Hawaiian Telcom's statewide fiber expansion.

"We want to level the playing field in technology located in schools, the medical field and personal connections in families," he said in an interview.

It also helps that a federal grant is taking care of 10 percent of the cost of installation in rural areas.

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## Protecting Kohala Mountain Forest and Watershed



*What difference can a fence make? Fenced in 2004, Kilohana stream unit neighboring 'Eke has thrived under pig-free conditions as indicated by the abundance of native plants covering the ground, such as 'ama'u, maile and hāpu'u. (Mahina Patterson)*

By Toni Withington

A project to remove feral pigs and non-native plants from a 614-acre tract of land high on the Kohala Mountain is expected to boost the health of the forest and improve the quality of water resources in leeward Kohala. The State Department of Health last month granted \$234,000 to the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), in partnership with The Kohala Center (TKC) for the 'Eke project.

Located several miles mauka of the Koai'a Corridor and Tree Sanctuary, which is near the 5.5-mile marker on the Kohala Mountain Road, the land is the home to the headwaters of Keawewai and Luahine streams. It has been heavily eroded and impacted by invasive plants.

A perimeter fence will be constructed to protect 'Eke from hooved animals on land owned by the Queen Emma Land Company and the State of Hawai'i. Hunting and trapping of the pigs

inside the fence will be conducted by TKC's watershed stewardship technicians in collaboration with regional hunters over a period of several months.

Removing pigs from 'Eke will allow native plant species to naturally regenerate and support new growth while also protecting, replenishing, and cleansing water sources, according to Jake Merkel, Kohala watershed field supervisor at The Kohala Center.

TKC will also host community workshops at the Koai'a Sanctuary on removal of invasive plants and care in the transplanting of native species.

The forest to be fenced is part of the Kawaihae and Honokaa watersheds, a swath of 31,013 acres stretching from the summit of Kohala Mountain to the Kawaihae coast. The four-year long project was prioritized by the Kohala Mountain Watershed Management Plan.

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Kohala Mountain News

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