HUI O LAKA KŌKE'E museum

Kōke'e Connections

Hui o Laka Membership Newsletter

APRIL 2020

Kōke'e State Park is Closed Indefinitely

All state parks are closed in Hawai'i. Currently, the Kōke'e Natural History Museum and the Kōke'e Civilian Conservation Corps Camp remain shut down to the public as part of the closure. We have a skeleton crew at the office continuing administrative work of running the business and providing security for the properties. We are answering the phones and emails. We have applied for Small Business Loans and are finishing up grant reports to make sure we have all money due to us.

Both the museum and camp had a roller coaster beginning to 2020. From 300 to 400 people visited the museum each day. Then in early March, Kaua'i went on lockdown after the first cases of Covid-19 were diagnosed in Hawai'i. Kaua'i Mayor Derrick Kawakami took a rapid and decisive stance in his stay home orders, curfews, and closing non-essential businesses. County facilities, including parks, were closed. On March 17, State Parks announced the closure of all their parks and concessionaires to begin the next day. This order included Hui o Laka and the Kōke'e Lodge's operations.

While spring vacation tourists still flowed into the park in droves, they found the lookout driveways blocked with cones and yellow tape. Leaving their vehicles haphazardly parked along Kōke'e Road, many visitors walked under the tape, disregarding the intent of closure. Some were angry with the inconveniences of the park closure, especially the locked bathrooms. Mini-buses and tour vans were still in evidence. That weekend DLNR DOCARE officers began enforcement and posted small signs at lookout entrances and the Kōke'e State Park sign near Halemanu road.

Now there is very little traffic. Enforcement of the previously blatant illegal camping and cessation of legal camping has made the park very quiet. Leaseholders are being allowed to stay in their cabins but are not allowed to hike in the park. Gatherings of 10 or more to socialize are prohibited, and using picnic areas in the State Park is not permitted. Social distancing is required. Enforcement is making random checks.

Although the museum is closed and the museum staff on furlough for the time being, Hui o Laka's business office is minimally staffed. There are still payroll and bills to pay. Please do not visit the office in person as we are practicing social distancing but do call or better yet email. Check our temporary contact information to the right. Please do not use the camp parking lot to leave vehicles overnight without prior permission. We are taking security seriously and finding strange cars at the camp may mean a tow.

We wish all our members a safe and rapid conclusion to this pandemic threat and hope to see you soon on the other end.

Examples of illegal park activities prior to enforcement. Far left: Waimea Canyon Lookout. Right: Vehicle campertop in the parking lot fronting the Museum and Lodge.

CALENDAR

2020 FESTIVAL CANCELLATIONS

The economic devastation from mandatory business shutdowns all over the island is real. Many small businesses may not be able to recover as the forced "Stay at Home" policy continues. Tourism may not be allowed to return to pre-Covid-19 levels for a long time. Already businesses are shutting down for good. Some of them were sponsors of our two festivals. To give our community a break, as well as preserve our cash, we have decided to cancel the 2020 Banana Poka RoundUp! and Eō e Emalani i Alaka'i and resume in 2021. We have spent a great deal of time writing successful Hawai'i Tourism funding proposals, so it isn't a light decision. Canceling the contracts means more hours of paperwork without the benefit of a program. The postponement gives our community, businesses, and ourselves time to recover and reevaluate our activities. Right now, keeping our core business activities, the museum, and camp, afloat is our chief concern. We thank all of our festival participants, volunteers, sponsors, and donors for their support every year and pray for understanding.

Temporary Contact List

Our office is staffed somewhat randomly at this time. Allow a little time for a response to phone and email messages.

Executive Director - Chris Faye
Phone: 808-639-5270 Email:
director@kokee.org

Admin – Michelle Hookano
Phone: 808-335-9975 ext 2.
Email: Michelle.Hookano@kokee.org

Membership – Rosalind Thompson
Phone: 808-335-9975 ext 3.
Email: Rosalind.Thompson@kokee.org

General Information regarding Camp Reservations or Gift Shop. Messages.
Phone: 808-335-9975 ext 1.
Email: info@kokee.org

Hui o Laka Membership

Membership is very important to our organization. Listed here are Memberships at the patron level or higher from August 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020.

Patron Members

Koa Members

Karyn Leisz – Foley
Lyndon Fong
Ginger Saiki
Yvonne Hosaka
Robert & Diana Piety
Corina & Rhone Scoggins
Brad Weigle
Lillo & Kirsten Crain
Teresa Young
Billi Smith
Cheryl & Michael Shintani
Laurie Ho
Nelson Kaai
Timothy Cashdollar
Ken Ogilvie
Bryce Johnson
James B. Friday & Katie Friday
Sandy Howatt
Jill Landis
Alan & Susie Faye
Judy Oliver
Earl Begley
Gaylord & Carol Wilcox
Melinda Walker
Marina Drummer
Mary Neudorffer
Kathy Richardson
Karen Gally & Frank Hay
Calvary Chapel Lihue
Laurie Roberts
Lani Macrae
Sacred Hears Academy
Tim & Sue Cross
Patricia Englehard
Clyde Furumoto
Ka Pa Kanaenae O Kekaha
Jerald Keaulana
Thomas King, Jr.
Coleen Schnitzer /Created for Adventure
Mike & Diana Shaw
Mathew Vidaurri
Wendy Wichman

Kauila Members

Sharee Anderson
Kokee Lodge
Jonathan Wichman
Chipper & Hauʻoli Wichman
Pam Dohrman
Puna Dawson

ʻIliau Members

Charles & Jeanne Wichman
Eric & Jeanne Toulon
Michael Bill
Tom Mendes

Unrestricted Donations

Cheryl Shintani
Joan Pratt
David Pratt

$1000

Waimakua (Mary Rice)

$5000

EHW Broadbent Foundation
Hawaii Community Foundation
Waimakua #2

Emalani

James & Sylvia Thacker

Hanner Property

L. Christine Faye

In Honor of Joan Prattʻs Birthday

Eileen Bull
Melinda Walker
Sarah Quinn

In Honor of Joan Pratt & David Pratt

Tim & Jill Pratt

Endowment Fund

Joan Pratt
David Pratt

MEMBERSHIP

__ **$12 Maile Student**
__ **$25 Mokihana Individual**
__ **$50 Haʻupu Family**
__ **$75 ʻOhiʻa**
__ **$100 Koa Patron**
__ **$250 Kauila Patron**
__ **$500 ʻIliau Patron**
__ **$1000 Lama Patron**

Donations

__ **Unrestricted**
__ **Endowment Fund**
__ **In honor/memory of**
_____

__ **Other** (describe) _____
_____

Fill out contact information so we can send a receipt for your tax records:

Name_____

Email_____

Mailing Address_____
_____

Newsletter will be sent by email. Check___ if you need to have newsletter mailed to you.

Pay online at kokee.org or by personal check mailed to Hui o Laka, P.O. Box 100, Kekaha, Hawaiʻi 96752. Credit card payment can be made by phone. See contact info on front page.

Brief Notes of Interest for Our Members

We bid a fond farewell to Hui o Laka Trustee Sue Boynton who has decided on a fresh start in California. We will miss her energy!

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Sadly, we have a number of people to mention that have passed away in the past six months. They were exceptional volunteers and influences in our endeavors. They are:

Arlene Kuapahi
Jennie Hutchings
Lorita Wichman
Delbert Hookano

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Chipper Wichman is the new President of the Kōkeʻe Leaseholders Association.

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There have been some changes in leases for our nonprofit run camps at Kōkeʻe. Storybook Theater has obtained lease on the former Methodist Camp.

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Hui o Laka completed repairs at the Hanner property shown below. A wind storm last year sent large tree branches smashing onto the cottage pulling out the powerlines and hammering the roof. Repairs were funded by insurance. Contractor Two Perfect Construction completed the repairs with Hui o Laka taking on the painting later when it is drier. Jon Henkel is the electrician on the project. The property was donated to Hui o Laka in the early 1980s to house the museum director.

Covid-19. Temporary Museum Closing

Closing a business with no idea of when it can reopen is a daunting task. Try two. The first thing we did was to cut back on all expenses related to the two operations. Unfortunately, one of the few we have any control of is our staffing. Museum associates furloughs occurred swiftly ahead of the bulk of the hotel closures. Notifications to all camp reservations on the books through April and early May of the park closure and deposits returned. Banana Poka RoundUp's scheduled performers and exhibitors had to be notified. Payroll and a surprise State mandate of an unemployment payout to furloughed employees required attention at the end of the month. To get a handle on our cash reserves, expedited processing of all bills and invoices occurred. The museum shop conducted an early physical inventory for the FY ending on May 31.

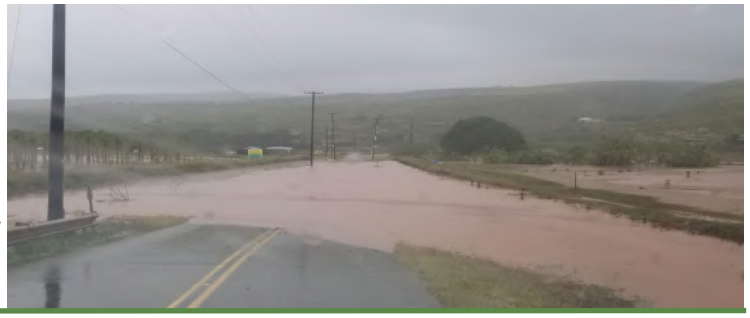
The HoL executive committee met to clarify our cash position and options. During the discussions, a decision to protect our core business and cash resources led to the postponement of the Eō e Emalani i Alaka'i until 2021. As soon as they were available, we filled in applications for Covid-19 relief with the Small Business Administration.

Meanwhile, addressing concerns over keeping the museum closed for an indefinite period is more than security. Rarely is the museum closed for more than a day or two. Ever. The doors are usually wide open, with hundreds of people walking in every day, rain or shine, and even during power outages. What happens when you leave a building closed up in a damp environment? Within just a few days, the interior smell test revealed mold and mildew. The installation of a dehumidifier should be a significant improvement. A second and even third one may be necessary to keep the building dry.

All the taxidermies need conservation work and some climate control—especially the signature diorama of 'apapane and 'i'iwi with the backdrop of Kalalau Valley. Staff and trustees relocated museum collections for security. In May, as the paperwork burden slows down, we will work on cleaning the interior of the building. The forced closure is an excellent time to update the collections inventory and photograph everything. Refreshing exhibit labels, cleaning cases, and reframing artwork will be some of the staff projects as we can come back to work, closer to reopening. If we can afford them, scheduling repairs and painting of the building would be a priority. Things that seem impossible with the hundreds of cars and people every single day at Kōke'e State Park.

Frankly, the foot traffic in the recent past has been overwhelming and detrimental to the museum and especially staff morale. Most of the museum's visitors seek only hiking advice and are not making use of the museum. We've always been lucky to have our gift shop sustaining the staffing and expenses of the museum and Hui o Laka. We hope to use this downtime to actually work on the museum itself and maybe even reorganize the way people use the museum. It may mean moving the trail information further away from the museum itself.

One of our funded projects, interpretive signage at the significant lookouts in partnership with the State Park's Interpretive Team, is still on track. Components have to be adjusted, and the grant paperwork again resubmitted. The same contract upgrades the nature trail, which has extensive erosion and cross trails damaging endemic and native plants. The improvements will broaden the Kōke'e experience for both resident and off-island park users. It will help move our museum mission further out into the park where it is needed most.



Right: March 17, 2020 flooding at Kekaha. It was 2 feet deep at lower Kōke'e Road where the old stoplight used to be. The drains remained unopened until farms and homes were threatened.

Visit us on Social Media

We haven't been doing the best job of communicating with our members via the traditional newsletter route. It easy to share information immediately with a quick post on Facebook. For the website or a newsletter, the effort and expense hinder sharing frequently. Many of you probably didn't use social media platforms in the past, but with the nationwide "Stay at Home" mandate, many have been learning new skills and exploring social media. Much of our Covid 19 news has been via social media. Twitter is the president's personal favorite. Hawaii's Governor still holds formal press conferences that air on television Twitter and Facebook accounts. Kauaʻi Mayor Kawakami has not only provided daily Covid-19 reports on Facebook but a "Stay Home" activity offering every evening from his home. Two retired policemen, former County Council Chair Mel Rapozo and Charlie Iona, have a daily hour-long Zoom program where top state and county leadership have been guests. Who needs tv? Our current life is a reality show.

To relieve the stress, Hui o Laka is offering almost daily Kōkeʻe photos on the Kōkeʻe Museum page. The scenery is whatever is on the camera roll since we are supposed to be on lockdown. Of course, traffic alerts, what's flowering, chicken jokes, and other things of note show up as well. The website www.kokee.org homepage also shares a link to the current post. Please join the conversation about our favorite place. Share a few of your own memories and photos.

We Need You!

Our members remind us of why we do what we do. We appreciate having you as part of the Hui o Laka family. Hui o Laka is a self-sufficient operating non-profit business with 67 years of experience at Kōkeʻe. This pandemic situation is not a normal disaster and far from over. Not for just us, but in all countries around the world.

In recent years, Hui o Laka's operations have grossed about $30,000 per month. This income pays all the bills, employs a modest staff of eight full time and part-time people, and maintains an inventory of merchandise to offer our visitors, including you. This income has allowed us the luxury of holding two festivals annually for over 30 years. Since March 18th, there has been no income.

Fortunately, we have a few months of savings and restricted funds to cover bare bone expenses in the bank. None of us has any clue as to when our income-producing operations can resume and at what level. We don't know if our SBA applications will be successful. The funding has run out as of April 16.

You can help us by continuing to be a dues-paying member at whatever level you can afford. You can ask your friends and family to support us as well. We will be continuing to look for grants and other sources of income to keep our doors open. Realistically, social services will probably be the focus of our local charitable foundations and trusts for the near future.

If you can afford to help support Hui o Laka, we have many things that will help us now, especially making improvements to the museum. Cash contributions and donations of services are all acceptable and tax-deductible. We will entertain ideas for online learning experiences that have little or no cost.

Critical needs for the museum are:

• Contributions to sustain our operations until we reopen and gift shop customers can again support us.

• Conservation of the taxidermy, especially the ʻapapane and ʻiʻiwi display, which is probably 50 years old if not older.

• Keep our WWII vintage facility dry, safe, and secure for staff and visitors. Power washing the exterior of the museum and painting the roof (and maybe the building itself) and eliminating mildew and mold inside the museum. A ventilation system may be needed to provide circulation. This downtime would allow us to do a proper job.

• A photovoltaic/battery backup system to generate power during outages. We cannot take advantage of tax credits as we are a nonprofit organization. It makes this a costly option. The power outages have been frequent and take a toll on our employees and electronics. The longer ones have forced closures or reduced hours of operation.

• Refurbishing the planting beds set up by John Plews. We lost two of the mature kōkiʻo keʻokeʻo (Hibiscus waimeaensis) trees that, in hindsight, were planted too close to the museum.

Bird Diorama in sad repair.

Corteva Agriscience's Mark Stoutemyer and Isaac Miller have been researching propagation of our beloved Mentley plums. One day it will be possible to replace aging stands of plum trees at Kōkeʻe. We are happy to report the success rate has been good.