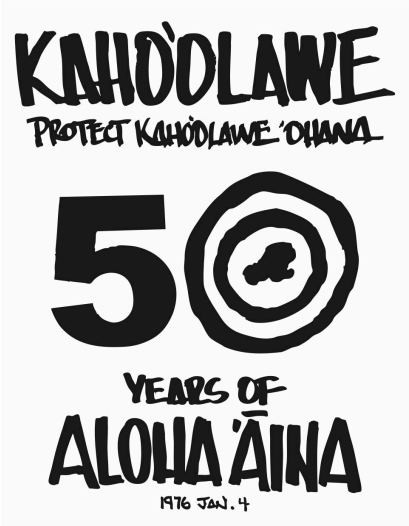

50th Anniversary of The Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana:

Proclaiming 2026 a Year of Aloha ʻĀina Reactivation!

January 4, 2026 marks the 50th anniversary of the "Kahoʻolawe Nine" landing at Kuheʻeia, Kahoʻolawe to draw national attention to the illegal role that the U.S. played in the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaiʻi and to protest U.S. military control and destruction of Hawaiian national lands.

Boldly risking arrest and exposure to unexploded bombs, George Helm, Emmett Aluli, Kimo Aluli, Kawaipuna Prejean, Walter Ritte, Ian Lind, Ellen Miles, Steve Morse, and Karla Villalba, broke through the Coast Guard blockade on Captain David Padgett's boat to make landfall. This initial landing inspired the founding of the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana to stop the bombing and devastation of Kohemālamalama Kanaloa Kahoʻolawe by the U.S. Navy's training operations.

Under the guidance of Aunty Emma Defries, Kahuna Sam Lono, Aunty Edith Kanakaʻole, Molokaʻi kūpuna and many others, George Helm negotiated access to the island to hold a spiritual ceremony in Hakioawa on February 13, 1976 asking the spirits of the land to provide permission and open the way for those who wanted to protect and heal Kahoʻolawe.

Following this ceremony, the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana began organizing a grassroots Aloha ʻĀina movement throughout Hawaiʻi, gaining widespread support that remains strong and steadfast through 2026 and beyond. In this pursuit, the ʻOhana has been spiritually guided by the Edith Kanakaʻole Foundation.

Between March 7-9, 1977 George Helm and Kimo Mitchell were lost in the ocean off of Kahoʻolawe during their heroic efforts to safely bring back to Maui two ʻOhana members occupying the island. In the wake of their loss, the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana

persevered and carried the weight of Helm and Mitchell's sacrifice as it overcame obstacles and led the movement that ultimately stopped the bombing and military use of the island on October 22, 1990.

Through continued advocacy by the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana, the United States returned Kahoʻolawe to the State of Hawaiʻi in trust on behalf of the "sovereign Native Hawaiian entity" in a transfer ceremony at Palauea, Maui on May 7, 1994. The Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) was then established and began to manage and restore the island as a cultural and natural reserve in cooperation with the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana under a stewardship agreement known as the *Palapala ʻAelike Kahuʻāina*.

In the past 50 years, the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana has been steadfast in their aloha kūpaʻa i ka ʻāina ʻo Kohemālamalama, making great strides built upon the sacrifices and commitment of the kūpuna who believed in its mission of Aloha ʻĀina.

Today, on January 4, 2026, the 50th anniversary of the first landing, the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana calls for 2026 to be a year dedicated to the reactivation of Aloha ʻĀina. This proclamation acknowledges the accomplishments of the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana and celebrates the ʻOhana for:

• **Stopping All Military Use of Kahoʻolawe. Leading the movement that stopped the bombing and all military use of Kohemālamalama Kanaloa Kahoʻolawe.** Setting a precedent for the return of federal lands not only to the State of Hawaiʻi in accordance with the 1959 Admission Act, but more substantially making Kahoʻolawe the first lands to be held in trust for sovereign Hawaiian governance.

Laʻa - Reviving the Kapu of Kohemālamalama Kanaloa Kahoʻolawe

• Elevating Kahoʻolawe as a sacred island, dedicated to the education and mastery of ʻŌiwi cultural customs, arts and practices. Consecrating Kohemālamala as laʻa, set aside as Kapu, where any commercial use is strictly forbidden as preserved in HRS 6K, a precedent.

• Reviving the annual Makahiki ceremony to Lono, ceremonies that are now regularly conducted throughout Hawaiʻi, reawakening Kanaka ʻŌiwi spiritual beliefs, customs and practices. The ʻOhana has rekindled the relationship between kānaka and our ancestral akua, including Lono, Kūʻula, Kāne, Kanaloa, Laka and Haumea in the lives of Kānaka ʻŌiwi and all of Hawaiʻi, thereby re-connecting the soul and ea of our Lāhui Hawaiʻi.

• Monitoring and stabilizing the 600 cultural sites and 3,000 physical features of Kahoʻolawe for which the island is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Prominent sites include the *Hale Mua*, *Pōkāneloa, Kūʻula,* house sites, petroglyphs and iwi kūpuna. The ʻOhana has also rededicated and conducted ʻaha (ceremony) guided by the Edith Kanakaʻole Foundation at historically significant places such as Hale o Lono, Hale o Papa, Moaʻulaiki, Moaʻulanui and Kealaikahiki.

• Constructing and dedicating new cultural places for ʻaha such as the pā hula *Ka ʻIeʻie*, the mua haʻi kūpuna *Kahualele,* the rain koʻa *Ipu a Kāne*, and the *Kuhikeʻe* navigators platform. In 2026 the ʻOhana will have completed and dedicated a complementary mua in Honokanaiʻa.

Maʻa - Revitalizing the Ea of Lāhui Hawaiʻi

• Helping to spark the renaissance of Kānaka ʻŌiwi culture, language, hula, lua, navigation, music, arts, spirituality, healing and self-governance.

• Safely conducting monthly access to the island of Kanaloa Kahoʻolawe, as kahuʻāina (stewards) for Kānaka Maoli cultural, religious, subsistence, and educational purposes under a Consent Decree with the U.S. Navy and extending under the *Palapala ʻAelike Kahuʻāina* stewardship agreement with KIRC. This set a precedent for Kānaka ʻŌiwi access on government and private lands for traditional and customary practices.

• Connecting and engaging more than 50,000 people to Kohemālamalama through huakaʻi focused on cultural practices and stewardship that provide transformational life experiences. Volunteers learn the importance of observing the natural elements; engaging in the work of clearing invasives, growing native plants, opening access trails, establishing base camps, monitoring cultural sites; and conducting spiritual ceremonies, the fundamental elements of becoming cultural practitioners.

• Collaborating with Governor Waiheʻe and the Hawaiʻi State Legislature to set a precedent by designating Kanaloa Kahoʻolawe and its surrounding ocean out to two miles as a cultural, natural and marine reserve, with the rights of access for Kānaka ʻŌiwi religious, cultural and subsistence purposes. These designations prohibit any and all commercial use of the island.

• Modeling the possibility of holding the military accountable to clean up ʻāina ravaged by decades of military training. Under Title X, the U.S. Congress appropriated $400 million for 1994-2004. With these funds, they cleared 9% of the island to a depth of 4 feet and an additional 68% of the island's surface was cleared. None of the surrounding waters were cleared. From those funds, KIRC was provided $44 million to begin restoration of the island.

Paʻa - Revitalizing and Perpetuating Aloha ʻĀina

• Inspiring the revitalization of Aloha ʻĀina–to sincerely love, respect and care for the lands and oceans of our islands; revere the natural elemental life forces throughout Hawaiʻi Nei; and reclaim the sovereignty of Lāhui ʻŌiwi Hawaiʻi.

• Training five generations of kahuʻāina to restore and care for Kahoʻolawe. These kahuʻāina trained by the ʻOhana return to care for their home islands and communities with skills learned on Kanaloa.

• Engaging with a network of Aloha ʻĀina, from Honokāhua to Waokele o Puna, Pōhakuloa to Mākua and Kapūkākī, from the summit of Mauna a Wākea all the way out to Papahānaumokuākea. Aloha ʻĀina, guided by the kapu of ceremony, has inspired people across Hawaiʻi and beyond to persist in our collective kuleana to protect Hawaiʻi.

• Establishing residence on Kohemālamalama with the traditional hale *Nāmakapili*, the *Hāweoikeaopili* pavilion, constructing and dedicating the pā hula *Ka ʻIeʻie* and expanding to two additional base camps at Kūheʻeia and Ahupū.

• Clearing and lining an Ala Loa around Kahoʻolawe to connect all of the ʻili ʻāina enabling sustainable management of the island. To this date 10.6 miles–half of the island–have been opened and is accessible by foot.

• Conducting ceremonies to call the Lono and Kāne rains to both raise the water table and fill up a network of water catchments on the island that provide nourishment to native plants through irrigation.

• Gaining the experience and demonstrating the capacity to re-grow the endangered endemic Kapalupalu o Kanaloa plant on Kahoʻolawe.

All of these accomplishments demonstrate that for over 50 years the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana, with the collective support of our lāhui, has enacted, lived, bled, breathed, and built ea on Kahoʻolawe. Ua kūkulu ke ea a Kanaloa. Ua kanaloa kānaka i Kanaloa.

Laʻa, Maʻa, Paʻa - Sanctify, Revitalize and Perpetuate! 2026 will be a year of celebration and activation for all who live in Hawaiʻi to recommit and rededicate ourselves to Aloha ʻĀina, Ea and the protection and rehabilitation of Hawaiian lands from military and other destruction. When Kanaloa flourishes, we thrive! I Ola Kanaloa! I Ola Kākou! Kani ka pū!