



SIERRA CLUB  
OF HAWAII

# 2021 Annual Report

# Who we are

With 54 years under our belt, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i is working to advance climate solutions, act for justice, get outdoors, and protect Hawai'i's lands, water, air, and wildlife.

As a local chapter of the national Sierra Club we are rooted in the islands, activating our base of members and supporters to advocate for their community's well-being. We work on both island-wide and county-based issues through our groups on Hawai'i Island, Maui, O'ahu, and Kaua'i. The Sierra Club of Hawai'i is led by a member elected Executive Committee and employs seven staff members.

---

## 2022 Executive Committee

Kau'i Pratt-Aquino, Chair  
Letani Peltier, Vice Chair  
Heidi Schemp, Secretary  
Nara Takakawa, Treasurer  
Chuck Flaherty, Hawai'i Island Group Representative  
Lucienne de Naie, Maui Group Representative  
Angela Huntemer, O'ahu Group Representative  
Kip Goodwin, Kaua'i Group Representative  
Michael Nieling, member  
Katie Kamelamela, member  
Nate Yuen, Outings Chair

---

## 2022 Staff

Wayne Tanaka, Director  
Kirsten Kagimoto, Strategic Communications Manager  
Tanya Dreizin, Advancement and Administrative Associate  
Lauren Ballesteros-Watanabe, Chapter Organizer  
Anna Chua, Red Hill Organizer  
Tara Apo, Streams Organizer  
Sharde Mersberg Freitas, Chapter Organizer



**32,000+**  
supporters and  
digital activists

The infographic features a dark teal background on the left and a lighter teal background on the right, separated by a vertical line. A white line-art illustration of a raised fist is centered across the boundary. The text is white on the dark teal side and teal on the light teal side.

**4,656**  
members  
islandwide

# What we do

## Defending the rights of nature

Holding polluters and agencies accountable to the law is just as important as establishing protections for Hawai'i's environment and people. The courtroom is a key tool for ensuring Hawai'i's laws are fully implemented and we are fully prepared to use it in the defense of nature.

## Harnessing the power of the people

As one of the oldest environmental advocacy organizations in the islands, we have proven that grassroots action is an effective tool for change in Hawai'i. The Sierra Club of Hawai'i and its groups work hard to make advocating for your community's interests as easy as possible while being a watchdog for environmental justice legislation.

## Connecting people to the outdoors

Nature is proven to improve our mental, physical, and social health. Through our outings and service programs, our trained leaders create opportunities for everyone to experience the transformative power of the outdoors.

*Photo: Nate Yuen*

## At a glance

**193%**

increased social media following

**150+**

allies and partner organizations

**1,000+**

emails to decision makers

**79**

earned media hits

**40+**

priority bills tracked

**222%**

increased annual revenue

# Red Hill Water Security

by Wayne Tanaka

2021 started with a bang and left us with a cliffhanger ending in our years-long campaign to save O'ahu's water supply – and way of life – from the US Navy's Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility.

In February of 2021, years of Sierra Club litigation culminated in the start of a long-awaited contested case hearing over the US Navy's permit application for the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility. The witness testimonies and evidentiary exhibits painted a clear picture of the inherent danger of the dilapidated, WWII-era facility, and provided a critical foundation for the massive grassroots mobilization that would kick off later that year. These included key findings that:

- Slow leaks from the facility cannot be detected, and 5,000 gallons of fuel are “expected” to be chronically released every year;
- There is an 80% chance that up to 30,000 gallons of fuel may be “suddenly” released in the next five years, not including releases that could occur due to fire, floods, or earthquakes;
- The Navy's “Inspect, Repair, Maintain” process for the Red Hill fuel tanks is highly inaccurate, missing the mark in 4 out of 10 instances;
- 8 out of 14 tanks collectively holding over a 100 million gallons of fuel above O'ahu's sole-source groundwater aquifer have not been inspected, much less repaired, in over 20 years; 3 of these tanks have not been inspected in over 38 years;
- There is no workable plan to contain or remediate a large spill, which could irreversibly and catastrophically contaminate O'ahu's groundwater, and
- Six years after the 2015 Administrative Order on Consent, the Navy still has not completed a groundwater model or contaminant fate and transport model, has not completed its multi-phase risk assessment, and has failed to present a tank upgrade alternatives analysis to the satisfaction of regulators.

With this information in hand, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i began reaching out to anyone and everyone we could, from legislators to community groups to media outlets. Together with Hawai'i Peace and Justice we began organizing the O'ahu Water Protectors, a grassroots organization that would become a driving force in the Red Hill campaign.

Meanwhile, the contested case hearing would end up being reopened again, and again – after a routine “fuel movement” in May resulted in yet another massive release of fuel, and then after a Navy whistleblower revealed that Navy officials had “wrongfully withheld” critical information during the original hearing. Through all of this – and even after being issued a \$325,000 Notice of Violation by the Department of Health for its failure to abide by safety protocols - the Navy continued to insist that the people of O'ahu had nothing to worry about, and that the Red Hill Facility could be safely operated.

They were wrong.

In November, a devastating fuel spill poisoned the water system for nearly 100,000 residents, sending thousands to seek medical support as they suffered from the symptoms of acute petroleum exposure. The Board of Water Supply was forced to indefinitely shut down adjacent municipal wells, including its major Hālawā shaft, plunging O‘ahu into a water crisis that made water conservation mandates and even shutdowns a real possibility, if not probability, in the summer of 2022.

Thankfully, our ongoing grassroots work had provided the necessary foundation for the unprecedented community mobilization that included everyone – from policymakers to everyday residents, across the political spectrum and from all walks of life – standing up a united front to save our water and #ShutDownRedHill before it was too late.



*O‘ahu Water Protectors press conference and rally on December 3 demanding the Secretary of Defense meet with the community.*

With federal and state legislators and even city council members calling for the Red Hill facility to be shut down, the Department of Health finally issued an emergency order in December to defuel the Red Hill Facility. The Navy, predictably, decided to fight back and request a contested case hearing. Knowing we needed to ensure that the emergency order was upheld, the Sierra Club of Hawai‘i joined forces with Earthjustice to intervene, leading to a grueling, 13-hour hearing where our legal work, intimate institutional knowledge, and new relationships with affected Red Hill families placed us toe-to-toe with the best lawyers the Navy could buy.

2021 would end with a cliffhanger, with the outcome of the Department of Health’s emergency order still undecided; tens of thousands of people exposed to poisoned tap water and displaced from their homes; and the fate of O‘ahu’s people, environment, economy, and very way of life hanging in the balance.

**By  
the  
numbers:**

**4,150**

emails + mail sent  
to POTUS + the  
Pentagon

**50+**

public meetings,  
presentations +  
events

**500+**

in-person  
event  
participants

# Sierra Club vs. Red Hill: 2021 Timeline

**February 1:** A 6-day contested case hearing took place over the Navy's permit application for the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility. Successful Sierra Club litigation in 2017 and 2019 forced the Department of Health to enforce state underground storage tank permitting laws, and require the Navy to submit a permit application for its 80-year-old facility. The Sierra Club of Hawai'i, Honolulu Board of Water Supply, and DOH Environmental Health Administration all contested the Navy's permit application.

**May 6:** A routine "fuel movement" results in multiple pipes being blown off their couplings, leading to a spill of fuel. The Navy immediately claims that 1,000 gallons of fuel were released and immediately contained, although soil fuel vapor monitor readings indicate otherwise. The contested case hearing is reopened to gather additional evidence surrounding the spill.

**July:** The Navy admits that there has been an active leak at Pu'uoloa from the facility's pipelines for at least 6 months.

**September 12:** The hearing officer issues a recommended decision and order finding that the Red Hill facility is inherently dangerous, but that operations should be allowed to continue with certain inspection and repair requirements that would effectively shut down 8 of the tanks.

**September 25:** A group of community leaders convene to strategize around shutting down Red Hill. Organizers with Sierra Club of Hawai'i and Hawai'i Peace and Justice begin to facilitate the formation of the O'ahu Water Protectors.

**October 8:** A Navy whistleblower releases emails to the Department of Health and media showing that Navy officials knew about an active facility leak during the contested case hearing, but did not disclose this information as required. Emails suggested that Navy officials were concerned about a leak jeopardizing their permit application, and that "activist organizations" would use it to advance an "anti-Red Hill narrative." Sierra Club files an open records request with the Department of Health to obtain information provided by the whistleblower, and the contested case hearing is reopened - again.

**October 19:** Sierra Club director Wayne Tanaka and State Representative Sonny Ganaden hold a press conference demanding an investigation into whether the Navy misled the public during the contested case hearing.

**October 25:** Sierra Club files a complaint against the Department of Health for failing to comply with the public records law in withholding whistleblower documents.

**October 26:** Sierra Club organizer Anna Chua and volunteer Jun Shin kick off a community education campaign with a presentation and update on the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, urging attendees to participate in an upcoming Fuel Tank Advisory Committee meeting. Over the next two months, presentations and panels would be provided to a wide range of organizations from the Hawai'i State Teachers Association, to the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement,

the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the Hawai'i Council for the Humanities, Elemental Excelerator, the Hawai'i Youth Climate Coalition, various neighborhood boards and neighborhood associations, and others.

National and international media outreach would also result in Sierra Club's work being on Red Hill being covered in The Guardian, Associated Press, ABC News, Al Jazeera/AJ+, Vice News, Truthout, Coffee or Die, Empire Files, The Humanist, Clearing the FOG (NYC radio), and more.

**November 20:** A fire suppression drain line in the Red Hill facility bursts, releasing approximately 19,000 gallons of fuel that had been spilled in May, unbeknownst to Navy officials at that time. One week later, thousands of people on the Navy's water lines begin to report fuel odors, sheens, and illnesses consistent with petroleum exposure, while Navy officials deny any indication that their water is "unsafe to drink."

**November 25:** Sierra Club and numerous other organizations hold a press conference and sign waving event in front of the Honolulu Board of Water Supply, demanding that President Biden and Pentagon officials take action to #ShutDownRedHill. The postcard and letter writing campaign targeting top officials in Washington, D.C. would result in over 1,000 emails and hundreds of postcards and letters sent to the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of Defense.

**December 3:** The O'ahu Water Protectors hold a press conference and rally to demand that Secretary of Defense Carlos del Toro meet with the Hawai'i community regarding the Red Hill crisis.

**December 6:** The Department of Health issues an emergency order to defuel the Red Hill facility. The Navy contests, and Sierra Club (represented by Earthjustice) and the Board of Water Supply intervene to enforce the order.

**December 11:** The O'ahu Water Protectors hold a die-in at the Hawai'i State Capitol in protest of the contamination of O'ahu's water supply.

**December 20-21:** The contested case hearing over the Department of Health's emergency order is held.

**December 27:** The hearing officer in the emergency order contested case recommends that the emergency order be upheld, finding that the Red Hill Facility is a "ticking time bomb" placing public health and Hawai'i's environment in imminent peril. The Navy files "exceptions" to the hearing officer's recommendations; the Department of Health takes the matter under advisement.

*Die-in demonstration at the Hawai'i State Capitol. Photo: O'ahu Water Protectors.*



Hawai'i is at the forefront of the clean renewable energy transition in the US. In no easy feat, we set ambitious clean energy goals early and many hardworking hands have helped keep the islands' progress on track to meet #climategoals. But we still have more work to do. Hawai'i's energy systems have burdened its communities - disproportionately siting impactful energy developments in rural, Indigenous and working class communities, while strapping residents with the highest electricity rates in the country. Halting these injustices and ensuring our energy transition does not repeat them is what guides the Sierra Club of Hawai'i's energy justice work today.

## People over profits

Hawai'i's households spend upwards of 15% of their income on electricity alone and the struggle to afford electricity was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet as more families worried about keeping their lights on, Hawai'i's primary energy provider, Hawaiian Electric, saw record profits while simultaneously threatening rate increases and demanding that customers pay off arrears despite widespread unemployment and economic turmoil.

This deepening disparity between the elite power providers and working class users, especially during such unprecedented times, moved us to launch a comprehensive digital campaign urging Hawaiian Electric to use its earnings to offer bill forgiveness for families hit hardest by the pandemic. Together, through building social media pressure and flooding executive inboxes, we caught the attention of the power producers and regulators, ultimately helping to secure multiple extensions of the utility shutoff moratoria, ease the requirements to enroll in Hawaiian Electric's payment plans, and spark Hawaiian Electric to do the unheard of and donate \$2 million in shareholder earnings to help residents pay overdue utility bills.

Moving to renewable energy sources is one way of lowering energy costs but we must also look at new systems of power production and distribution, ones that begin with true community consent and are rooted in place-based expertise. A major aspect of this work is ensuring that community voices are represented in discussions and decisions about developments that impact their areas.

## Bringing community voices forward

In 2021, we hosted a series of virtual panels during the week of the Hawai'i Energy Conference to elevate community voices concerned about Hawai'i's energy future. Our independent panels provided the opportunity for cross-sector participants to hear from passionate and visionary grassroots leaders about Indigenous perspectives, equity, and locally-owned power alternatives—voices that are often absent from the high-level discussions of the conference.



*Social media post from digital campaign.*



The inaugural panels, featuring discussions on using ancestral knowledge and consent-based engagement to inform energy developments, were hosted in partnership with community leaders from Moloka'i and Kahuku, O'ahu. The idea for these panels stemmed from a growing network of communities that the Sierra Club is convening that aims to advance grassroots solutions to injustices with Hawai'i's energy systems.



*Screenshot from the Energy Sovereignty panel with Ikaika Hussey, Tēvita Ka'ili, Dr. Pualani Kanahele, and Todd Yamashita*

With dozens of participants from state agencies, various local nonprofits and communities across the islands, the presentations sparked meaningful conversations and knowledge sharing that will shape the future of Hawai'i's energy systems and inspire other communities to take back their power grids. These conversations from practitioners with generational knowledge of the islands and grassroots leaders whose mission is to empower their community are the life force of the work we continue today. They have inspired us to make information about Hawai'i's energy systems more accessible, especially for youth passionate about the climate crisis.

### Youth energizers

Energy systems are complex. Dismantling them to build new ones that truly benefit the users over the producers is even more so. But if we remember that it is the same two factors that caused the climate crisis as well as the high cost of electricity in Hawai'i—greed and fossil fuels—we can see the root of injustice. We need visionary solutions that move our grid away from monopolized corporations hooked on profits and fossil fuels.

To harness the creativity of Hawai'i's visionary youth while sharing about the energy justice issues Hawai'i faces, we built out a series of monthly youth-centered energy justice colloquiums for high school and college students in partnership with the Hawai'i Youth Climate Coalition. In 2021, we hosted eight colloquiums covering topics like Hawai'i's current energy landscape, historical analysis, renewable energy economies, consent-based development, and utility structures, while also mentoring a handful of dedicated participants that grew to be leaders of the colloquium series and other youth-led initiatives.

Through our work we are demonstrating the essential place that community members, youth, and Kānaka Maoli have in our energy system. The growing recognition to implement our renewable energy mandate with an equity and justice-centered approach is critical to not only ensuring that the environmental injustices inherent in the current system aren't replicated but to seize the opportunity to transform our energy system to be of true benefit and accountable to the people of Hawai'i.

**By  
the  
numbers:**

**1,645**  
emails sent to  
Hawaiian Electric

**2.2k**  
views of  
panels

**105**  
colloquium  
participants

# East Maui Streams

by David Kimo Frankel

Alexander & Baldwin and East Maui Irrigation have drained constitutionally-protected water from East Maui streams for more than a century, leaving many streams bone dry. Once flourishing native ecosystems and downstream communities now struggle to survive. Even after the fall of sugar, millions of gallons of water continue to be diverted daily, despite the lack of data demonstrating the diverter's need for the water.

In 2021, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i filed a petition with the Commission on Water Resource Management to establish protective standards for a dozen East Maui streams. These streams have no meaningful protections, allowing Alexander & Baldwin to take all of the water from the streams. We anticipate a decision from the commission in the fall of 2022.

Our petition follows years of litigation fighting to stop the unjust take of East Maui's precious waters. For decades, through "one-year" revocable permits, the Board of Land and Natural Resources has allowed Alexander & Baldwin and East Maui Irrigation to divert excessive amounts of water with little questions asked.

Most recently in late 2021, the Sierra Club challenged Alexander & Baldwin's request to once again continue the revocable permits. In the closed door contested case hearing, we cross examined witnesses and a lot of new damning information was put on the record. Nevertheless, the Board of Land and Natural Resources once again voted to continue the permits without conditions that would help protect East Maui's streams.

Throughout all of our litigation, we have learned information that furthers our case for restoring a dozen more of East Maui's streams. We learned that Alexander & Baldwin has made up numbers. Alexander & Baldwin has provided no basis to justify its dewatering of East Maui streams. Alexander & Baldwin has wasted most of the water it has diverted. Alexander & Baldwin's own expert determined that dewatering a stream reduces stream habitat by 88 percent. Alexander & Baldwin has access to groundwater that it could use instead of draining East Maui streams.

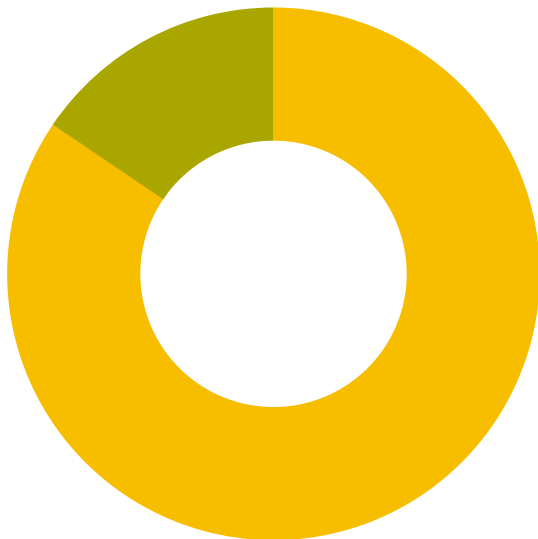
We are cautiously optimistic that through our petition at the Water Commission meaningful protections will be issued that bring life back to these twelve streams. In 2001, Nā Moku Aupuni O Ko'olau Hui, a group of Native Hawaiian kalo farmers and fishermen filed a similar petition to the Water Commission for another two dozen streams. After 17 years, the commission ordered that no water be taken from nine streams and a major tributary; a minimum of 64 percent of the minimum flow necessary to support suitable habitat for native stream animals continue to flow in five streams; and 20 percent of a stream's base flow remain in approximately seven streams to ensure stream connectivity.

In the face of climate change, the way in which we manage water will become increasingly vital to the survival of our life sustaining ecosystems and communities that rely on them. Long gone are the days in which corporations can take water that is not theirs for just pennies on the dollar. We must continue to do everything we can to restore stream flow mauka to makai for the health of our communities and the generations to come.

# Financial report

2021 was a year of growth for us, resulting in a 222% increase in annual revenue. This increase was achieved by ramping up our campaign-based fundraising efforts and securing generous grants to support our inaugural Virtual Tree Planting Program and energy justice work. Community members had the biggest impact on our growth, especially in joining our fight to shut down Red Hill—we've received global donations, from Honolulu to Germany to Guam. As our fight for clean water, air, and climate justice continues, we extend a huge thank you to all who help make this work possible.

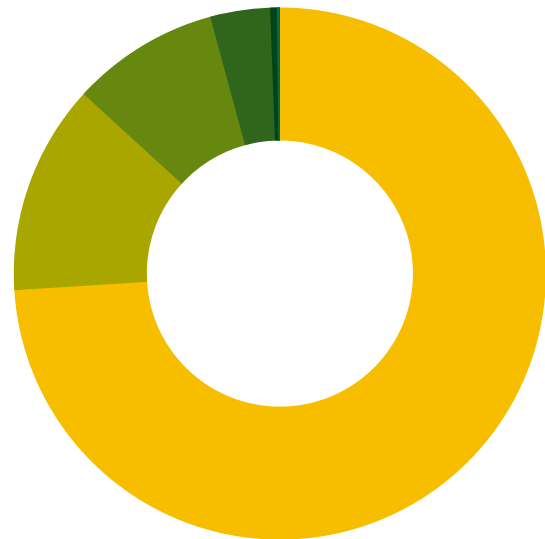
## Revenue



**Donations** - One-time, monthly or recurring, online, mail or specialty appeals, bequests and planned giving

**Other revenue** - Grants and donor-advised funds

## Expenses



- Staff
- Public interest litigation
- Rent and operations
- Advocacy
- Fundraising
- Events and meetings

## Monthly donations

provide the dependable base of support we need to use all of our tools to fight back including grassroots advocacy, public interest litigation, online organizing and our ever growing Sierra Club network.

Goal: **120**

# Monthly Donors

Current: **84**

## 'Āina. Wai. Aloha.

The Sierra Club of Hawai'i understands that our islands' climate resilience will depend not just on our food and water security, but upon our willingness to care about one another, to help carry each other and our communities through the worst of the crises that befall us.

Fostering aloha - aloha 'āina, aloha kekahi i kekahi - therefore can and must serve as a fundamental part of our islands' climate response strategy. To do this, however, will require ongoing reflection and action - to heal the harms and confront the privileges and inequities that marginalize communities, divide us against ourselves and drive us apart in a time when we will need each other the most.





Throughout 2021, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i has accordingly strived to this include this third pillar of resilience in who we are and what we do. We have stood shoulder to shoulder with Native Hawaiian organizations and others fighting to protect stolen ancestral lands and waters, adopted policies that reject sacrificing frontline communities for corporate convenience, spearheaded efforts to provide economic relief and environmental protections for working class families and communities impacted by environmental injustices, and helped to seat the first Native Hawaiian on the Intermediate Court of Appeals in three decades.

With your continued support, we will continue and expand these efforts to ensure a secure and resilient future for ourselves, our children and future generations in 2022 and beyond.

### Sierra Club of Hawai'i

PO Box 2577, Honolulu, HI 96803  
808-538-6616  
hawaii.chapter@sierraclub.org

Cover photo: MNstudio

 [sierraclubhawaii.org](https://sierraclubhawaii.org)  
 [sierraclubhawaii](https://www.facebook.com/sierraclubhawaii)  
  [sierraclubhi](https://www.instagram.com/sierraclubhi)