



Contact:
Heather Simmons, HFIA Executive Director
hfia@hawaiiforest.org
(808) 933-9411

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pana‘ewa Zoo Discovery Forest Celebrates Completion of Phase I

Hawaii Island 12.xx.11 ~ The Hawai‘i Forest Industry Association (HFIA), along with a intimate group of community partners, celebrated the completion of Phase I of the Pana‘ewa Zoo Discovery Forest at the Pana‘ewa Rainforest Zoo & Gardens in Hilo, Hawai‘i on December 17th. Kealakai (Keala) Kanaka‘ole lead the group in an authentic Hawaiian ceremony to bless the place and ask for continued growth and vitality of the native and Polynesian-introduced plantings.

Phase I of the Discovery Forest showcases Native Hawaiian and Polynesian-introduced “canoe plants” demonstration plots. Over the past five months, 75 community volunteers assisted with preparing the site for planting, placing landscape boulders and stone groundcovers, building a dry stream bed, and outplanting seedlings.

Landscape Architects, Leonard Bisel Associates designed creative, low-maintenance native and agro-forest (Polynesian-introduced plants) design plans. Dr. Yiqing Li and his University of Hawai‘i, Hilo Tropical Forestry Program students tagged all the plants and will map, monitor, and document plant growth, phenology, and mortality rates. In addition to UH students, Kiwanis Kids (K Kids) have volunteered their time to help maintain the Discovery Forest.

The Native Forest provides a tiered effect of native trees, plants, and groundcovers including Naupaka kuahiwi (*Scaevola gaudichaudii*), Maile (*Alyxia stellata*), Hāpu‘u pulu (*Cibotium glaucum*), Kōlea (*Myrsine lessertiana*), and Kōpiko (*Psychotria hawaiiensis*). Boulders, gravel rock, and stepping pavers will provide for a low maintenance viewing platform and add visual interest.

The Agro-forest plan features a strategically-placed viewing platform overlooking low, mid and higher canopy species such as ‘Awa, (*Piper methysticum*), Noni (*Morinda citrifolia*), ‘Ulu (*Artocarpus altilis*), and Milo (*Thespesia populnea*). Edged planting beds, stone groundcovers, and decorative pavers will enhance the plantings.

“We would like to extend a huge mahalo to the many community volunteers who helped us reach this point and of course our partners including the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority (HTA) and Change Happens Foundation,” said HFIA Executive Director Heather Simmons. “Our goal going forward is that visitors, island students and kama‘aina all leave the exhibit with a greater appreciation for Hawaii’s forest ecosystems.” Visitors will find the project site adjacent to one of the Zoo's main attractions, Namaste the white Bengal tiger.

In addition to HTA, Change Happens Foundation, and community volunteers, project supporters include: HPM Building Supply, Hawaii Forest & Trail, Big Island Candies, Aileen’s Nursery, Forest Solutions, and Mālama O Puna.

HFIA continues to seek monetary and in-kind donations for continued support of the project through the Hawai‘i Forest Institute, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization. Visit the Discovery Forest webpage at [Pana‘ewa Zoo Discovery Forest Webpage](#).

About the Hawai‘i Forest Industry Association (HFIA):

HFIA’s mission is to promote healthy and productive forests and a sustainable forest industry through forest management, education, planning, information exchange, and advocacy. In addition to the Pana‘ewa Zoo Discovery Forest, HFIA sponsors the annual Hawaii’s Woodshow *Na La‘au o Hawai‘i*; promotes the Hawaii's Wood branding program; and provides restoration and education at several community forests in West Hawai‘i.