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Parker Ranch explores reforestation opportunities on pasture lands to improve resiliency and sustainability through strategic partnerships

Parker Ranch recognizes that climate change is very real and affecting the planet. Unprecedented weather extremes have devastated countless regions around the globe.

Forests have a critical role to play in addressing climate change. As one of the major sub-systems of the greater planetary ecosystem, forests interact with the land, fresh water, atmosphere, and oceans to regulate temperature and weather patterns. Increasingly we are seeing that forests are vulnerable to drought, destruction, and excessive harvesting.

Parker Ranch recognizes forest health as a key indicator of overall ecosystem health. As a result, the Ranch is announcing that it is seeking to collaborate with public and private partners to explore synergies in reforestation and conservation on its lands.

“We accept the unique responsibility of one of Hawai`i’s largest landowners and will prioritize forests among our various strategic priorities as part of our resiliency and sustainability goals. Forests play a vital role in the health of the environment. Forests are essential to preserve our endowment of critical elements in the ecosystem like water, soil, and the atmosphere. We are exploring many facets of forestry for Parker Ranch, including both cultivation and reforestation,” said Dutch Kuyper, President and CEO of Parker Ranch Inc. “We believe native forest restoration is a practical and actionable solution for tackling a variety of environmental challenges. The dedication of our lands for large scale reforestation aligns with our core values of sustainability and responsible land stewardship.”

“We decided to shift from a passive approach to a proactive proprietary approach, creating an internal competence to manage our forests and related priorities,” Kuyper said. Parker Ranch

recently hired Zachary B.P. Judd, a forestry and conservation professional who has spent most of his career primarily focused on the management and protection of Hawai`i Island's expansive and diverse native ecosystems. Prior to joining Parker Ranch, Judd managed field operations in West Hawai`i for the Natural Area Reserves System (NARS), a native ecosystem protection program under the State of Hawai`i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), Division of Forestry and Wildlife.

In an initial step towards advancing its reforestation goals, Parker Ranch intends to restore native Hawaiian forests on roughly 3,300 acres of ranch lands on the slopes of Mauna Kea at elevations ranging approximately 6,200 to 7,700 feet. Neighboring lands are designated forest conservation areas owned by the State of Hawai`i, including the Kaohe Mitigation area to the west, Mauna Kea Forest Reserve to the south, and the Pu`u Mali Restoration area to the northeast.



Categorized as dry and high elevation, the initial lands identified by Parker Ranch for restoration run along a 6.7 mile boundary in a region that contains remnant pockets of Māmāne (*Sophora chrysophylla*), an endemic tree to the Hawaiian Islands and primary food source for the critically endangered Palila (*Loxioides bailleui*). Māmāne is the dominant tree species in the higher elevation forests of the Mauna Kea Forest Reserve adjacent to the Parker Ranch lands, forming what has been referenced as a 'lei' of bright yellow māmāne flowers around the mountain. Considering that māmāne trees flower and fruit at different times of the year depending on the

elevation in which they are growing, expanding the current elevational range of māmāne into Parker Ranch lands will provide a more consistent food resource for Hawaiian forest birds and expand the lei of Mauna Kea into lower elevations.

Māmāne also has special significance in Native Hawaiian culture and local history. In one notable account from 1882, Queen Emma made a trip to the top of Mauna Kea and Lake Wai`āu with William Lindsey, a guide selected by John Parker to take her to the summit. Queen Emma was protected from the rain in a shelter that Lindsey and her other attendants made from māmāne branches. It is said that on the journey, Queen Emma gifted Lindsey with a Hawaiian name for his son, Ka-hale-lau-māmāne' (the māmāne-leafed shelter), commemorating their time on their way up the Mauna.

In addition to adding an in-house forester to support its reforestation initiatives, Parker Ranch contracted with The Global Airborne Observatory (GAO) to utilize its advanced Earth imaging technology to capture and analyze data from Ranch lands. The insights from this collaboration will help guide strategic decision-making on forest ecology and management and development

of long-term sustainability and conservation plans. Key components of the project include a survey of species composition, forest health, and above ground carbon stock. Founded by Dr. Greg Asner, world-renowned scientist, ecologist, and Director of Arizona State University's Center for Global Discovery and Conservation Science, the GAO's mission is to make scientific discoveries, support conservation, and galvanize action to protect the environment at large geographic scales.

Parker Ranch is exploring additional lands for reforestation. Through its ongoing forestry initiatives and collaborations, the Ranch will continue to assess and determine the most suitable lands and plant species to incorporate into its future plans.

In the aftermath of the recent fire that scorched over 36,000 acres of its pastures, Parker Ranch will be focusing efforts on restoration of grasslands, another major sub-system of nature's ecosystem that is also vulnerable to drought and destruction.

"As we just experienced what we expect to be the worst wildland fire in state history and are in the midst of dealing with its devastating impacts, it is clear, now more than ever, that the decisions we make affecting our pasture and forest ecosystems critically determines our ability to contend with and overcome environmental threats. Climate change is real and we must develop strategies to mitigate its potential impacts," Kuyper said.

Looking forward, Parker Ranch seeks to concurrently rehabilitate pastures and establish forestlands with plant species that have the greatest potential to benefit the entire ecosystem. With help from ecological experts, cultural advisors, and other like-minded partners, Parker Ranch will enhance resiliency and sustainability across its various enterprises.

About Parker Ranch

Parker Ranch is one of the largest and oldest cattle ranches in the United States. Parker Ranch Inc. is owned by Parker Ranch Foundation Trust whose beneficiaries are four non-profits: Queen's North Hawai'i Community Hospital, Hawai'i Preparatory Academy, Parker School, and Hawai'i Community Foundation. To learn more, please visit www.parkerranch.com or www.prft.org

About Mauna Kea and the Māmane Tree

More information on Mauna Kea and the Māmane tree is available on Mauna Kea Restoration Project (MKFRP) website: <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/restoremaunakea/palila/mamane/>

