

Case Study: The North Shore Greenprint

In early 2012, the U.S. Army Garrison-Hawai'i (USAG-HI), The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the North Shore Community Land Trust (NSCLT) completed a strategic conservation plan that identifies common areas of interest for protection. The plan serves as a guide to priorities for all three organizations and is the genesis of a 1,700-acre project in the buffer region adjacent to the Schofield Barracks Military Reservation. In addition to helping the organizations focus on the most critical projects, the planning process has increased community support for conservation, the land trust, and the installation.

Background

USAG-HI is home to more than 15 Army and Defense commands, including the Headquarters of U.S. Army, Pacific; the 8th Theater Sustainment Command; the 25th Infantry Division; and numerous military-affiliated tenants. Spread across Oahu and the Big Island, the installation manages more than 200,000 acres and provides services and support to approximately 95,000 soldiers, civilians, and family members. As the largest Army post in the Pacific Region, USAG-HI is essential to military readiness because of its role in supporting the rapid deployment of service members to and from the Pacific theater. Portions of the post's footprint—Kahuku Training Area, Kawaihoa Training Area, Helemano Military Reservation, Dillingham Army Airfield, and the Schofield Barracks—are located in the rapidly developing Central and North Shore areas of the Hawaiian island of Oahu. Serving that area is the NSCLT. Founded in 1997, NSCLT has partnered with TPL and others to protect over 1,600 acres on the North Shore and has also played a valuable role in supporting the efforts of other voluntary land conservation partners in protecting an additional 4,754 acres on O'ahu's North Shore. In 2005, The TPL Hawaiian Islands Program and USAG-HI entered into a Cooperative Agreement, and since that time they have completed four projects protecting over 10,300 acres of land buffering training areas or serving as necessary off-site mitigation areas for listed species.

Challenge

Famed for its natural beauty, rich agricultural land, ecological diversity, beaches, and superb surfing, the 90,000-acre North Shore has faced extreme pressure from developers cashing in on those very qualities. The development pressures have also impacted the Army's use of its training areas and caused the installation to become an island of refuge for many species. Wishing to move away from a reactive approach to conservation and knowing that the land trust had limited resources and a lot of ground to protect, NSCLT Executive Director Doug Cole reached out to The TPL Hawaiian Islands Program for help in creating a strategic conservation plan that would proactively identify priority parcels for conservation. After learning more about TPL's conservation planning tool known as "Greenprinting," both from the organization itself and at the Land Trust Alliance's annual conference Rally, Cole, along with Hawaiian Islands Program Director Lea Hong, approached Alvin Char, chief of the USAG-HI Environmental Division regarding the Greenprinting tool and opportunities to collaborate on shared land conservation goals.

Solution

With support from the Army Compatible Use Buffer program and a grant to TPL by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, NSCLT, TPL, the Army, and the North Shore Community embarked on a 16-month Greenprinting project to identify high-priority land conservation targets. Planners began the process by convening a steering committee of 25-30 people who

represented a cross-section of the community that would be impacted by conservation, development, and Army plans. Over the course of four months, the team drafted the objectives for the project:

- A guidance document for land and water conservation that would feature maps highlighting areas of joint concern
- A communications plan that would:
 - Promote the value of voluntary land conservation to local and state economic sustainability
 - Build community pride for the area
 - Increase awareness of the North Shore's potential to contribute to food security in Hawai'i

According to TPL's Kelley Hart, program director for the Greenprinting effort, "A lot of people didn't understand what a land trust is and how conservation organizations, like NSCLT and TPL, can help sustain local and state economic viability. So, education and community outreach were very important."

In the next phase of the project, TPL and NSCLT researched current conditions by interviewing about three dozen people to determine what areas they believe are priorities for both immediate and long-term conservation. They also conducted three "speak outs" at farmers' markets where people could stop by to give their opinions and learn a little bit about land trusts. Hart notes: "We spoke to hundreds of people about their individual priorities. Some people would only stop for a minute or two, but others would stay for 15-20 minutes, explaining what they have seen on the North Shore and what changes they wanted or what they wanted to stay the same. The speak outs gave us a good sense of what we needed to focus on."

Once TPL and NSCLT understood community concerns, they worked with the steering committee to translate that information into seven conservation goals:

- Protect agricultural lands
- Preserve cultural and historic places
- Protect the coastal region
- Protect natural habitats for plants and animals
- Preserve and enhance view planes
- Protect water quality and quantity
- Increase recreation and public access opportunities

With help from a technical subcommittee of the steering committee, TPL and NSCLT created maps that identified key parcels that would enable the community to meet those goals. The maps were designed to be layered to highlight the parcels of importance to everyone.

With the public maps in hand and after a healthy discussion, the steering committee drafted an action plan for next steps. The action plan contained four next steps with goals attached to each:

- Conservation: begin at least one new conservation transaction and complete at least one pending transaction every year
- Collaboration: create and maintain a social/political environment that is conducive to voluntary land conservation
- Education: develop a public awareness campaign, including a glossy brochure designed to raise the profile of the land trust and highlight the benefits of conservation

- Capacity: build NSCLT's capacity to conserve land and support programs and policies that foster successful voluntary land conservation

TPL and NSCLT then created a password-protected website that allows users to display each of the maps individually as well as in a layered view that highlights parcels that meet more than one goal. According to Cole, some parcels meet every one of the goals and several others contain three-to-four attributes. The tool also allows users to search by parcel number or qualities of the property (e.g., if it is under a particular flight path). Then users can create a profile report on the property that includes its key details (and the conservation goals that will be met by protecting it), which is very useful to show potential funders because it highlights why protecting this property is a priority.

The website also allows users to search for potential funding partners. For example, if someone wants to donate funds to preserve a specific property, NSCLT or TPL can analyze the property to see how it matches up with community goals and Army interests. According to Cole, the website can also help generate ideas for new projects and landowner outreach by allowing Cole or his partners to run searches to determine which properties have high community value and meet urgency criteria or what properties are currently for sale.

Lessons Learned

According to Cole, the steering committee and project conveners learned not only the locations of the highest priority lands for conservation, they also gained valuable information about the community and built important relationships in the process. "One of the main reasons we did the Greenprint was that it's a great way to outreach to the community and find out what was on people's minds. It's also a terrific way to build more relationships, cultivate existing relationships, and to bridge our work and the people on the North Shore. We were successful in building that bridge," Cole says.

Hart suggests that if you are contemplating starting a Greenprinting project, take stock of your community and how you will involve it. For example, make sure your steering committee fully represents all major segments of your community – not just your land trust's friends. Plan your outreach strategy carefully and consider bringing in outside advisors to help draft your approach. She also notes: "Make sure you account for the time and money it takes to craft a successful plan because plans take anywhere from one to two years and can typically cost between \$100,000-\$350,000 depending on the custom GIS work, geographic focus, and other factors."

Finally, don't hesitate to start such a project if you think it will benefit your installation or community. "Building partnerships and working together is critical, especially because so much of what we do affects or involves each other," Char says. "At a local level, the relationships we've built in Hawai'i have been priceless, and we plan to continue the momentum."

Accomplishments

- 1700-acre project in the buffer region adjacent to Schofield Barracks expected to be permanently protected from incompatible development by the end of 2012 (identified in the Greenprint as high priority agricultural lands for the North Shore community and high priority buffer lands for the installation)

- 469-acre project in the buffer region adjacent to the Kahuku Training Area expected to be permanently protected from incompatible development in 2013 (identified in the Greenprint as high priority agricultural lands for the North Shore community and high priority buffer lands for the installation)
- A sophisticated online tool that allows users to quickly identify parcels of interest to the community and stakeholders (currently being used to investigate potential projects)
- A stronger relationship between the local community and stakeholders focused on preservation of areas of importance to everyone.