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## Hui works to improve waterway health

by Michael Levine - the garden island

HANALEI — At the Hanalei Watershed Hui's 10th anniversary celebration yesterday, the kayak rides and water quality demonstrations just couldn't compete with the "star of the show" — a van.

Well, not just any van. The Hui's brand new mobile water quality lab allows hydrologist Matt Rosener to expand his water-testing operations from Hanalei Bay and Hanalei River to other areas, according to Hanalei Watershed Hui Executive Director Maka'ala Ka'auomoana.

Hanalei Watershed Hui has, to this point, focused "mauka" of the bay, working to study the effects of sewage treatment as well as natural phenomenon like rock slides, animal waste and rainwater runoff.

"All the data we collect is another piece of the puzzle," said Rosener, "and there are a lot of pieces."

Ka'auomoana said that the plan for the future is to widen the group's focus to include nearshore marine issues, and to eventually develop what she an integrated resource management plan.

The Hui, an environmental nonprofit, was begun 10 years ago to provide stewardship of the Hanalei River. The organization tests water quality, informs the community of flooding and "brown water" warnings, repairs hiking trails, restores fishponds, reduces cesspool contamination and monitors the coral reef, according to literature available yesterday.

Ka'auomoana said the Hanalei waterway — one of just 14 nationwide to be honored as American Heritage Rivers during President Bill Clinton's second term — is one of the only navigable rivers in the state and is a very important estuary.

"It's a river that's in really good shape," she said.

Yesterday's event also coincided with the International Year of the Reef.

Dr. Eric K. Brown, a Marine Ecologist from Moloka'i's Kalaupapa National Historical Park who visits Hanalei twice a year, said while reef news worldwide has been largely discouraging, Hanalei Bay remains one of the premier reef locations anywhere on earth.

"The reason why Hanalei, in my mind, is one of the good news stories from around the globe, is the reefs haven't changed a heck of lot in the last 15 or 20 years that we've been studying them," Brown said. "On top of that, they seem to have all the characteristics of a reasonably healthy reef."

In a chart comparing average settlement rates, a statistic that helps measure reef health, Hanalei's mark of 11,004 more than doubled that of its nearest challenger, Australia's Great Barrier Reef, which came in 4,258.

"All the pieces of the puzzle necessary to sustain a reef are found here in Hanalei," he said. "The connection of the reef to other reef areas, high recruitment levels, the fact that a lot of the organisms are very resilient and resistant to change, in other words very tough. It's also the fact that the human fishing pressure here is moderate compared to other places."

Ka'auomoana said that she is not a scientist but feels the research into the safety of the Hanalei River and the health of its various user groups is important.

She said the group makes decisions using ancient Hawaiian values, with the goal of keeping residents emotionally invested in Hanalei.

"The process is not pretty, but it's a pono product when you're pau," she said. "It's been a good 10 years."

The Garden Island  
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