



WATER MATTERS

Safe, dependable, and affordable water, now and into the future

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Protecting the Wai‘anae Watershed Lands

Keeping watersheds healthy and functioning is key to replenishing O‘ahu’s precious groundwater supply. Trees and shrubs in these lands catch rainfall and funnel it down to the soil, where it seeps underground into the aquifer.

But a healthy watershed can be ruined by a wildfire. Fire quickly spreads through grasslands into forested areas. A wildfire with intense heat can change the soil so that it repels water instead of absorbs it, increases some nutrients while decreases others (such as nitrogen) and destroys microbes that make soil fertile.

Also, after a wildfire, the first plant typically to grow back is grass, perpetuating the grass-fire cycle. Grass tends to crowd out more fire-resistant shrubs and trees and makes it hard for those plants to get established, sometimes for decades. This reduces rainfall capture in a



Green break along a Wai‘anae Kai road using milo trees. Photo credit Mike Walker, Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources.

watershed and keeps the land vulnerable to future wildfires.

On O‘ahu’s Leeward Coast, unused former agricultural land has been overrun by haole koa trees and guinea grass that burn easily and quickly, leaving the land more prone to wildfire.

To help protect watersheds above these unused lands from wildfire, the

Board of Water Supply (BWS) has been working with the Wai‘anae Mountains Watershed Partnership (WMWP) and the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), Division of Forestry and Wildlife, to fund and install vegetative green breaks in Wai‘anae and Mākaha.

A green break is a physical barrier of fire-resilient shrubs or trees that help slow down the spread of wildfire, giving firefighters a better chance to contain and extinguish it to minimize damage.

The WMWP involves area schools with this effort. It helps create on-campus nurseries and teaches students to grow green break plants. Students travel to green break sites to pull weeds and plant seedlings to build green barriers that protect the watershed against wildfires.

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Smart Home Devices: A Smart Way to Save

Did you know that the average single-family household on O‘ahu uses about 9,000 gallons of water per month? Smart home devices are designed to help you save water and money, both inside and outside of your home, and provide useful data directly to your smart phone:

Smart Water Monitor \$400 Rebate

This device detects leaks and helps prevent costly property damage and

water loss. It connects to your home’s water line, providing data on water usage, and alerts you when potential leaks are detected.

Weather-Based Irrigation Controller \$135 Rebate

This smart technology uses local weather data and a soil moisture sensor to keep your plants healthy and prevent overwatering. It will help lower your water costs and can save up to 15,000 gallons of water per year!



The Water Sensible Program offers rebates on water-efficient products for your home or business. Learn more at boardofwatersupply.com/watersensible. Happy saving!

Help Make Our Island More Water Resilient

Apply for a FREE rain barrel installation today

Help make O'ahu more earth-friendly, cleaner, and water-resilient by applying for a FREE rain barrel installed for FREE for your property.

Rain barrels capture and store rainwater onsite, and allow rainwater more time to soak into the soil and replenish our aquifer.

Capturing and using rainwater benefits our island home in these ways:

- Preserves our precious groundwater supply.
- Reduces energy use, as less potable water is pumped through the water distribution system.



- Reduces stormwater runoff that can cause flooding and erosion, and pollution in streams and the ocean.

- Lowers everyday expenses. Rainwater is free.

This second phase of the O'ahu pilot incentive program, led by the City and County of Honolulu Department of Facility Maintenance and Mālama Maunaloa, allows 250 O'ahu residents (islandwide) to apply to get a free rain barrel installed on their property.

Applications are prioritized in order they are received, apply now!

In addition, a targeted incentive program is also being launched for the Wailupe watershed.



Two hundred free rain barrels will be installed within this watershed as part of a ridge-to-reef effort to restore the health of Wailupe stream and nearshore reef.

Applicants who live within the Wailupe watershed, between Wiliwilinui Ridge (Wai'eli st. and Kalani'iki St.) and Hawai'i Loa Ridge, are especially encouraged to apply!

Application period open: April 1st, 2026

Application submission deadline: July 15th, 2026

Learn more and access the application at www.rainwaterhawaii.com.



Join the Fun!

2026 ANNUAL Hālawā Xeriscape Garden's Unthirsty Plant Sale

Saturday, August 1
9am to 1pm / FREE ADMISSION!
99-1268 Iwaena Street
www.boardofwatersupply.com/plantsale

Wai'anae Watershed

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This activity also builds within young participants a sense of personal stewardship for the land and their community.

Additionally, edible plants such as 'ulu, soursop, taro, breadfruit, and

mountain apple used in a green break can also help nourish area residents.

Customers can use these same ideas to create a green break for their own home by using plants that are less likely to catch on fire. These include succulents and native plants.

The BWS has an online "O'ahu Planting Guide" with suggestions for

native plants for a particular climate zone at boardofwatersupply.com/opg.

Through community partnerships and proactive efforts to protect watersheds from wildfire, the BWS maintains a safe and dependable drinking water supply for island water users today and in years to come.