

## Maui Resilience Partnership

### 2026 Brief for Decision-makers

*Working together to restore the land, protect our communities, and build a more resilient Maui.*

[Companion video \(5 minutes\): Maui Resilience Partnership — Working Together](#)

**At a glance:** There are three clear priority areas for decision-makers to facilitate wildfire risk reduction on Maui:

1. sustained investment in people and capacity;
2. coordinated land and water management across sectors; and
3. clear pathways from policy and funding to on-the-ground action.

Maui is facing compounding risks from wildfire, prolonged drought, water insecurity, and land management gaps. In this context, Hawai'i Green Growth and partners convened a two-day, field-based learning experience on September 29-30, 2025 to provide decision-makers with firsthand perspectives from community leaders, cultural practitioners, farmers, ranchers, and land managers working across wildfire readiness, watershed protection, and community-based stewardship.

The months since the convening took place have been used intentionally – to follow up with participants, gather reflections, and synthesize what was seen and heard across sites, sectors, and conversations. This brief is shared now, as legislative, budget, and implementation decisions come into focus, to reconnect leaders to those firsthand insights and highlight where timely action can most effectively reduce risk and strengthen long-term resilience.

The purpose was not to recap programs, but to inform better policy, investment, and coordination decisions at a moment when new resources are becoming available – and when choices made now will shape risk, recovery, and resilience for decades.

### What leaders experienced firsthand

Participants repeatedly emphasized that the most powerful learning came from seeing conditions and interacting directly with land stewards on the ground:

- Landscape-scale drought and water stress including dry streambeds, depleted reservoirs, and stressed forests visible from both the air and the ground.
- Community-based solutions already at work, from watershed protection and fuels management to regenerative agriculture and neighborhood preparedness – often operating at the limits of capacity.

- A systems approach that is foundational to resilience – no single entity, land management approach, or sector can do the job alone.
- Youth voices that grounded urgency, accountability, and the long-term stakes of today’s decisions.
- These insights are difficult to grasp from meetings or reports alone. Field exposure changed how leaders understood the scale of need, the urgency, and interdependence.

Across site visits and discussions, a clear systems model emerged. Wildfire resilience depends on coordinated action across four interdependent areas:

### **Water & Watersheds**

Healthy native forests, functioning watersheds, and resilient water infrastructure with equitable access underpin both wildfire risk reduction and long-term water security.

### **Productive Landscapes**

Regenerative agriculture producers contribute to the myriad activities needed to effectively manage natural resources and reduce risk across the landscape. They build healthy soils that facilitate water retention; steward large, unmanaged areas and in so doing mitigate fuel loads; and are critical to supporting local food security and communities when disaster strikes.

### **Wildfire Readiness**

Fuels management, fire-adapted built environments, wildfire response and evacuation planning, and community preparedness must work together across jurisdictions.

### **People & Place**

Workforce capacity, cultural practice, youth leadership, and community stewardship determine whether solutions can be implemented and sustained.

Approaching wildfire through this integrated lens moves Hawai’i beyond piecemeal fixes toward durable, place-based solutions.

### **Consistent gaps leaders identified**

While solutions are visible and promising, leaders consistently surfaced several gaps that constrain impact:

- Workforce & wages: Inadequate compensation and limited career pathways undermine conservation, agriculture, and wildfire readiness across the system.
- Sustained funding: Short-term, project-based funding does not support ongoing operations, coordination, and maintenance.

- Jurisdictional silos: Unclear kuleana across County and State agencies, and landowners slows action, particularly around water and fuels management.
- Implementation pathways: Decision-makers want clearer routes from funding and policy to on-the-ground results.
- Data & visibility: Shared tools are needed to track outcomes, guide investment, and communicate progress.

## **The Path Forward**

Leaders repeatedly asked for clarity on next steps. Based on what was seen and heard, the following actions would unlock progress:

### State and County Agencies

- Enable wildfire mitigation through water access, tanks and wells, evacuation routes, and fire-resistant materials.
- Support both agricultural and forested watershed land management approaches to fuels reduction and stewardship. It's not one or the other, it's both.
- Streamline partnerships with community organizations and watershed groups.
- Align funding cycles and contracting mechanisms with real implementation timelines.

### State Legislature

- Given new Green Fee funding pathway, ensure the appropriations are supplemental to base conservation funding, not supplanting existing resources.
- Design appropriations and policies that support integrated, place-based solutions rather than isolated projects.
- Address workforce compensation and career ladders as foundational infrastructure.

### Philanthropy

- Invest in multi-year capacity, coordinators, and workforce pilots that allow proven models to scale.

Hawai'i Green Growth and partners stand ready to support these next steps and continue working with leaders to build wildfire readiness, water security, and community resilience across Hawai'i.