

STEWARDS OF



WAIMEA VALLEY

1164 Bishop Street, Suite 124 • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813  
Scott Foster, Director of Communications  
Waialua, Hawai'i 96791  
VOICE 808-637-9822 • FAX 808-637-1236  
<sfoster@aloha.net>

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**STEWARDS OF WAIMEA VALLEY HONORED AT CHINA TOURISM CONFERENCE  
Effort To Save Historic Ahupua'a "A Model For Community Based Tourism Development"**

**HONOLULU** - The Stewards of Waimea Valley recently learned that their successful community-organizing effort to "move the historic ahupua'a of Waimea, O'ahu into more caring hands" has been presented as "a model for community based tourism development" during the recent "International Conference on Tourism Development and Management In Developing Countries" hosted by the government of China. The international event was sponsored by Guilin Municipal Government, Zhongshan University, the Commission on the Geography of Tourism of the Geographical Society of China, the Tourism, Leisure and Global Change Study Group of the International Geographical Union, and the Department of Geography and Public Planning, Northern Arizona University. The Waimea Valley project was presented by Dr. James Fletcher, Commercial Recreation and Tourism Specialist in the Department of Recreation and Parks, California State University, Chico. Dr. Fletcher had been brought into the project by the Stewards of Waimea as a volunteer consultant "who became enthralled by the Valley's beauty, potential, and apparently our community organizing effort," said Ralph Bard, Stewards spokesperson. Bard noted that the presentation had passed unnoticed close after the tragic events of September, 2001 and "while we knew this event in China would occur, it got completely lost in the chaos surrounding 9/11."

Dr. Fletcher was accompanied by his associate, Dr. Jeff Jiang whose expertise is in international tourism development. Their program title was "Community Resource Conservation in Waimea Valley, Hawaii." Fletcher noted, "We adapted a tourism planning model (University of Missouri, USTTA, and EDA, 1991) and focused on the local residents' input on almost all stages of planning as well as the historical background of the case and the implications of the Waimea Valley model for tourism development in developing countries. As there have been concerns about directly adopting some planning models as developed in Western countries, the

Steward's community organizing and planning model resonated beautifully with this distinguished international group."

The "saga of Waimea Valley" began shortly after the Stewards formed, originally to do crisis management and fundraising for the rare and endangered plant collection managed by the struggling Waimea Valley Arboretum Foundation. Days later, owner and New York Developer, Christian Wolfer placed the property on the market for \$25 million - potentially as a private residence. As Scott Foster, the communications and marketing consultant retained by the Stewards noted, "Suddenly our entire mission changed and we quickly began exploring alternative measures." Ten flyers were mailed to each of the 900 business licenses listed on the North Shore by the State Department of Commerce & Consumer Affairs; 9000 handbills announcing a community meeting. With many businesses independently duplicating the handbill for further distribution, on October 20, 2000, a standing-room-only crowd gathered in the 500 seat Pikake Pavilion to begin a community process to determine the Valley's future. The dramatic public outcry was heard and North Shore City Council Representative, Rene Mansho then convened a series of meetings to define and articulate a community plan. Three Subcommittees were formed; Botanical & Environmental, Cultural & Historic, and Economic Development and on April 2, 2001 - some five months, 16 meetings (many taped, broadcast statewide on public access television, and mailed nationally) and untold-thousands of volunteer hours later the final "specific and closely focused" report as developed by the community was presented to Honolulu Mayor Jeremy Harris. Since, \$5.2 million has been placed in the current City & County budget for the property and the historic Valley has moved through the City & County condemnation process.

The condemnation announcement is expected shortly. The project has garnered the interest of the National Audubon Society which has expressed serious interest in becoming the future management entity and has hired one person in Hawai'i to oversee due diligence and planning towards bidding on the soon-to-be published City & County Request For Proposal (RFP). The Office of Hawaiian Affairs had earlier voted their philosophical and financial support for the park's cultural sites and educational programs once the management entity is finally selected.

Concerning the magnitude of the now international story, Scott Foster noted, "I believe the local and international media picked up on this story, 'the saga of Waimea Valley,' simply because the 'desecration' of the

pre-contact Hawaiian historical and cultural sites and the threat to the rare and endangered plant collection were somehow being allowed to occur in Hawai'i -- the last place that most people might have imagined such things happening. From the em, letters of interest and support, and official proclamations and interest now coming from venerable institutions and organizations around the US and Canada, untold thousands are watching to see the final outcome." "The story was even reported in The New York Observer," Foster noted.

COMPLETE WAIMEA VALLEY MEDIA BACKGROUND AVAILABLE AT  
<http://www.waimeavalley.org>  
INTERNATIONAL CHINA CONFERENCE WEB PAGES  
<http://www.geog.nau.edu/igust/guilin2001/index.htm>  
<http://www.geog.nau.edu/igust/guilin2001/abstracts.html>  
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY SANCTUARIES & NATURE CENTERS  
<http://www.audubon.org/local/sanctuary>

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