

## Building in Volcano

This photo (right) of a newly cleared lot in our community posted recently on Facebook generated a lot of conversation. Some people expressed dismay; others said owners can do whatever they want on their land. Here's what we learned in this Facebook discussion and beyond.



### Building codes have changed

While necessary, these changes are designed for the majority and therefore affect unique communities differently. For example, in Hilo most homes are connected to county sewer systems and a municipal wastewater treatment plant. Here in Volcano, we provide our own utilities and haul our own trash.

### Concrete slabs are now mandated for new construction

The once commonly used post and pier foundation is no longer permitable. New construction requires cement reinforced poured footings and brace walls, which call for significant grading. This is costly and more destructive to our native forest.

### Cesspools are banned

Hawai'i has about 88,000 cesspools. They can contaminate groundwater and leach pollution into the ocean, which is both gross for swimmers and surfers, and harmful to coral reefs and fish. In 2016, Hawai'i became the last state to ban cesspools. All properties with cesspools must upgrade to a sep-

tic tank and drain field by 2050 (or sooner if they are sold). Although a tax credit is available, there is a significant cost in both dollars and land.

### Small lot size

Some lots in the Volcano area are so small that it is difficult to install septic systems and meet all the new requirements without substantial clearing and grading. A water catchment tank must be a specific distance away from the septic tank, drain field and house. Setbacks also play a role – some lots have a 15-foot setback requirement on the sides and a 25-foot setback from the front and back property lines. Clearly, smaller lots are better suited to places with public utilities.

### Next Steps

While VCA will always recommend selective and/or hand clearing and careful planning that preserves as much of the native rainforest as possi-

ble, we've learned, sadly, that this may not be as feasible on smaller lots because of new county and state codes. But pin-to-pin clearing and lot scraping can harm trees on nearby lots because their roots don't understand human property boundaries. Several large 'ōhi'a trees in our community have died from Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death (ROD) after their roots were damaged by clearing on adjacent lots.

It's complicated, but we want to share accurate information with one another, help new neighbors to understand when and where they can preserve our native forests, and consider what changes or exemptions could be requested for our community.

VCA's next step is to update our "Building in the Forest" brochure (available at our table at the Sunday Cooper Center Farmer's Market) and we could use your help. Please share your ideas and thoughts by email at [vcainfo@yahoo.com](mailto:vcainfo@yahoo.com) or at [www.facebook.com/coopercentervolcanocommunityassoc/](http://www.facebook.com/coopercentervolcanocommunityassoc/).

*submitted by Evelyn Wight*



The 'I'iwi (scarlet honeycreeper) was once a common sight (and sound) in Volcano Village. Habitat loss and mosquito disease have led to a dramatic reduction in their population.

*photo credit Bryan Berkowitz*

### Volcano Community Association (VCA) Mission Statement

To improve and protect the quality of life in Volcano, County and State of Hawaii, on behalf of all residents of the area. To promote the social and educational advancement, increase recreational opportunities, ensure health, protect natural environment, and develop community spirit. Also, it will undertake any consonant project the community may be moved to assign to it.

However, it will remain nonpartisan and nonsectarian.

## Why Should I Care About Native Forests?

**-Special:** It's beautiful, unique, and home to more than 10,000 species found nowhere else on earth.

**-Endangered:** We've lost so many native plants, birds and animals that Hawai'i is known as the 'endangered species capital' of the world.

**-Provides Water:** Layers of trees, plants, moss, and ferns evolved to enable Hawai'i's forests to capture fresh water. While many of us are on catchment locally, in urban areas across Hawai'i, replenishing fresh water supplies is much more difficult without native forest.

**-Rooted in Culture:** Hawaiian cultural practices, from hula to lā'au lapa'au, are directly linked with native forests.

**-Sacred:** Forests are the wao akua – the realm of the gods. Native Hawaiians only visited this area where we live with specific tasks in mind after following careful entry protocols.



Above: Kirsten Snook (far right) and 2 volunteers from Puna Precious Plastics set up at Carlson Court Saturday, August 8<sup>th</sup>. Please visit their website or Facebook page for future collection events.

[www.punapreciousplastic.org](http://www.punapreciousplastic.org)

[www.facebook.com/groups/VolcanoPreciousPlastic/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/VolcanoPreciousPlastic/)

### Time to join or renew your membership?

#### Membership Form -- Volcano Community Association

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode \_\_\_\_\_

Email (important) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(s) \_\_\_\_\_ (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (eve) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Your information will be kept private and will only be used for VCA official business.

VCA is a Group of Volunteers serving the wider Community. We welcome your help! Please check your interests:

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <sup>th</sup> of July   | <input type="checkbox"/> VCA table at Farmers Market | <input type="checkbox"/> Volcano Long Range Plan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Committee   | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Misc. Grunt Work        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter/Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____             |

Annual dues \$15 individual \$25 family (2 household members) ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional donation for printing and mailing of brochures and guidebooks, etc..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Card Expires: \_\_\_\_\_ Total amount received: ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(office use only)

Please make your check out to the Volcano Community Association, and send with this form to:  
Volcano Community Association, P.O. Box 600, Volcano, HI 96785  
You can also join or renew at [www.volcanocommunity.org](http://www.volcanocommunity.org)

Mahalo!

The Voice of the Volcano Community Association is published by the VCA Board of Directors:  
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