The Nature Conservancy’s Marine Conservation Fellowship Program:
Empowering the Next Generation of Marine Conservation Leaders in Hawai’i

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai’i
The Nature Conservancy is a private, non-profit conservation organization whose mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. Since 1980, The Nature Conservancy of Hawai’i has been conserving and managing native habitats and ecosystems in Hawai’i. With a system of 11 preserves on the islands of O’ahu, Maui, Moloka‘i, Kaua‘i and Hawai‘i, the Conservancy directly protects 40,000 acres of critical habitat. Together with other public and private landowners, we are protecting almost 1 million acres of critical forest and conservation lands across the state through voluntary, cooperative partnerships that allow landowners to share expertise and resources and work across ownership boundaries. In 2002, The Conservancy extended its work from the forests to the reefs, and is now engaged in marine conservation in the nearshore waters of the main Hawaiian Islands.

The Need for Qualified Marine Resource Managers
Lasting conservation success depends on building strong partnerships with the people who live in and care for the places where we work. Since 2002, the Conservancy has worked with local communities to improve nearshore marine resource management because we know that empowered communities will help to ensure that our conservation work will endure. However, as our marine program grows, we are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit qualified local candidates to fill entry and mid-level Marine Resource Manager positions. And yet these “on-the-ground” managers are key to the long-term success of marine conservation in Hawai’i. They are the ones who will work directly with local communities to develop conservation strategies to restore and manage marine resources, guide the implementation of those strategies, and help communities monitor the effectiveness of protection efforts.

Technical and scientific training for Marine Resource Managers is available through several venues in Hawai’i. Undergraduate and research programs typically provide a good science foundation, including some hands-on experience within resource agencies and conservation organizations. However, that training often lacks focused field work, where collaborating with diverse communities and stakeholders is a critical skill. The few marine conservation jobs available in Hawaii are often filled by marine resource managers who have acquired their work experience elsewhere. While this professional cross-pollination is almost always beneficial, it must be matched with an investment in Hawaii’s youth.

Project Goal and Objectives
The goal of the Conservancy’s Marine Conservation Fellowship Program is to provide recent, local college graduates with the experiential and practical training they need to become Hawai’i’s
next generation of marine conservation leaders. By building the capacity of future Marine Resource Managers, we can help ensure that Hawaii’s marine resources are cared for and sustainably managed for generations to come.

The program objectives are to:
- provide four fellows with two years of on-the-job training which combines mentoring by senior program staff and peer-to-peer learning;
- strengthen the fellows’ core competencies in traditional Hawaiian and contemporary science-based resource management, and community-based conservation;
- provide training through direct experience with on-site projects, formal instruction, and field-based work; and
- enable fellows to compete successfully for positions in marine resource management after completing the program.

The Nature Conservancy’s Marine Conservation Fellowship Program
The Marine Conservation Fellowship Program is modeled after the Conservancy’s successful Assistant Natural Resource Management Fellowship Program. The Marine Conservation Fellowship Program will provide two years of on-the-job training to build a strong pool of well-qualified, experienced Marine Resource Managers. Trainers will include Conservancy staff, marine resource experts, kupuna (community elders), and other conservation leaders throughout Hawai’i. During the program, the fellows will complete formal training in core skills such as biological monitoring, strategic planning, and data analysis. They will also play an integral role in the Conservancy’s Marine Program by working on marine projects alongside our senior staff and staff from partner agencies. We also expect the fellows to add fresh perspectives, energy, and enthusiasm to the Conservancy’s Marine Program.

Upon completion of the program, the fellows will have gained the necessary skills and knowledge to become effective marine conservation practitioners in Hawai’i. They will be highly competitive in Hawaii’s conservation job market for positions not just at the Conservancy, but at partner agencies; other non-profit conservation partners; and recreational fishing, ecotourism, and other private sector marine-based operations.

More importantly, there will be a new generation of empowered, highly skilled, and motivated marine stewards who will help restore and sustain our islands’ marine resources.

Program Design
The Marine Conservation Fellowship Program will take two years to complete and will offer a salary of about $32,000 annually, depending on qualifications and experience. The program is designed for four fellows: two will be hired in the first year and two more in the second year, with a one year overlap. The program emphasizes mentoring by senior program staff as well as peer-to-peer learning among the fellows to enrich the educational experience. The fellows hired in the first year will help train those hired in the second year.

Fellows will be based in the Conservancy’s program offices, with two on O’ahu and one each on Maui and Hawai’i Island. The fellows will be supervised by the Conservancy’s Community-based Project Manager and will work closely with our island Marine Coordinators.
Qualifications of Applicants
The Marine Conservation Fellowship Program will seek applicants with undergraduate degrees in ecology, biology, natural resource management, Hawaiian studies, environmental studies, geology, geography, conservation, or other related fields. Candidates must be proven “self-starters” who have demonstrated initiative and motivation in all of their past experiences (e.g., school, professional, or volunteer projects). Preference will be given to candidates who have knowledge of cultural and traditional marine resource management practices, are dedicated to conservation, and have a demonstrated commitment to the marine resources management and conservation field in Hawai‘i.

Application Process
Interested applicants will be asked to submit a resumé, a list of references, and a cover letter stating:
• why they are an outstanding candidate for the program;
• their interest and experience in marine resource management in Hawai‘i;
• their short- and long-term career goals; and,
• the island(s) on which they wish to be located (O‘ahu, Hawai‘i or Maui).

We plan to hire two fellows by January 2008. We will hire two additional fellows in December 2008. Please send your resumé with cover letter to: jeber@tnc.org by December 17, 2007.