

Dr. Samuel M. 'Ōhukani'ōhi'a Gon, III

Senior Scientist and Cultural Advisor

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i

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Part of the Conservancy staff for over 30 years, Sam has brought his expertise to the organization in a variety of capacities. As the Ecologist for the Hawai'i Natural Heritage Program of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i from 1986 - 1999, he conducted biological inventories and produced biological reports and management recommendations for The Conservancy, our partner federal, state, and local agencies, and for private landowners and organizations. As the coordinator for the Hawai'i Natural Heritage Program from 1992 to 1994, Sam managed a staff of 15 and an annual budget of over \$1 million, conducting biological inventories across the archipelago. As Director of Science he guided the science behind the vision and operations of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i. In his current role as Senior Scientist and Cultural Advisor, Sam maintains his science guidance, and adds his cultural expertise to enhance the mission of The Conservancy.

Sam has 40 years of experience in Hawaiian ecology. This experience includes biological inventories and research, field ecology, entomology, arachnology, ethology, natural community classification, ecological modeling, climate change vulnerability analysis, ecological landscape change, and biological database management. He also is versed in Hawaiian culture, history, and language. Sam is instrumental in many facets of the Conservancy's work. His knowledge of Hawaiian culture and history are an important asset when working with local communities and land management agencies. He has applied his island conservation expertise in cooperative projects and workshops in the Galapagos Islands, the Philippines, Pohnpei, Palau, Fiji, Jamaica, Okinawa, Amazonia, and Rapanui. As an excellent public speaker, Sam often lends his knowledge to conservation agencies, educational institutions, community groups, donors, and important visitors. He has presented on Hawaiian ecosystems and culture at the Smithsonian Museum, Washington D.C., at The Dalem Ethnological Museum in Berlin, Germany (2011), at the National Museum of Natural History (2012) and the Museum of World Culture (2014) in Paris, France.

Sam is an active member of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i and served on the Advisory Committee member for the 'Ōhi'a Project (Hawaiian natural history curriculum development). Additionally, he serves as a Hawaiian natural history and culture consultant for the Moanalua Gardens Foundation (and its evolving status in the Papahana Kuaola Hawaiian Education Center), sat on the board of the 'Ahahui Mālama i ka Lōkahi (Hawaiians for the preservation of native ecosystems), and on the Restoration Advisory Group for the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission. He has served on panels of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs on the topic of traditional management of natural resources, on the Hawaiian leadership committee advising the Hawai'i Life Sciences Consortium and on the State of Hawai'i Endangered Species Recovery Committee. Sam serves on the Executive Committee of the Hawai'i Conservation Alliance (HCA), and on the Pacific Islands Climate Change Cooperative (PICCC); he served on the Board of Trustees for the Native Hawaiian Culture and Arts Program (NHCAP), the Bishop Museum Association Council, and is a member of the Hawai'i State Board of Land and Natural

Resources. Internationally, Sam is a Commissioner for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), serving on the Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP) as part of the Theme on Culture and Conservation (TCC), and the Species Survival Commission (SSP) as a member of the Hawai'i Rare Plant Specialist Group. In 2016, he served on the Hawaiian protocol group that provided daily opening pule as well as protocols for the opening of the plenary assembly at the IUCN World Conservation Congress.

For over 12 years Sam studied oli (traditional Hawaiian chant) and hula with Kumu John Keolamaka'āinana Lake, a master of Hawaiian religion and cultural protocols; training that culminated in his 'ūniki (traditional rite of passage) in February 2003 as a kahuna kākālealeo, practitioner of Hawaiian chant and protocol. In that capacity he serves as a Kahuna Pule (prayer master) at the heiau (temple) of Pu'u Koholā at Kawaihae, Island of Hawai'i as part of Nā Wa'a Lālani Kāhuna o Pu'u Koholā. Kumu Lake, before his passing, gave Sam the kuleana (responsibility) to continue teaching oli for the hālau (traditional learning group) on O'ahu, Hālau Mele, a heavy but joyful responsibility. Sam strives to blend the richness of unique Hawaiian ecosystems with the equally rich culture that developed here. In 2013 Sam received from his peers the Distinguished Service Award in Conservation, which honors exceptional service, personal effort and unselfish interest, embodying long-term dedication and tenacity in environmental conservation for the Hawaiian Islands. Shortly thereafter, Sam was honored in 2014 with the designation of Living Treasure of Hawai'i by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i, for his rapprochement of conservation biology and Hawaiian cultural practice. That blending of science and culture is reflected in a TED talk that Sam was invited to present on Maui in September 2014. In 2017, Sam was a recipient of the Ali'i Award recognizing 20 for the Next 20: Hawai'i individuals whose leadership will be instrumental in the coming decades.

Sam received his bachelor's degree in Zoology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. He then went on to receive his masters in Zoology and doctorate in Animal Behavior at the University of California, Davis. He holds an affiliate faculty post with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Hawai'i, and regularly lectures at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the upper division course BOT/ZOO 450: Natural History of the Hawaiian Islands.

Born and raised in Hawai'i, Sam currently resides in Honolulu with his wife

They have

two sons.