

Notes from the Palm Forest

The Merwin Conservancy

SPRING 2015

A sanctuary for exploring the intersection of language, nature, and imagination as inspired by W. S. Merwin

Dear Friends:

In what seems like a dramatic change in the palm forest, the enormous mango trees have been removed from the property, letting in more light and allowing the palms beneath to thrive and reach up towards the sky.

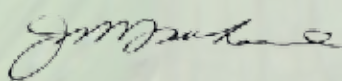
Similarly, the Conservancy has been in a new phase of uprooting, transition and exciting growth. Our founding executive director, Karen Bouris, moved back to Berkeley, California, last summer, passing the mantle to Jason Denhart, who comes from the snowy mountains of Colorado with an extensive background in conservation and nonprofit administration. Jason enthusiastically hit the ground running.

Thanks to your generous support, we have finalized the permanent conservation easement, finished cataloging the palm collection and made the data publicly available, and launched the capital campaign to secure the future of the palms. And Karen, ever devoted to William, Paula and our mission, agreed to stay involved from afar, as cultural director.

Together, we are deeply honored to work to conserve and support this vibrant arts and environmental sanctuary, described by Chipper Wichman of the National Tropical Botanical Gardens as “One of the greatest palm collections of the world; a remarkable assemblage of species.”

As always, we thank you for your heartfelt commitment as we strive to make a positive impact on the environment.

Sincerely,



Jason Denhart
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Karen Bouris
CULTURAL DIRECTOR

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PROTECTED IN PERPETUITY

A living treasure house of palm DNA

*I*n the Pe‘ahi valley in the late 1970s, W.S. Merwin embarked on a nearly 40-year journey transforming an agricultural wasteland into one of the most extensive private collections of palm trees in the world.

Now, the 19-acre palm forest and handcrafted Merwin home are protected by a deed of conservation easement held by Hawaiian Islands Land Trust—and with a generous pledge of the land from William and Paula Merwin to THE MERWIN CONSERVANCY.

“From the start, Paula and I hoped to be able to save this bit of wrecked land and valley of Pe‘ahi Stream. To see a fully organized and legally expressed conservation easement take form is a reassurance and a great joy to both of us.”



Conservation easement signing ceremony with Ted Clement, William & Paula Merwin and Jason Denhart



Chehalis Hegner



No. 3 with Naomi Shihab Nye

The “wandering poet” stopped long enough on Maui for a deeply felt Green Room exchange last September. The author or editor of more than 30 volumes, including books of poetry, essays, short stories and novels for young readers, Naomi shared stories, poems and herself as she signed books and lifted our spirits.

“Before you know what kindness really is you must lose things”
—from Naomi’s poem “Kindness”

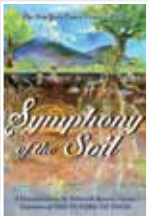
Louis Gakumba



No. 4 with Terry Tempest Williams

The legendary naturalist, author and activist Terry Tempest Williams came for warm breezes and a visit to The Green Room in January 2015. With her exquisite mastery of language and emotional honesty, she talked about relationships, silence, and mothers—and read from her latest book, *When Women Were Birds*.

“Wild mercy is in our hands.”
—Terry Tempest Williams



No. 5 with *Symphony of the Soil* and filmmaker Deborah Koons Garcia

A documentary film, *Symphony of the Soil* explores the miraculous substance soil and the elaborate relationships among soil, water, the atmosphere, plants and animals. After the film showing, Deborah Koons Garcia joined us in March 2015 for a lively discussion on soil, GMOs, and more.

“What fascinates me about soil is its transformational nature, the idea that it not only provides a foundation for life—that plants and trees and animals grow out of it—but that it transforms death into life.”
—Deborah Koons Garcia

IN THE NEWS...



W.S. Merwin and the Merwin Palm Collection are featured on PBS NewsHour in a story by senior correspondent

Jeffrey Brown; the segment is available on-line at www.pbs.org/newshour.

The Academy of American Poets awards William the Harold Morton Landon Translation Award for his *Selected Translations*.

William receives the Hawaiian Islands Land Trust’s 2015 Champion of the Land conservation award.

William wins the 2015 Good Steward Award from the National Arbor Day Foundation.

“From what we cannot hold the stars are made.”

— W.S. Merwin

Jon Letman



WE INVITE
YOU TO JOIN US

Save the palm forest and poet's home
for future generations.

OUR CAPITAL
CAMPAIGN
IS UNDERWAY

WHAT
WE ARE
PRESERVING
AND
CREATING:

An iconic property hand-planted by one of the world's greatest poets
A one-of-a-kind, biodiverse jewel in the Pacific
A future sanctuary for artists, writers, and poets
A place of study and sampling for botanists and other scientists
A rare, breathtaking example of humans living in harmony with the Earth

PAULA AND WILLIAM MERWIN have pledged to donate their palm collection and home to the Conservancy via their estate, if the Conservancy raises \$1 million for a capital fund to ensure its permanent preservation. Because of two very generous lead gifts, over \$500,000 has been pledged, bringing us more than halfway to our goal.

Please help us secure the donation of the property and palms by making a generous donation to our capital campaign today.

THE MERWIN CONSERVANCY TIMELINE

2009-2010

Formal discussions begin on how to support William's dream of saving the property.

Lawyer Scott McCue draws up documents with help from Copper Canyon Press and Hawaiian Islands Land Trust, our supporting partner organizations.

The Merwin Conservancy becomes a 501(c)3 and hires its first executive director.

Website launched and founding donors step up to invest in William's vision.

2011-2012

The Conservancy makes capturing the historical record a priority.

We evaluate documentary film proposals and select Stefan Schaefer and Cicala Filmworks.

We begin a two-year palm cataloging project with the National Tropical Botanical Gardens.

The Conservancy outlines conservation values and easement parameters.

The documentary team films on the property and at the Merwins' farmhouse in France.

2013

We celebrate William's *The Folding Cliffs* at the Hui No'ëau Visual Arts Center.

The Green Room salon series is launched with author Alexander Maksik.

FIM Group becomes our presenting sponsor of The Green Room.

A benefit screening of the documentary *Even Though the Whole World Is Burning* is held at Seabury Hall's Creative Arts Center.

The Nature Conservancy provides aerial map photographs and GPS points to assist with the palm cataloging.

2014

The Green Room series features Dr. Abraham Verghese and Naomi Shihab Nye.

The Conservancy finishes the palm cataloging with a publicly searchable database.

The Conservancy receives two lead gifts to kick off the capital campaign.

The documentary film premieres at the Maui Film Festival and begins screening at film festivals, colleges and writer conferences nationwide.

We complete a smooth transition to a new executive director.

The Conservancy finalizes, signs and executes the conservation easement.

William and Paula Merwin pledge to donate the palm forest and poet's home to The Merwin Conservancy.

2015

The Merwin Conservancy officially launches its capital campaign.

The Green Room features Terry Tempest Williams and *Symphony of the Soil*.

Small group tours are led through the palm forest by arborist Olin Erickson.

The documentary screens at the Hawaii International Film Festival and debuts on PBS Hawaii.

The Nature Conservancy donates Native Hawaiian ferns from the Waikamoi Preserve, which are planted where the mango trees were removed.

Merwin Palm Forest FACTS

2,741 palm trees

407-486 species

128 genera

875-900 horticultural
varieties

Our Supporters*

Thank you for your support, philanthropic investment and your partnership. Your generosity helps us preserve the living legacy of W.S. Merwin and conserve the world-renowned Merwin palm collection.

*As of March 15, 2015

With deep appreciation,

The Merwin Conservancy Trustees, Advisors & Staff

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Paula & William Merwin

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OUR MISSION

To inspire reverence for language, nature, and imagination, as embodied in the poetry and palm forest of W.S. Merwin, through study, events and education.

If there are any errors or omissions on our list, please accept our sincere apologies and contact us at 808-579-8876.