



Dear sangha friends:

It's awe-inspiring to reflect once in a while on the nature of meditation retreats. Teachers pore over teachings, devote themselves to practice, and inform themselves about the unique conditions of each retreat to ensure the purity of transmissions continuously. More than that, trusting the teachers, yogis across the world begin preparing *months* in advance to clear their schedules to attend a weekend, a week or longer to do, well, nothing! That's no small task in today's environment.

Why all the effort? Whatever makes us decide to attend a retreat, it requires an enormous commitment. At times it brings us only right where we are at. It can be humbling. What retreats give, at a minimum, we believe, is the safe, skillful support to explore what all that might mean. As a result of our recent September retreat in Honolulu, three yogis signed up for the upcoming three-week Kyaswa Monastery Retreat in Myanmar to continue their practice. "I'm grateful for the skillful teaching and guidance, and for the opportunity to share the practice with a group of like-minded people, who, even in silence, bring so much to the experience," says Tom Oksner, who this summer traveled from Los Angeles to a retreat in the high altitudes of New Mexico's Tusas Mountains at Vallecitos, where registration numbers despite the locale's intense remoteness rose far above the original limit: "The silent retreat redefined my practice. When you pair a deep exploration of loving kindness and the other sublime attitudes with a beautiful setting, it makes your heart ache and mouth water: It's no mystery as to why the heart begins to open."

Supporting practice is at the core of our mission at Vipassana Hawai'i. So as we enter winter with four new [retreats](#) spread across Hawai'i, Thailand and Myanmar, we are deeply grateful to all of you who allowed us to do so by making that hard commitment. Thanks to you, we look back on a year that has been fiercely loyal to our mission, packed with retreats, from shorelines in Canada to the USA East Coast, in Honolulu and in Southeast Asia, together attended by hundreds. The truth of the dhamma is alive: We thank each and everyone for your practice.

HIMC hermitage: A place for practice connected to the land

The year 2013 brought other success: In June, we received a time extension from the Hawai'i County Planning Commission for our special permit to build Hawai'i Insight Meditation Center (HIMC) on a beautiful, spacious, tree-shaded 81-acre parcel edged by a stream, in Hālawā in North Kohala on the northeastern tip of Hawai'i Island. We now have until June 2018 to complete, which gives us time to build up funds. We have a great architect on board.



Vipassana Hawai'i has long sought to ground its transmission of the teachings with an acknowledgement of our connection with and responsibility for the earth. We strongly believe that it's the earth that can teach us best how to live. It's what's implied in the third line of our mission statement (see footer). We feel fortunate that HIMC can give us these roots.

The site plan includes 40 private monastic cottages (called kuti in Southeast Asia) as well as teacher cottages and, of course, a meditation hall. Our goal is for HIMC to be constructed over the course of three years, with ground-breaking to occur in the late autumn of 2014. You can read more about HIMC [here](#).

Yes, we are excited! And we greatly welcome your participation, asking you to please support our vision with your HIMC [donation](#).

.org

Our website has reached a new milestone: If you haven't visited our site lately, please take a moment in the next few weeks to do so, as we have launched a totally new design, under the same address: www.vipassanahawaii.org. Upgrades include a new audio page for teacher talks, new content, lots and lots of photographs, and an easier retreat registration and donation process. Eventually we will add more talks, more texts and resources, and introduce a log-in system to make your participation effortless, but we are doing this step by step. For now, if you see faulty or confusing links or pages, please feel free to drop us a [note](#). And if you like the site or have suggestions, yes, tell us as well.

Roots through the land

It's hard to share with you that Vipassana Hawai'i (VH) has decided not to pursue a conservation easement for the land it owns in North Kohala, Hawai'i Island.

Naturally we feel disappointment. As you may know, Vipassana Hawai'i holds title to 254 acres of property, which includes the 81 acres of Hawai'i Insight Meditation Center (HIMC), mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter. We have been involved for several years in an intensive process to protect the land as part of the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program of the US Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The easement under this program would have protected our land in perpetuity from further development and, so we hoped, would provide Vipassana Hawai'i (VH) with some of the financial resources needed to build HIMC. Over the past two years, we spent innumerable hours developing a conservation plan, raising matching funds for the grant, and negotiating the many terms of the easement. Unfortunately it became clear over the past few weeks that the program was not a match for us: The intensity of the restrictions and the reality of the compensation were not viable for VH's long-term needs.



We are proud of the work we have put into this process and the integrity of vision that we had hoped to bring formally to our stewardship of the land. We are grateful to the many good partners at NRCS, Hawaiian Islands Land Trust (HILT), and the State Legacy Land Conservation Program, to the many people in the

sangha, in the wider community, in our team, *everyone* who helped in trying to make the easement possible. Mahalo nui loa to all those who have supported this process and encouraged us along the way.

What do we plan to do instead with the land? Vipassana Hawai'i remains firmly committed to its vision and will continue to strive for its protection. We are simply refocusing by taking a new and promising direction. While we will begin the process of selling some of the land, we are already exploring our options ensuring healthy stewardship. Our intent is to draw a mindful community of new landowners to surround us.

Proceeds of land sales will support the organization, give Vipassana Hawai'i space to manage its remaining 81 acres with focused excellence, and help fund the building of the hermitage with ease.

Along with disappointment, we feel relief. We make the shift with confidence, clarity, and joy at the good fortune of Vipassana Hawai'i's stewardship of the land, appreciative of viable possibilities in realizing the vision.

Long retreat for Michele McDonald



Dear Friends: Our wonderful teacher Michele McDonald is taking the next six months for an intensive period of retreat in an effort to renew and deepen her practice. Michele has guided many of us with wisdom and great love for a long time and hasn't managed to arrange a retreat of this length for herself in almost 30 years! It is something she has aspired to do since she first began practicing.

We now have a chance to support her in this endeavor. Since she will have no income during this time, each and every donation from us will support her to deepen her practice and rejuvenate her body. I hope you will join me in expressing gratitude by making whatever

contribution you can, knowing that not only will you be supporting Michele directly, you will also be contributing to the continuation of the Dhamma in all of her future teaching.

~ Rebecca Bradshaw, Guiding teacher, Pioneer Valley Insight Meditation Center

Checks can be sent to Vipassana Hawai'i, earmarked for Michele, c/o PO Box 551681, Kapa'au, Hawai'i 96755, or you may make an online [donation](#).

Bridge Support



Vipassana Hawai'i is at an exciting juncture with lots of good news. However, we do need your help as an organization. Please contribute to the bridge that will sustain Vipassana Hawai'i and a new year full of teachings until a first neighbor landowner in Hawai'i steps forward. Your generosity today will make a difference. Please visit our secure website [donation](#) page or write a check to Vipassana Hawai'i. (Address: PO Box 551681, Kapa'au, Hawaii 96755). If you wish to set up a recurring gift, please contact us. Thank you for your support!

Calendar - Vipassana Hawai'i Winter Retreats:

Click on the events to learn more or register:

[Giving Thanks ~ Weekend Vipassana Retreat](#)

With Steven V. Smith and Pat Masters.
Friday November 29 to Sunday December 1, 2013
Location: Palolo Zen Center, Honolulu, HI

[Vipassana Retreat with Mindful Movement](#)

With Steven Smith and Julie Seibt.
December 29, 2013 to January 5, 2014.
Location: Khlong Long Lake, Southern Thailand. Note that Vipassana Hawai'i does not take registrations and inquiries for this retreat directly. Please visit the link provided.

[The Noble Eightfold Path or the Path of Happiness](#)

A mindfulness retreat with Sayadaw U Thuzana.
Friday January 17 to Thursday January 23, 2014
Location: Palolo Zen Center, Honolulu, HI

[Kyaswa Fusion Dhamma Retreat](#)

With Sayadaw U Lakkhana and Steven Smith;
Assisted by Jake Davis and Mia Tremblay.
January 11, 2014 to January 31, 2014
Location: Kyaswa Monastery, Sagaing Hills, Myanmar



Sunday afternoon sittings ~ O'ahu and Hawai'i Island:

On O'ahu and Hawai'i Island, the sangha gathers each Sunday. For more information or location directions, visit [this page](#). All sittings are free of charge. (Dana is welcome.)

The O'ahu sangha meets each Sunday at 5:00 pm:
Location: Chan Khong Buddhist Temple, 1105 Hind luka Drive, Honolulu, HI 9682.

5:00 – 5:45 – Silent Sitting Meditation

5:45 – 6:30 – Dhamma talk, sharing reflections, experiences, questions and answers.

The Hawai'i Island sangha meets each Sunday at 4:00 pm:
Location: Hawai'i Insight Meditation Center in North Kohala

4:00 – 4:45 – Silent Sitting Meditation

4:45 – 5:30 (only when a teacher is on island) – Dhamma talk, questions and answers.



All of us at Vipassana Hawai'i express our deepest thanks for your faith, shared commitment, and continuing trust. In gratitude, Steven Smith, Michele McDonald, and Trent Cornell - Board of Directors.