Keeping the Spirit of Kaloko-Honokōhau Alive

Nā wai ʻola o Kane (life-giving waters of the god, Kane) provides the life essence in this dry district of West Hawaiʻi Island. Native Hawaiian conservation values protect the use of the land, sky, and sea by laying out specific guidelines for interactions between humans and nature. Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park contains visible reminders, such as heiau (temples), loko iʻa (fishponds), and kiʻi pohaku (petroglyphs) that speak of the spirit of this place. Today, changes of population, resource use, and development alter the environment by compromising groundwater flow, marine life, and native species. The current challenge for this fragile national park is to keep the spirit alive by preserving these unique cultural and natural resources in the face of a rapidly developing landscape.

~1200
A settlement is in place and the Kaloko Fishpond is constructed

1778
Western contact accelerates changes in native culture, practice, and population

1819
The kapu system is abolished after Kamehameha I dies, initiating major cultural changes

1848
Great Mahele, a private property law, causes social and land use changes

1962
Honokōhau settlement becomes a National Historic Landmark

1978
Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park is established

approx. 1650

Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park

Cultural and Natural Resources
- villages and sacred sites such as heiau (temples) were built along the coast
- a large stone slide was built for hulua, sledding sport of the aliʻi (chiefs)
- early Polynesians brought many plants and animals for their use
- a few harmful species, such as rats, arrived unseen with the Polynesians
- native plants were maintained for medicinal and ceremonial use
- taro and sweet potato were cultivated in planters on the lava fields

Kaloko Fishpond wall

Cultural and Natural Resources
- groundwater recharged coastal pools and wetlands with fresh water
- ʻōpae ʻula (red shrimp), used for fish bait, lived in coastal brackish pools
- many resident and migratory birds used the coastal wetlands
- fish were trapped and raised in loko (ponds) for the aliʻi (chiefs)
- feeding fish by canoe, then netting, maintained the koʻa (fishing grounds)
- abundant and diverse marine life communities existed along the reefs

Threats and Human Impacts
- invasive and culturally significant sites remain culturally significant and relevant today
- invasive plants are removed and native plants are restored by park staff
- endangered aeʻo (Hawaiian stilt) and other birds nest in park wetlands
- many resident and migratory birds use the coastal wetlands
- introduced cats, rats, and mongoose threaten native bird populations
- fishing grounds (petroglyphs) that speak of the spirit of this

Management Initiatives
- limit groundwater withdrawal and pollutant inputs
- remove invasives and restore native plants
- reduce populations of small introduced mammals
- collaborate with state on marine resource management

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Cultural and Natural Resources
- pools and wetlands fed by groundwater
- unique and culturally significant native plants
- migratory and resident wetland birds
- coast with high coral cover and fish diversity

Threats and Human Impacts
- proposed developments threaten groundwater
- invasive plants outcompeting native plants
- introduced mammals reducing bird populations
- unregulated fishing reducing fish populations

Management Initiatives
- limit groundwater withdrawal and pollutant inputs
- remove invasives and restore native plants
- reduce populations of small introduced mammals
- collaborate with state on marine resource management

http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/pacn/

http://www.ian.umces.edu

Ahupuaʻa land division map (left) with Hualalai watershed (circled) and park (red).