At Pu‘ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site, many key features of this culturally significant park are influenced by waters flowing from Makeāhua and Pōhaukole Gulches. In 1790 when the Pu‘ukoholā Heiau was constructed, the bay supported abundant limu (seaweed) and fish in clear waters, and Hale o Kapuni Heiau (shark temple) was visible. Centuries of cattle ranching and feral pig and goats have spread invasive plants and increased erosion. Recent damming of the stream has increased sediment flow, and the adjacent port, built on landfill, has reduced flushing of sediment from the bay. As a result, Hale o Kapuni Heiau is now buried, and many native fish can no longer be found.

1790
Pu‘ukoholā Heiau is constructed by Kamehameha

1798
John Young builds his house at Kawaihæ, land given to him by Kamehameha

1801
Kamehameha unites the islands and becomes King Kamehameha I

1819
Kamehameha I dies, ending centuries of the kapu social and economic structure

1928
Pu‘ukoholā Heiau is designated as a Historical Landmark

1972
Pu‘ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site is established

approx. 1790
Pu‘ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site

Cultural and Natural Resources

- heiau, such as Hale o Kapuni (shark temple), were key to the native culture
- freshwater streams and a spring provided water to the community
- occasional feral pigs disturbed native vegetation and soil
- continuous stream flow contained small amounts of sediment
- some stream water was diverted for agricultural irrigation
- native sandalwood trees were abundant

- native plants such as the loulu palm and pili grass were plentiful
- the bay was clear and deep with a rocky bottom
- limu (seaweed), nutrition for people and turtles, was harvested on the reef
- longshore currents kept the deep bay well flushed
- a thriving coral reef supported a diverse and abundant fish population

Cultural and Natural Resources

- restored heiau (temples) host Hawaiian historical and cultural events
- invasive plants are removed and native plants are restored by park staff
- freshwater upwelling continues to flow in the bay
- tilapia is an introduced fish found in the park pond

Threats and Human Impacts

- landfill blocks longshore currents from flushing sediment from bay
- sediment is filling in the bay, killing coral and reducing fish populations
- neighboring development is encroaching on park boundaries
- port and military traffic is increasing noise and pollution
- cattle, feral pigs, and goats cause soil erosion and spread invasive plants

Management Initiatives

- work with neighbors to minimize impacts on park
- remove invasive plants and fence park
- replant stream banks and restore stream flow
- explore options for sediment reduction in bay