



Foundation Document Overview

Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park

Hawai'i



Contact Information

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Description

Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park is located on the west coast of the Island of Hawai‘i, approximately 3 miles south of the Keahole International Airport and 3 miles north of the town of Kailua-Kona. In 1972 Congress authorized the Honokohau Study Advisory Commission, comprised primarily of Native Hawaiians, to advise Congress and the Department of the Interior on the desirability and feasibility of establishing a unit of the national park system at the Honokōhau Settlement National Historic Landmark. The result was *The Spirit of Ka-loko Hono-kō-hau: A Proposal for the Establishment of a Ka-loko Hono-kō-hau National Cultural Park*, which was completed in 1974 and is commonly referred to as the Spirit Report.

Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park was designated in 1978. As described in its enabling legislation, the park was established “to provide a center for the preservation, interpretation, and perpetuation of traditional native Hawaiian activities and culture, and to demonstrate historic land use patterns as well as to provide a needed resource for the education, enjoyment, and appreciation of such traditional native Hawaiian activities and culture by local residents and visitors.” In the legislation Congress further directed the National Park Service to manage the new park “generally in accordance with the guidelines provided” in the Spirit Report. To this day, the Spirit Report remains the park’s primary guiding document.

Within its approximately 1,200-acre boundary, the park protects the site of an ancient Hawaiian settlement, the coastal portions of five different *ahupua‘a* (traditional Hawaiian land divisions extending from the mountains into the sea), and a great concentration and variety of tangible and intangible resources that attest to the Hawaiians’ presence on the land. *Kānaka maoli* (Native Hawaiians) who once lived in this settlement possessed in-depth knowledge of their natural environment and demonstrated great ingenuity in adapting this seemingly inhospitable environment to their use. The people employed ingenious fishing and agricultural practices, and built large ponds to raise fish as a source of food. Some of the coastal pools provided an underground water source to support a settlement of people.



The spirit of the *poe* (people) and the knowledge of the *kūpuna* (elders) created a tradition of respect and reverence for the area. Among the park’s diverse resources are *loko i‘a* (two fishponds and a fishtrap that were used for food production), *kahua* (house site platforms), *ki‘i pōhaku* (petroglyphs), *heiau* (temples), graves, and a network of historic trails. As expressed in the Spirit Report, these resources are “not just a few token archeological representations of the Hawaiian culture, but the historic site of an entire community that existed as an entity within the boundaries of the *ahupua‘a* but tied as well to adjacent communities of similar structures. It is a stage upon which the Hawaiian way of life was first performed centuries ago.” This distinctively Hawaiian way of life persisted for centuries, but almost disappeared after European contact and settlement. Today Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park provides opportunities to learn about Hawaiian culture and offers a much-needed venue for the practice and perpetuation of traditional skills and knowledge.

The park’s rich natural abundance and diversity further draw people to this special place, where they may spot rare native plants and wildlife. The endangered *ae‘o* (Hawaiian stilt) and *‘alae ke‘oke‘o* (Hawaiian coot) make their home in the ‘Aimakapā Fishpond. Several species of migratory waterfowl visit the park every year to overwinter at ‘Aimakapā Fishpond. Along the shoreline, local residents and visitors may watch for juvenile *honu* (Hawaiian green sea turtles) feeding in the shallows and migratory shorebirds foraging along the shore, or on occasion may encounter an *‘ilioholoikauaua* (Hawaiian monk seal) basking on the beach. Vibrantly colored corals and fish are seen by those who explore the park’s waters offshore.

Although Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park is a place that all people may visit and appreciate, it has particular significance to Hawaiians. As expressed in the Spirit Report, the park provides an opportunity to “restore the cultural identity” of Hawai‘i. Through its preservation and management, the park enlarges “the horizons of people throughout the state, nation, and beyond.” Today the Hawaiian spirit is strong again and is celebrated and nurtured at Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park.

Map



Purpose



Through stewardship of the ‘āina (land) and wai (water), KALOKO-HONOKŌHAU NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK serves as a kīpuka¹ (island of life) for the perpetuation and practice of traditional Native Hawaiian activities and culture, for the education, enjoyment, and appreciation of local residents and visitors.



1. In common usage, a *kīpuka* is a protected place or oasis within a lava flow where life is able to thrive. This foundation document overview describes Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park as a *kīpuka* or a “cultural *kīpuka*”—a protected area spared from modern development where traditional Hawaiian activities and culture can thrive.

Significance

Significance statements express why Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- *Ola i ka wai* (water is life). Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park preserves intact the historic site of a Hawaiian community sustained largely by groundwater. Without an underground flow of freshwater, the barren and harsh lava landscape would have been unsuitable for human settlement; yet hidden within the land flows this water of life. Water is the dynamic thread that continues to tie the environment and people together.
- Although small in size, Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park contains an astonishing variety of rare, native ecosystems that support threatened, endangered, and candidate species, as well as myriad culturally significant species. From dryland forest, anchialine pools, brackish fishponds, natural wetlands, and coastal strand to coral reefs, the park offers a glimpse of Hawai‘i’s unique, and vanishing, natural diversity and abundance.



Significance



“The spirit of Ka-loko, Hono-kō-hau was its life, the life that flowed in its land and the water that washed upon its shore. Like Hawaiians who found its presence elsewhere, the people of Ka-loko, Hono-kō-hau let the spirit become part of their existence. They lived in such perfect harmony with it that they became a singular, total, and inseparable environment.”

- *He ali‘i ka ‘āina; he kauwā ke kanaka* (The land is a chief; man is its servant). Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park, a rare “cultural *kīpuka*,” connects practitioners, descendants, community, and visitors to the land and to each other.
- Designated a national historic landmark, Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park features a rich abundance, variety, and concentration of cultural and historic resources in their natural setting that demonstrate a coastal Hawaiian settlement prior to and immediately after contact with Western civilization in 1778. These features illustrate Hawaiian culture and heritage, and vividly portray the traditional relationship between people and nature.
- Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park was established for and remains committed to the preservation, interpretation, and perpetuation of traditional Native Hawaiian activities and culture. The park’s diverse resources represent a Hawaiian way of life and culture that continues to evolve, and uniquely contributes to our national heritage.
- Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park is the only unit of the national park system with three distinct types of *loko i‘a* (two fishponds: a *loko kuapā* and a *loko pu‘uone*); and a *loko ‘umeiki* (fishtrap). The park’s three fishponds illustrate ingenious engineering, aquaculture techniques, and practices of the past and offer opportunities for Hawaiian aquaculture to thrive into the future.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **The Spirit of Kaloko-Honokōhau.** Since long before written history, a strong spirit of life has flowed through the land and waters of Kaloko-Honokōhau. Hawaiians saw and felt this spirit in every element of the environment that surrounded and sustained them. Visitors and local residents who experience the park’s contemplative setting, beautiful scenery, and natural sounds can feel the spiritual life force. Keeping alive the spirit requires protecting this unique sense of place, and perpetuating traditions and teachings by handing them down to the next generation. As the Spirit Report explains, “The Hawaiian settlement at Ka-loko, Hono-kō-hau did not just survive. It thrived, because the ancient Hawaiians touched and understood the spirit but did not disturb it. They nurtured the spirit tenderly, like a rare and precious plant, and grew it until it filled everything around it with its being.”
- **Cultural Landscape.** The cultural landscape at Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park is an enduring expression of the inseparable connections between Native Hawaiians and their environment. It is a place where the inhabitants adapted to and protected their surroundings. The Honokōhau Settlement, nominated in 1962 and listed in 1966 as a national historic landmark, contains both human-made features (cultural resources such as *heiau*, historic trails, and stone planters) and natural features such as vistas, night skies, water, land, and wildlife. In the traditional Hawaiian worldview, natural and cultural resources are fundamentally intertwined. The park’s cultural landscape provides tangible evidence of past features and patterns of use that illustrate a traditional and thriving Hawaiian coastal settlement. Traditional Hawaiian concepts of land use and land division are evident in the landscape, with portions of five *ahupua‘a* (traditional Hawaiian land divisions): Kealakehe, Honokōhau, Honokōhau Iki, Kaloko, and Kohanaiki. Each *ahupua‘a* extends from sea to mountain containing most of the resources needed to sustain people living there. The Hawaiian people lived in self-sustaining communities that relied on fresh and brackish water supplies, sea and fishpond harvests, and upland cultivation of sweet potatoes, taro, breadfruit, and sugar cane. Although a comprehensive cultural landscape inventory has not been completed, contributing elements of the park’s cultural landscape include the historic setting, spatial organization, historic viewsheds, and archeological sites and features.

Fundamental Resources and Values



- **Cultural Practices.** Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park preserves a place to cultivate the spirit. *Kūpuna*, the lineal and cultural descendants of the Kaloko-Honokōhau region, Native Hawaiian practitioners, community members, and volunteers all keep the spirit alive through their cultural practices and continuing connections to this special place. The park provides a place for Native Hawaiians to relive the finest hours of their ancestors, empowering them with *kuleana* (responsibility) to ensure stewardship and respect for all things spiritual and physical. With the concept of *mālama ʻāina*, caretakers nurture the land to ensure the continuation of resources necessary to sustain life for present and future generations. Early Hawaiians practiced environmental adaptation and engineering through the construction of fishponds, agricultural planters, and fishing *koʻa* (traditional fishing grounds) and were further sustained by a variety of natural food sources. Subsistence activities were balanced with recreational and religious activities. Oral history narratives and traditions provide present and future generations with opportunities to understand the relationship shared between people and their environment.
- **Loko Iʻa (Fishponds and Fishtrap).** Early on, Hawaiians conceived the practice of using ponds and bays for catching and farming fish. As far as is known, the development of fishponds for true marine aquaculture in the Pacific is unique to Hawaiʻi. At Kaloko-Honokōhau, Hawaiians developed three *loko iʻa* (two fishponds: a *loko kuapā* and a *loko puʻuone*); and a *loko ʻumeiki* (fishtrap) to collect and raise a secure source of food. The construction and use of these *loko iʻa* demonstrated the Hawaiians' ingenuity and in-depth understanding of their resources. These fishponds are representations of high-status authority and reflect the importance of the Kona District in Hawaiʻi Island politics of traditional times.

At the Kaloko Fishpond, an approximately 17-acre pond / wetlands complex, a great *kuapā*—a massive, dry-set stone wall is constructed across an ocean embayment, the largest and widest in the state. The *kuapā* has been rehabilitated using modern and traditional techniques and materials. Rehabilitation is conducted to preserve the historical integrity, configuration, and function of the *loko iʻa* while preserving opportunities for traditional reuse. Kaloko Fishpond is connected to the sea through two *ʻauwai kai* (channels) affording access for fish and circulation of water. When used, a *mākāhā* (sluice gate) prevents passage of larger fish back to the sea.

The ʻAimakapā Fishpond operated in much the same manner, except that the pond, a *loko puʻuone*, formed naturally behind a sand berm, rather than being enclosed by a *kuapā*. *Auwai kai* dug through the berm to the ocean in historic times are evident today. At approximately 30 acres, ʻAimakapā is the largest natural fishpond / wetland complex on Hawaiʻi Island and is a rare example of a *puʻuone*-style fishpond. In addition to its significant cultural history, ʻAimakapā is one of only two natural fishpond / wetland complexes on the Kona Coast that has supported large numbers of endangered waterbirds in the past.

ʻAiʻōpio Fishtrap's stone walls are constructed across a small bay, forming an enclosure around the naturally curving shoreline. Inside ʻAiʻōpio, four rectangular walled enclosures are situated near the sandy shore of the pond. Today, these three *loko iʻa* are defining features of the park, provide important habitat for threatened and endangered species such as the *aeʻo* (Hawaiian stilt; *Himantopus mexicanus knudseni*), and *ʻalae keʻokeʻo* (Hawaiian coot; *Fulica americana alai*), and offer the opportunity for traditional Hawaiian aquaculture to continue in the future.

- **Anchialine Pools.** Anchialine pools are rare worldwide. Within the United States, anchialine pools are found only in Hawaiʻi's coastal areas. Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park contains more than 185 known anchialine pools, an estimated 25% of the state's known anchialine pool resources. Although these brackish coastal pools lack a surface connection to the ocean, their hydrologic connections to groundwater and the sea are apparent as pool water levels rise and fall with the ocean tides. Anchialine pools provide habitat for a distinctive set of native species, including mollusks and crustaceans, such as *ʻōpae ʻula* (*Halocaridina rubra*), a small, endemic species of red shrimp. Hawaiians used the pools for a variety of functions, including drinking, irrigation, holding fish, and bathing.

Fundamental Resources and Values

- **Native Biodiversity.** From coastal dryland forest, brackish fishponds, anchialine pools, natural wetlands, and coastal strand to vibrant coral reef, the park offers a glimpse of Hawai‘i’s unique, and vanishing, natural diversity and abundance. Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park’s diverse array of rare, native ecosystems supports native and culturally significant species, including 16 species that are protected under the Endangered Species Act or are candidate species for listing. Notable among the variety of rare ecosystems protected within the park are coastal wetlands, which are rare statewide and particularly on geologically young Hawai‘i Island; and dry coastal shrublands, a critically rare ecosystem statewide. More than 90% of Hawai‘i’s coastal shrublands have been lost to urban development and displacement by invasive species.
- **Wai (Water).** Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park is a small park, yet it contains a diverse array of water resources including seaward-flowing groundwater, anchialine pools, traditional Hawaiian fishponds, brackish wetlands, and coastal marine waters. These water resources are hydrologically connected and therefore interdependent. An abundant supply of fresh, clean water is critical to support the resources and values for which the park was established, and to support coastal ecosystems, fisheries, tourism, and recreation throughout the wider area. As stated in the Spirit Report, water is the “dynamic thread that ties the environment together.” The land, sea, and sky act as carriers for this valuable resource and make possible human settlement. Ancient Hawaiians, perceiving the necessity of water on isolated islands, oriented their land-sea use patterns to the water cycle. “Each *ahupua‘a* developed around a recognition that all of its elements were interdependent. What affected the *mauka* (toward the mountain) regions affected the *makai* (toward the ocean). What affected the neighboring *ahupua‘a* affected it. What affected the land affected the fishponds and the sea. What affected the water cycle affected the total environment. This is the way it was and is at Ka-loko, Hono-kō-hau.”



- **Marine Waters.** Approximately half of the park is comprised of marine waters, 600 acres spanning from Noio Point (south of Honokohau Harbor) to Wāwahiwa‘a Point in Kohanaiki *ahupua‘a*. The nearshore waters and the resources they contain are an integral part of the park. The early Hawaiians maintained a relationship with the ocean that was vital to their way of life. From ancient times to present day, Hawaiians used these waters as a major source of food and careful management was practiced to sustain the resource. Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park is one of four national park units in the Pacific Islands containing a coral reef ecosystem, and is the only national park in Hawai‘i with extensive coral habitat. The submerged lands are managed by the State of Hawai‘i and the waters within the park boundary are subject to NPS jurisdiction. The marine waters of the park are a part of the national system of marine protected areas. The abundant marine life in park waters includes five species protected under the Endangered Species Act: the ‘*īlio*holoikauaua, Hawaiian monk seal (*Monachus schauinslandi*), *nā koholā*, the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), the Hawaiian insular false killer whale (*Pseudorca crassidens*), the *honu* ‘*ea*, hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), and the *honu*, Hawaiian green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*).

Other Important Resources and Values

- **Partnerships.** Collaboration is essential to the success of Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park. Partnerships enable a wide variety of individuals and organizations to connect with the park and directly contribute to, improve, and enhance the research, interpretation, and stewardship of park resources and the perpetuation of the Hawaiian culture.

Some key partners include: the community, Nā Hoa Pili O Kaloko-Honokōhau, Hawai‘i Pacific Parks Association (HPPA), Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail, and public agencies and research institutions.



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from, and should reflect, park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all park significance statements and fundamental and other important resources and values.

In developing the following interpretive themes for Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park, the National Park Service looked to the Spirit Report for guidance and inspiration.

- Since long before recorded history, Hawaiians have had an intimate relationship with the *‘āina* (land), *wai* (water), and *kai* (ocean) based on an understanding of the natural cycles of the environment gained through observation and experience, which allowed them to thrive in this seemingly inhospitable environment.
- Hawaiians, recognizing that all earth’s elements are interdependent, divided the land into *ahupua‘a* (land divisions) that stretched from *mauka* to *makai* (the mountains to the ocean), and encompassed the necessities of life. Hawaiians knew that what happens on the mountain, happens in the sea—*Ko kula uka, ko kula kai*.
- The people of Kaloko-Honokōhau were skilled stewards of the environment, honoring the relationships between humans, nature, and the gods through the construction of Kaloko and ‘Aimakapā fishponds and the ‘Ai‘ōpio fishtrap, which provided habitat for fish that sustained people physically and spiritually.
- The spirit of life flows through this land in the form of water—the *kai* (ocean) washes upon its shore and the *wai* (water) collects in pools fresh enough to drink—nurturing and sustaining plants, animals and the people who depend on them for survival.
- Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park is a “cultural *kīpuka*,” a protected place amid urban development where *mana*, the enduring life force of the people, connects cultural practitioners, descendants, community and visitors to the land and to each other.
- The abundance of ocean resources in ancient times is evidenced today in the *wahi pana*, sacred spaces where *lawai‘a* (fishermen) expressed their gratitude and spiritual connection to ancestors through cultural practice and prayer.

