



Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail — Hawai‘i

Background: Located on the Island of Hawai‘i, the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail (ALKA) was designated in 2000. Rich in culture, history, and natural beauty, this 175-mile corridor runs from ‘Upolu Point in North Kohala, along the entire western shoreline of the island, around South Point, and into Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park.

Approximately 50% of the trail is government owned including 17% managed by the National Park Service (NPS). Participation from private landowners, governments, and the public is voluntary. A memorandum of understanding with the State of Hawaii and Hawai‘i County is being finalized.

The long term goals of the ALKA and its ahupua‘a (traditional Hawaiian land division, usually from the mountain to the sea) community-based partners are to identify, access, link, manage, and interpret alignments to allow for a continuous route and a system of trails along the 175-mile corridor. The geo-cultural platform from which planning and management will be launched is the ahupua‘a system of which there are 210 within the trail corridor. The role of the NPS is to administer the trail which will be opened on a segment-by-segment basis.

Similar to the production crew of a play or movie, our mission is to preserve and manage a system of trails and associated features to provide an authentic setting for the practice and perpetuation of the Hawaiian culture as determined by elders, scholars, and practitioners. The ahupua‘a community-based management structure will provide guidance to trail visitors as to how to integrate recreational uses within a given trail segment and to offer authentic interpretive programs, educational experiences, and stewardship opportunities. The authenticity and integrity of ALKA rests in the capacity of the community and visitors to apply these values to the management and use of the trail’s cultural and natural features.

Consultation in Planning and Implementation for the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail: Authenticity and integrity must come from two perspectives: that of those whose ancestors built and managed the trail and associated features; and from the perspective of contemporary Euro-American sciences associated with stewardship and use.

The administrative challenge for ALKA and its partners is to integrate these epistemic perspectives into the management and interpretation of the trail in a manner that honors and perpetuates the values and lifestyles of the host culture.

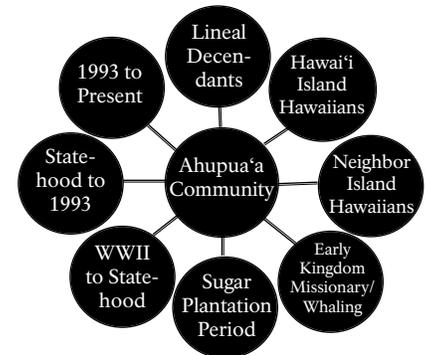
Ahupua‘a Community-Based Approach to Consultation: The Ala Kahakai has the characteristics of both a scenic, continuous shoreline trail, and a historic trail that preserves and interprets history at the places that history was made. More significant is that the host culture – the Native Hawaiian community including other ethnicities that have deep ties to the land – continues to value trails and the places that trails lead.

Use of trails to access places for spiritual and traditional practices, subsistence gathering, and recreation continue unbroken from ancient times through today. Families and communities whose ancestors built trails and associated features continue to retain deep kinship connections to these places. Concurrently, many have become displaced, increasingly alienated, and saddened by the changes to the land. Trail management planning needs to begin with this question: How can national historic trail designation serve to connect, reconnect, or enhance the relationships of those with deep ancestral and historic ties to the land?

Building community, promoting meaningful involvement, and getting to know your neighbors are important aspects of this community-based initiative. The ALKA consultation process for trail management is expected to be continuous from planning through implementation and evaluation. While involvement and input are welcomed, respectful acknowledgement of one’s ancestry and origin is important. As such,

and in keeping with the traditions of the host culture, it’s suggested that comments offered at public meetings be preceded by an informal, voluntary protocol that places the commenter within a historical period as follows:

Ala Kahakai NHT Consultation Protocol for Trail Management Planning



This social protocol was developed as a result of comments received at several meetings that addressed how the federal government consults with Native Hawaiians. No distinction was acknowledged between those from the ahupua‘a or larger local districts from those who are from other districts of the island or from neighbor islands. As such, decisions could be made based on input from those who are not from the affected areas. A best practice model is being developed to address this issue.

Inventory and Monitoring: The role of contemporary science within the ALKA setting is to provide research and new technology to assist in management, thereby assuring the sustainability of traditional and modern uses within a healthy natural and human environment. Several biological inventories were conducted in the three West Hawai‘i National Parks and Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park connect by the ALKA corridor. Although Vital Signs monitoring will also occur at all of these parks, only the Climate, Water quality, and Early detection of invasive plants Vital Signs will have a direct impact on ALKA. In addition, the final draft of the trail’s Comprehensive Management Plan/EIS will be available for public comment in the latter part of this year. —A. Arakaki

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