

## **G. Hawai'i's Cultural and Natural Resources**

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#### **Background**

##### Policy Area and Goals

In Hawai`i, protecting the unique cultural and natural resources of our islands is a prerequisite for economic sustainability. The Hawai'i State Supreme court ruling in *Ka Pa'akai O Ka 'Aina v. Land Use Commission* (94 Haw. 31 (2000)) affirmed the necessity of identifying and protecting natural resources which are integral to cultural practices. In 2000, the Hawai`i State Legislature passed Act 50 as an amendment to HRS 343-2 in order to include the effects of economic development on the culture of Hawai'i's communities. One of the goals of this workshop is to identify and discuss policies and available resources which can be used to help communities protect unique and important cultural and natural resources in their district. Another goal is to identify the elements of a methodology to conduct cultural and environmental impact assessments and studies.

##### Sustaining Hawai'i's Natural Resources

Located midway between the American and Asian land masses, the islands of Hawai`i are the most isolated land mass in the world. They are home to diverse and unique endemic species of plant and animal life. By the end of the 20th Century, Hawai`i had the largest number of extinct and endangered endemic species of flora and fauna of any place in the world. Traditionally, Hawaiians were the caretakers of resources and ecosystems that lie within or adjacent to their communities. They practiced a system referred to as kapu which carried highly proscriptive norms related to resource management. For example, fish and limu (seaweed) were harvested seasonally and not during spawning season. When it was deemed that resource levels were declining, the area was designated off-limits to fishers and harvesters. Violators were severely punished. Throughout the islands subsistence livelihoods thrive in particular rural communities. Surrounding these communities are pristine and abundant natural resources in the forests, streams, and oceans. These rural Hawaiian communities were bypassed by mainstream economic, political, and social development. Hawaiians living in these communities continued as their ancestors before them, to practice subsistence cultivation, gathering, fishing, and hunting for survival. Thus, we find that the natural resources in these areas sustained a subsistence lifestyle and a subsistence lifestyle, in return, sustained the natural resources.

##### Sustaining Cultural Resources

The practice of Hawaiian culture is tied directly to the quality of, and access to, native flora and fauna and the integrity of cultural sites and use areas. Hawaiian communities are particularly vulnerable to development which alters the conditions of, or access to, native natural resources and habitats and/or cultural sites and use areas. The long-term effects of inappropriate development upon Hawaiian peoples and lands are reflected in the varying degrees of cultural dissolution and social problems. When a planned development will impact the condition of or access to natural and cultural resources, an analysis of cultural impacts is requisite part of a social impact assessment.

## Issues

Many communities have been involved in initiatives to empower themselves through community-based planning processes, engaging multiple constituencies in a dialogue to develop a vision for the community. □ This process is informed by Native Hawaiian concepts of stewardship of the land (malama aina) and land management systems wherein the ahupuaa or watershed is the basic resource management unit. □ Mapping techniques are often used to identify services, resources, and other qualities that lie within the community. □ It is a means to assess deficits and strengths as a basis for developing a strategic plan. □ The group will also discuss policies which can help to promote this process, incentives such as tax breaks to protect significant cultural resources, on site management of public lands, and resources which can be made available to communities to pursue such projects.

One approach to doing this is Cultural Impact Assessments (CIA), which have become a major legal requirement in the permitting/approval process for development in Hawai`i. Numerous laws at the federal, state and county levels affect the legal compliance and defensibility of CIAs (Federal Clean Water Act, National Register Bulletin, Hawai`i Revised Statute 343). Despite such legal requirements, CIA guidelines continue to be amorphous and vary in terms of how they are conducted. Commensurate with establishing new guidelines for CIAs is the development of new methodological approaches to conducting them. A multi-methods approach that includes community surveys, ethnographies, archival research, GIS mapping, and assessments of access rights and natural resources are some of the critical methods and approaches that should be considered. One of the goals of the workshop is to identify key elements of a Cultural Impact Assessment and multiple methodologies which can be used to conduct a CIA. Another goal is to design a manual on how to conduct a CIA.