

Updates from the 'Aha Moku 'Ohana



While not acting in its official capacity, the leadership of the 'Aha Kiole o Moloka'i took part in an island-wide effort to address the deer famine issue (due to long-term drought) and COVID-19 as a kakou (all of us) thing. Photo: Malia Akutagawa.



The 'Aha Moku structure is based on the ancient Hawaiian communities' consultation leadership model called the 'Aha Kiole (people's council). The structure emphasized broad participation in resource management of moku (region) and ahupua'a (wedge-shaped land sections from mountain to the sea). Native Hawaiians have managed their natural resources successfully for thousands of years through this structure. That experience and practical knowledge can add value to modern ways of managing natural resources.

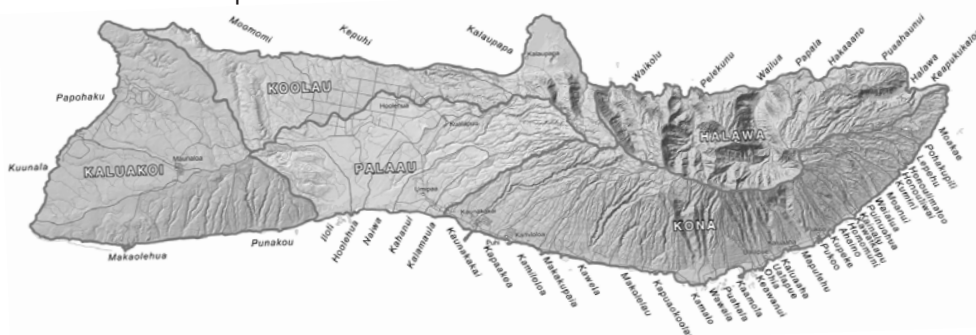
Under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council developed ecosystem-based fisheries management approaches consistent with traditional indigenous cultural practices. Beginning in August 2006, the Council hosted the Ho'ohanohano I Na Kupuna Puwala conference series to increase the Hawaiian community's participation in the conservation and management of Hawai'i's resources through the creation of a community and cultural consultation process within other governance structures. These meetings included Native Hawaiian kupuna (elders) and cultural practitioners, educators, governmental agency representatives, state legislators and other community members. The conferences served as an effective tool to bring native practitioners together to discuss traditional practices and provide input to the Council's Hawai'i Archipelago Fishery Ecosystem Plan.

Through the combined efforts of more than 100 kupuna and Native Hawaiian resource practitioners of the

43 moku in the State of Hawai'i, Act 212 and 288 were signed into law. In 2007, Act 212 initiated the process to create a system of best practices based on indigenous resource management of moku boundaries, and established the 'Aha Kiole Advisory Committee, consisting of eight members that represented the eight main Hawaiian islands. The Committee operated as an independent body and reported its findings, recommendations and progress in establishing the 'Aha Kiole system to the legislature and governor. Act 288 passed in 2012, changing the group's name to the 'Aha Moku Advisory Committee (AMAC) and placing it within the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Although the governor has yet to appoint new members to the AMAC, the communities have continued to work on their kuleana (responsibilities). When the coronavirus hit in 2020, grocery stores on Moloka'i were impacted due to infections of their employees. Many members of the 'Aha Kiole o Moloka'i responded to challenges in their community by conducting wellness checks, and bringing food (e.g., fish, venison) and providing services (e.g., housekeeping, adult daycare) to kupuna in their area. Some members obtained permission from large landowners to allow people to hunt on their lands for subsistence to help families that were struggling financially. Local fishermen also provided fish to the Maui Food Bank, which was distributed to communities on Moloka'i.

This is the first in a series on the 'Aha Moku, exploring what truly works for different islands, opportunities for the island councils and what is happening today. Find out more at www.ahamoku.org.



Example of a moku map (noted in white) for the island of Moloka'i by Islandbreath.org.