

Integrating Tourism into Land Management Planning for Community Resilience, Hawai`i Island

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Integrating Tourism into Land Management Planning for Community Resilience, Hawai'i Island

Introduction

Ka Lae, or South Point, located on the southernmost point of Hawai'i, is believed to be the site of initial settlement by the ancient native Hawaiians who came from the Marquesas Islands and first arrived in Hawai'i as early as A.D. 124 (Townscape, 2016). Approximately 710 acres of this area has been designated as a National Historic Landmark to recognize important historical and cultural lands that provide the longest and most complete record of human occupation in the Hawaiian Islands. Therefore, Ka Lae is considered sacred by many native Hawaiians, and residents from other regions of Hawai'i. This special place connects the past and the future, providing a source of identity and pride for communities in this region, known locally as the district of Ka'u. Coupled by scenic, undeveloped, coastal landscapes offering many recreational opportunities, Ka Lae has become a popular tourist destination on the island of Hawai'i, attracting hundreds of tourists and local residents, daily.

However, Ka Lae has experienced significant destruction to its natural and cultural resources since the 1980s and most notably in recent years with increasing vehicular access to the region. Recently, Ka Lae has become a popular site for recreational off-roading for four-wheel drive vehicles, bikes, and ATVs that has resulted in miles of deep erosion. Though most of Ka Lae is under the jurisdiction of a state agency dedicated to the betterment of native Hawaiians, a lack of on-site management and enforcement have led to unrestricted vehicular access. It is believed that increasing tourism, as well as the lack of on-site

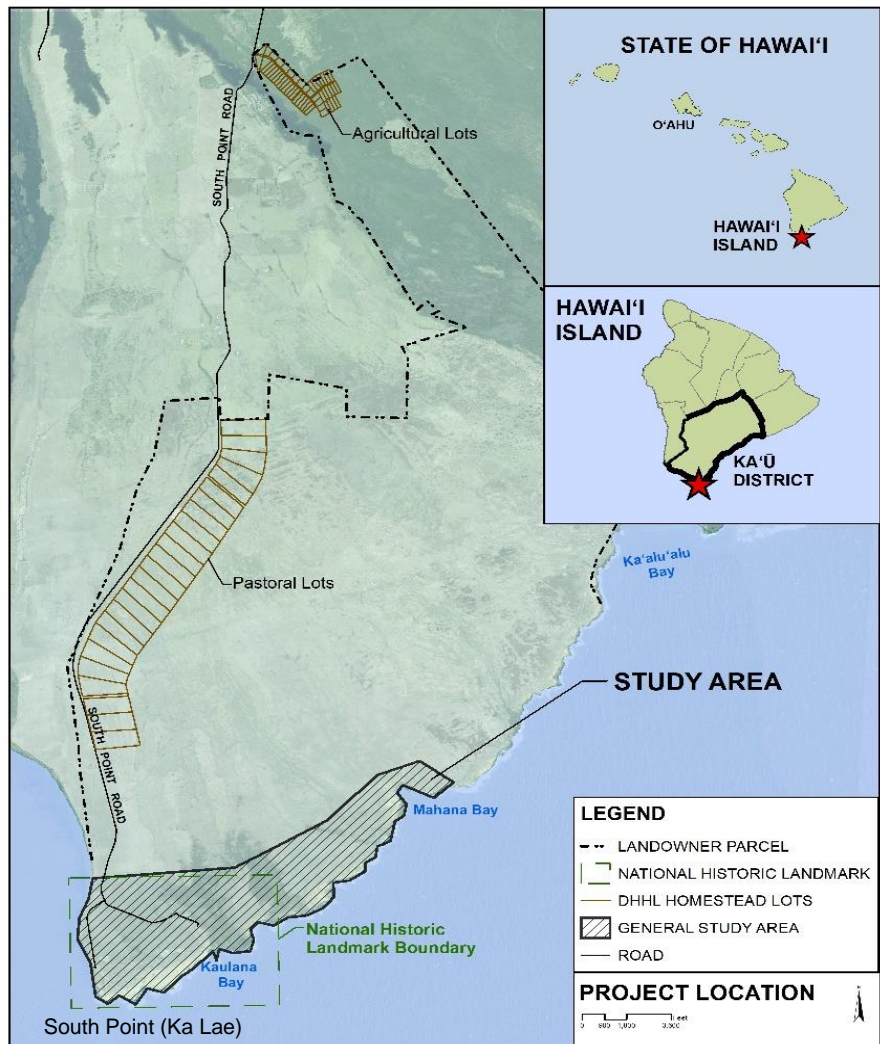


Figure 1. Ka Lae (South Point), Hawaii Island

management and enforcement, have significantly contributed to the erosion and deterioration of the site (Townscape, 2016).

In 2016, the authors were tasked with a project to establish a management plan for the restoration and protection of the natural and cultural resources of Ka Lae. Due to the lack of government capacity for management, the project explored a co-management regime to involve local communities in the planning for the management of the site. While tourism was identified as one of the main threats to Ka Lae, opportunities to leverage tourism for sustainable economic development to build the capacity of local communities and special places of Ka Lae, led to the integration of tourism opportunities into the management plan. This paper explores strategies for integrating tourism into land management as a vehicle for sustainable development. Key components of the management plan and co-management approaches to land stewardship are also discussed.

Literature Review

Tourism as a vehicle for sustainability and sustainable development has been a topic of much research and debate (Bramwell et al. 2017; Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Butler, 1999; Hardy et al., 2002; Hunter, 1995; Liu, 2010). McCool (1999) argues that tourism can be an agent for societal development, but the challenge lies in the ability to contribute to three fundamental goals of human welfare: (1) economic opportunities; (2) enhancing quality of life; and (3) protecting natural and cultural resources. McCool (1999) proposed that tourism can be strategically and proactively integrated into community development strategies to build the resilience and vibrancy of communities. McCool and Bosak (2016) acknowledge that while tourism has a predominantly economic development focus, tourism has the potential to address a wider range of social needs, such as, the need to protect communities' sense of place, quality of life, and the resources that are both tourist attractions and sources of community pride, values, and identity.

Other research links tourism with qualitative goals like quality of life improvement and wellbeing (Saarinen 2013) and social and cultural capital like health and education (Moscardo and Murphy 2014). Faanunu (2015) demonstrates how some native Hawaiian community-based organizations attempted to engage with tourism for sustainable self-determination, tying tourism to a larger purpose of nation-building to liberate indigenous people from oppressive colonialism and occupation. Faanunu (2015) emphasized that for many indigenous native Hawaiians, success is measured not by economics but by other factors, including the ability to participate in decision-making processes that impact their lives.

The participation of local communities in processes to achieve sustainable tourism is well documented (Beeton, 2006; Campbell, 1999; Drake, 1991; Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Mitchell & Eagles, 2001; Ross & Wall, 1999; Ryan, 2002). However, examples that illustrate how communities have strategically developed tourism and tied it to the broad range of socio-economic benefits that tourism is capable of delivering, are limited (McCool and Bosak, 2016). This research illustrates a case study of how native Hawaiian communities and a government agency have worked together to develop a plan for leveraging tourism at Ka Lae to achieve the

three fundamental goals of human welfare of economic sustainability, improving quality of life, and environmental stewardship.

Methodology

Primary data for this project were gathered through a series of community “talk story” consultations consisting of community meetings, small focus group meetings, and a public “speak-out” event. Community meetings consisted of two public meetings that included 70 community members from towns within the district of Ka’ū. Smaller focus group meetings were held over the span of two months in which 30 individuals participated. Informants were chosen through snowballing and included participants with expert knowledge on a wide range of topics. Participants included elderly (kūpuna), fisherfolks, native Hawaiian cultural practitioners, non-profit organizations, community activists, resource managers, tourism operators, and residents of Ka’ū District. Consultations were followed by an interactive five-hour open house “speak-out” event to provide opportunities for community members to identify and offer feedback on specific management goals and activities identified in the small focus group meetings. The intent of the event was to gather additional information that explored how and where feasible management strategies could be implemented at Ka Lae. Approximately 40 people participated in this event.

Talk story meetings were open-ended and gathered information and local knowledge on various topics including natural and cultural resources, threats and opportunities for Ka Lae, as well as management strategies for natural and cultural resources protection. Primary data were complemented with secondary data gathered from technical reports and previous research conducted in the area, as well as Geographic Information System (GIS) and land use maps. Data were synthesized to produce a management plan for Ka Lae that included 16 management strategies with both near-term and long-term management actions. Of these 16 management strategies, six were selected as priority projects.

Results

The resources management plan developed for South Point was the result of a community-based effort that documented the site’s existing conditions, threats and concerns, strengths and opportunities, community vision and core values, and management strategies for South Point. These findings are presented here:

Vision & Core Values

The vision developed for the plan was, “A self-sustaining, healthy, and safe community where the ‘āina (land)- inclusive of people and resources within it- and native Hawaiian culture and values thrive.” Four main categories of core values (Table 1) were identified and included the following:

- 1) Management of natural and cultural resources;
- 2) Perpetuation of native Hawaiian culture, knowledge and traditional practices;
- 3) Health and safety of native Hawaiians, island residents, and visitors; and
- 4) Economic self-sufficiency.

Table 1. Core values community members identified as important for South Point.

Core Value	Description
1. Cultural & Natural Resource Management	We value stewardship and effective management of our cultural and natural resources to sustain them for future generations.
2. Native Hawaiian Culture, Knowledge, and Traditional Practices	We value perpetuating the Hawaiian culture and traditional practices for our keiki (children) and kamali'i (grandchildren).
3. Health and Safety	We value the health and safety of beneficiaries, the Ka'ū community and visitors to our 'āina (land).
4. Economic Self-Sufficiency	We value capturing economic opportunities to improve the 'āina (land) which is inclusive of the people and the resources.

Existing Resources

Ka Lae is rich in cultural sites, place names, and stories. It has miles of coastline for near-shore and deep-sea fishing and consists of several types of endangered species such as the endemic 'ōpae'ula (anchialine pool shrimp, *Halocaridina palahemo*) and flora such as 'ohai (*Sesbania tomentosa*). However, most of Ka Lae is covered in invasive grasses and introduced species. A native Hawaiian homestead community is situated at Ka Lae, in close proximity to the study area, and members, also known as native Hawaiian beneficiaries, have been awarded 25-acre parcels of pastoral lands for ranching and agriculture.

Existing Uses

Ka Lae is accessed by native Hawaiian beneficiaries, island residents, and visitors for various subsistence and recreational uses. These activities include fishing, camping, cliff diving, sight-seeing, off-road riding on ATVs, dirt bikes, and four-wheel drive vehicles. While beneficiaries and island residents use Ka Lae for both subsistence and recreational activities, visitors to Ka Lae are there primarily for recreation to visit Māhana or Green Sand Beach and Ka Lae, the southernmost point of the United States. Some local residents have taken advantage of the large numbers of visitors to operate a shuttle service that takes visitors from Ka Lae to Green Sand Beach located 3 miles away on rugged, coastal terrain. Community consultations indicated that the shuttle service is one of the most controversial activities at Ka Lae as it occurs on native Hawaiian lands without the permission of the landowner.

Threats & Concerns

Community members indicated that the lack of management by the landowner, in terms of on-site presence, response to issues, and enforcement of rules, was the greatest threat to Ka Lae.

Lack of management was attributed to the landowner's lack of capacity to provide on-site personnel, lack of authority to enforce rules at South Point, and remoteness of the site. Therefore, unrestricted vehicular access to Ka Lae has been allowed to occur for decades resulting in severe erosion, destruction of historic and heritage sites, increased litter and unsanitary conditions, and the depletion of natural resources from increased access.

Tourism was also identified as a major factor that contributes to the destruction at South Point. Consultations indicated that tourists tear up the landscape at South Point with rented vehicles. Many accidents also have happened to visitors at South Point due to unfamiliarity with the rough terrain and often harsh environmental conditions. Previous accidents include heat stroke experienced by visitors hiking to Green Sand Beach, visitors drowning or being swept away by strong currents at Ka Lae, and deaths from cliff-diving. Accidents occurring in remote areas also place resident rescue personnel at risk and divert resources and personnel away from local resident needs.

Consultations identified a lack of economic opportunities in the district of Ka'ū, one of the most remote regions of Hawai'i Island. Historically, most local residents of Ka'ū earned a livelihood working for the sugar plantations. However, many people lost their jobs when the plantations closed in the 1980s. Today, local residents have difficulty finding employment.

Strengths & Opportunities

South Point has undeveloped, scenic, coastal landscapes that are ideal for sightseeing and has one of only two green sand beaches in the United States. Green Sand Beach is a popular tourist attraction in the Ka'ū region. Ka Lae is also considered and advertised on social media as the "southernmost point of America" which attracts adventurous and avid travelers. In addition, the significance of South Point, as a heritage site and a national historic landmark, offers opportunities for education and those interested in cultural and geo-tourism. Therefore, South Point has significant natural and cultural resources that could be developed for sustainable tourism operations to benefit local communities.

A general theme that emerged from among participants was the recognition that engaging with tourism offered possible strategies for economic development that could be used for the restoration and management of South Point. Ideas for generating revenue included: 1) providing an interpretive tour that educates visitors about the place; 2) offering an ecotourism shuttle tour to Green Sand Beach; and 3) instituting an entrance fee and/or parking fee for visitors to Ka Lae. However, cultural practitioners and residents of Ka'ū would not be considered visitors and therefore, would be exempted from any fees.

South Point also has native Hawaiian communities, not only from towns in the Ka'ū region but native Hawaiian beneficiaries living at South Point, who are lineal and cultural descendants of the place. Native Hawaiians in this region feel a deep connection to the place as evidenced by the emergence of several native Hawaiian non-governmental organizations to steward South Point voluntarily. While tension exists amongst some of these groups, the presence of community

members who are willing to steward South Point voluntarily are important resources to tap into for long-term management of the place.

Management Plan Goals & Action Strategies

Four management goals and 16 action strategies were proposed and summarized in Table 2. Of these 16 action strategies, six were identified as near-term strategies to be implemented first. These priority actions include Actions 1.1., 3.1., 3.2., 3.3., 4.1., and 4.2 (shown in **bold**).

Table 2. Management Plan Goals and Action Strategies

Goals	Management Plan & Action Strategies
<p>Goal 1 Restore, preserve, and protect natural and cultural resources.</p>	<p>Action 1.1. Restore and protect natural and cultural resources within the property.</p> <p>Action 1.2. Plan, design, and construct a walking path that guides visitors around cultural and natural resources of South Point.</p>
<p>Goal 2 Perpetuate native Hawaiian culture, values, history and language for future generations.</p>	<p>Action 2.1. Provide opportunities for land-based educational programs at South Point.</p> <p>Action 2.2. Design and implement a permit system to allow for 'ohana (family) camping at South Point.</p> <p>Action 2.3. Plan, design, and create an area to serve as a gathering place for the local community.</p>
<p>Goal 3 Provide a safe, clean and friendly environment.</p>	<p>Action 3.1. Manage vehicular access at South Point.</p> <p>Action 3.2. Provide sanitary amenities and signage at South Point.</p> <p>Action 3.3. Plan, design, and construct a service road and a pedestrian path to Green Sand Beach.</p> <p>Action 3.4. Develop and implement a public education campaign to increase awareness and to determine unpermitted recreational activities.</p> <p>Action 3.5. Improve access to lifesaving equipment for the local community and visitors.</p> <p>Action 3.6. Improve access to Kaulana boat ramp and launching area.</p> <p>Action 3.7. Develop and implement a fire management plan.</p>

<p>Goal 4 Generate revenue to sustainably fund cultural and natural resources management and provide economic opportunities for native Hawaiians and their families.</p>	<p>Action 4.1. Institute a parking fee for South Point.</p> <p>Action 4.2. Provide training and technical assistance to native Hawaiian beneficiaries to become legal business entities at South Point.</p> <p>Action 4.3. Provide opportunities/programs that engage visitors in the history and culture of the place.</p> <p>Action 4.4. Seek alternative sources to fund resource protection projects for South Point.</p>
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Discussion and Conclusion

Protecting natural and cultural resources (Environmental): This project demonstrates that the protection of natural and cultural resources at Ka Lae was the top priority for stakeholders. The management of natural and cultural resources was identified as a core value for Ka Lae and translated as Goal 1 of the management plan: “Restore, preserve, and protect natural and cultural resources.” An interpretive walking path along the significant heritage sites at Ka Lae, labeled Management Area B in Figure 2, was also proposed to educate visitors and perpetuate the history and culture of the place. It should be noted that many community members felt that vehicular access, the main source of destruction at Ka Lae, might be eliminated if South Point Road was closed. Road closure was perceived as an action that could be implemented immediately. Many agreed that the road should be shut down to “allow the land to heal,” and re-opened at a later time. However, emergency and service vehicles would be exempt to ensure public safety in remote areas of Ka Lae.

Shutting down South Point Road was problematic for some community members who felt that access to Ka Lae would be limited, especially for elderly who cannot walk long distances. Another concerned group were fishermen who currently use their vehicles to access various fishing grounds at Ka Lae. Elders recalled that during pre-modern times, native Hawaiians accessed the land on foot. Therefore, closing the road is consistent with traditional ways of access and practices in the past. However, closing South Point Road would also limit access to the State-owned Kaulana boat ramp located nearby. Despite significant community support for closing the road, engaging tourism for economic development to support the management of the property, as well as opportunities for local community to benefit from business activities, was also widely recognized as important for the local economy. Therefore, the alternative to close the road was not accepted in the final plan.

Economic opportunities (Economic): Economic self-sufficiency was one of the core values identified by the local community for Ka Lae. This value is represented by Goal 4 of the management plan which is to “generate revenue to sustainably fund cultural and natural resources management and provide economic opportunities for native Hawaiian beneficiaries and

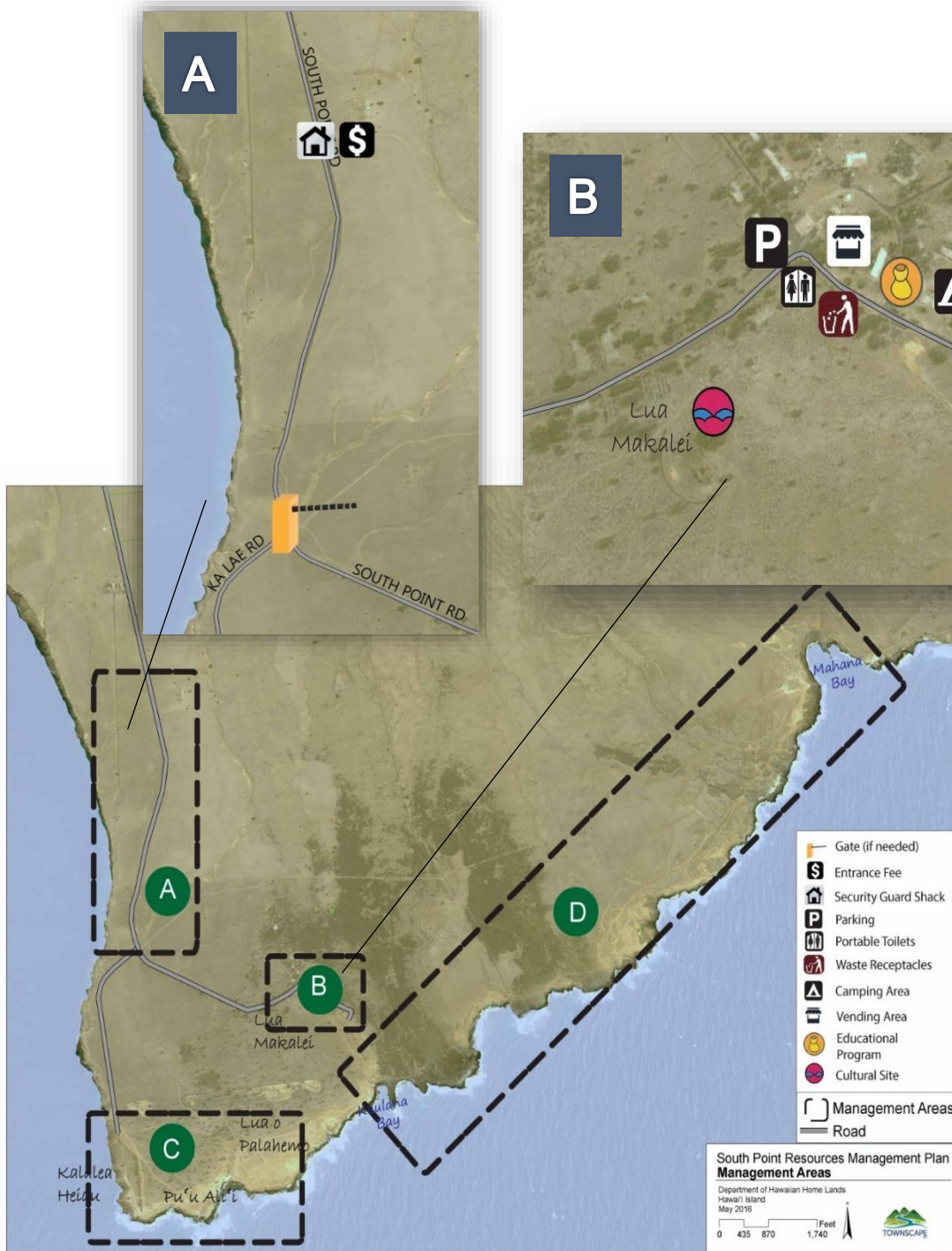


Figure 2. Proposed Management Areas at South Point showing Management Area A (Gate & Security Booth) and Management Area B (Townscape, 2016)

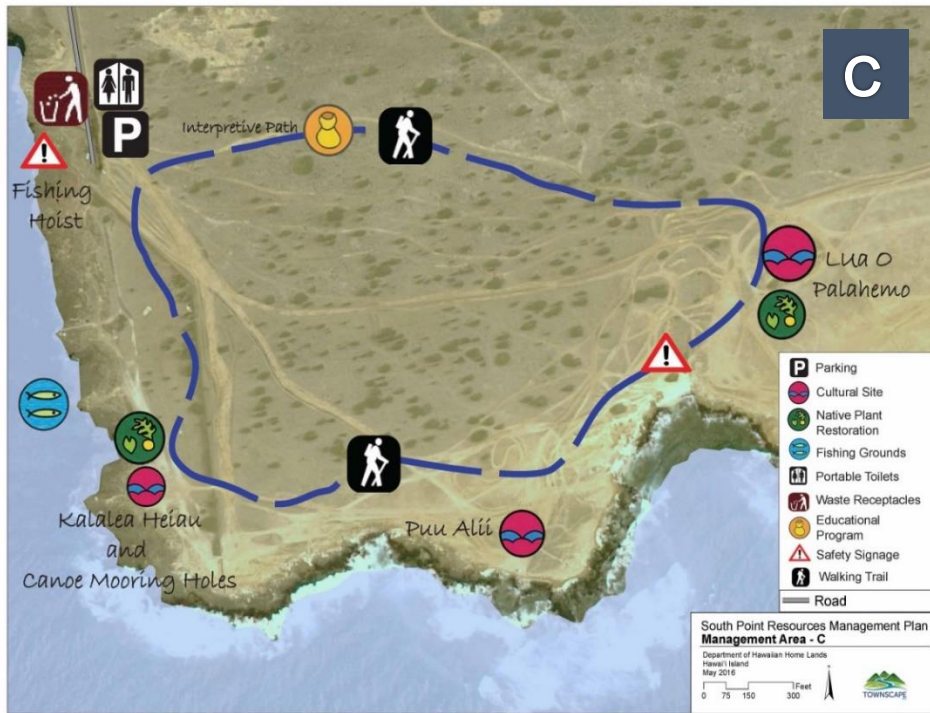


Figure 3. Management Area C - Interpretive Walking Trail (Townscape, 2016)



Figure 4. Management Area D – Pedestrian Path & Service Road. (Townscape, 2016)

their families.” Establishing a parking fee at South Point was identified as a priority action for short-term implementation that involves collecting fees as visitors head towards South Point. A gate and informational booth would be placed on South Point Road where visitors to Ka Lae would pay an entrance fee, as shown in Management Area A of Figure 2. Funds generated from fees would pay for security guards and for the management and restoration of Ka Lae. Residents of Ka’ū and cultural practitioners would be exempt from paying fees.

Another near-term action proposed in the plan to achieve the goal of economic sustainability includes offering training and technical assistance to native Hawaiian beneficiaries to form legal business entities at South Point. Currently, a shuttle service is operated by a local family without the consent of the landowner and the operation is perceived by the local community as a threat at Ka Lae because the activity is conducted without the proper permits. Furthermore, the operation poses a liability for the landowner. Many community members felt it unfair that the family is reaping the economic benefits from tourism that could otherwise be managed to benefit a larger community. The plan proposes to increase the capacity of local native Hawaiians, to enable them to legally participate in future business enterprises at Ka Lae.

Enhancing quality of life (Social): The plan also proposes to enhance quality of life by focusing on well-being through capacity building and actions to address public safety at Ka Lae. In the 1980s, a field school was created by local residents at Ka Lae to teach youth basic native Hawaiian traditional practices, such as fishing and hula. Many Ka’ū residents felt that the program was important and they recommended that something similar be re-established at Ka Lae to restore and perpetuate cultural knowledge, practices, and pride in Ka’ū. The cultural interpretive trail (Figure 3, Management Area C) and a cultural learning center with a little museum showcasing the heritage of the region, were other actions that local residents recommended. These amenities would serve a dual purpose of enhancing visitor experiences and also be enjoyed by local residents.

Camping was an activity at Ka Lae that was brought up often, especially among older informants. Currently, overnight camping is not permitted on the property and some local residents recommended that camping be allowed as an activity that native Hawaiians practiced traditionally for food gathering. Historically, native Hawaiians would camp near fishing grounds during the summertime when the ocean was calmer and ideal for fishing. Families would camp at the beach for a couple of days to weeks at a time. While at the beach, they would fish and preserve the fish with salt collected along the shoreline. Kūpuna (elders) remembered these memories with fondness and explained that camping created spaces for inter-generational learning to occur where knowledge would be passed from grandparents and parents to the youth. Important core values of aloha (love), kuleana (responsibility), and mālama (take care of) would also be taught, practiced, and reinforced while living together in a family unit. Camping, therefore, is a medium for perpetuating cultural knowledge and practices and enables families to connect and nurture relationships. Subsequently, this activity was included as a long-term action in the management plan.

Social well-being is also addressed in Goal 3 of the management plan which focuses on public health and safety concerns at Ka Lae. Three priority actions were identified including: 1) managing

vehicular access; 2) providing sanitary amenities and signage, and 3) establishing a service road and one pedestrian path along the coast between Management Area C and Mahana Bay (Figure 4). Many community members were concerned about risky activities conducted at Ka Lae that would often lead to injuries and fatalities. These included: a favorite local past-time of jumping off the 40-foot cliff at the point, visitors being swept out to sea while swimming, and hiking-related injuries while making the trek to Mahana Bay. Thus, a service road that extends along the coast was recommended to allow for emergency vehicles to access the remote areas of the property (Management Area D). Vehicular access by visitors from Management Area B to Mahana Bay is not permitted and a single pedestrian path along the coast is planned to keep visitors on one pathway rather than all over the place.

Unsanitary conditions are often common at Ka Lae due to a lack of permanent toilet facilities and trash receptacles. A local community-based, non-profit organization had installed temporary porta-potty toilets to mitigate unsanitary conditions but they are inadequate to meet the needs of the volume of visitors to Ka Lae. Therefore, permanent toilet facilities, trash receptacles, and safety signage are recommended along Management Areas B, C, and D.

Stewardship: The management plan for South Point is an example of government and community working together through a participatory and inclusive planning process that considers the environment, the social well-being of local communities, and economic self-sufficiency. This case study is also a positive example of how tourism can be managed to minimize local impacts and instead contribute to the resilience of local people and places. Though the plan reflects local values and perspectives, the plan did not address who would carry out the actions proposed. Advocates for community-based approaches to resources management argue that communities are better stewards of the environment because people living near the resource and whose livelihoods directly depend upon it, have a vested interest in the sustainable management and use of the resources than do state institutions located far away (Li, 2002). Also, local communities have better knowledge of the resources and the ecological processes and practices in the area, and that communities are better able to manage those resources through traditional practices (Brosius et al., 1998).

Therefore, national governments, international and conservation organizations have moved towards decentralization, such as co-management and community-based regimes that integrate local communities into processes to address social justice and environmental management issues. Proponents of decentralization or co-management argue that decentralization improves efficiency, equity, and responsiveness of bureaucracies to public needs. Greater citizen participation has helped give voice to local, indigenous, and community groups. However, studies suggest that decentralization most often does not fulfill what it promises to achieve due to structural and practical challenges that lead to these inefficiencies (Agrawal, 2001; Agrawal and Ribot, 1999; Ribot, 2002). Several community-based organizations at Ka Lae continue to steward the place voluntarily but it is unclear what their roles will be in the long-term implementation of the plan. Perhaps next steps for South Point involves mapping out an implementation plan for the various action strategies of the management plan to ensure continued and effective co-management between government and local communities.

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