



Draft Interpretive Plan

Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail Corridor

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PREFACE

FOLLOWING THE PATH

Nearly two centuries ago, in 1824, ʻIolani Liholiho, Kamehameha II, while traveling in Europe, offered a profound response to foreign monarchs who remarked on his brilliance as a leader:

**“Na wai hoʻi ke ʻole o ke akamai, he alahele
i maʻa i ka hele ʻia e oʻu mau mākuā”**

*Who indeed is without knowledge, having
trodden the path worn by my ancestors?*

In his response, Liholiho redirected the praise to his ancestors by likening their wisdom, intelligence, and his upbringing to that of a well-worn path. Of all the metaphors he could have chosen, he invoked the ala hele—something that can only be etched into the landscape through generational use. His words also conveyed the idea that wisdom and leadership are not

created in any one individual nor in isolation. Rather, these qualities are inherited and nurtured along well-worn paths, carried forward by those who continue to walk them.

In the little over two centuries since Liholiho uttered those famous words, Hawaiʻi has undergone profound change. The trails and those who have advocated for their protection have, however, remained steadfast, fixed to a landscape as a testament to cultural resilience and continuity.

The preparation of this interpretive plan was, in many ways, a literal and figurative retracing of footsteps, following the ala hele worn smooth by preceding generations. As we prepared this plan, we chose to walk not as consultants or planners eager to meet project milestones, but as haumāna. Each community we engaged with became our kumu, teaching us through their voices, laughter, memories, and visions. We stepped away from the typical structures often used in planning and instead followed an approach, grounded in Hawaiian ways of learning, that includes pilina (relationship), hōʻihi, (respect), and hoʻolono (attentive listening).





Time and again, we were welcomed by kamaʻāina—those who know intimately the lands of their birth. They graciously invited us to pause, sit, and listen to the moʻolelo of their homelands. They shared with us their intimate recollections of ancestors who traversed the rugged landscapes of Hawaiʻi Island. They shared their stories of lifeways and practices shaped by their ʻāina. They reflected on the present state of the places they cherish and, most importantly, spoke of their visions for the future of the trails and the many storied sites along the vast corridor we know as the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail.

The Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail is a living thread that binds together moʻolelo of aliʻi and makaʻāinana, akua and kupua, past and present communities, delicate ecosystems, sacred and storied landscapes, and the tangible and intangible heritage of Hawaiʻi Island. Above all, it is part of a living culture, inseparable from the descendants and caretakers who continue to walk its paths with a deep desire to breathe life back into the trails, the resources, and the places to which they are connected. It also serves as a bridge of invitation for visitors and those who have made Hawaiʻi Island their home, providing them with opportunities to understand and walk in the presence of these histories.

It is in this spirit that this interpretive plan was crafted. It is both a framework and a living document, meant to honor the wisdom of those who came before, elevate the voices of those who steward the trail today, and inspire those who will walk these paths long after us. It is also intended to hold space for current and future trail stewards to articulate the stories and histories they desire to share.

To those who hosted our planners and consultants in your respective places and to those who shared your knowledge and visions with us, we are deeply grateful. This plan would not have been possible without your generosity, wisdom, and vision. Though we harken to the words left by Liholiho, may we continue to walk on the ancestral paths.

**E mau ko kākou hele ma na ala i maʻa
i ka hele ʻia e ko kākou mau mākua.**

*May our journey continue on the paths
well-worn by the footsteps of our ancestors.*

USE OF ‘ŌLELO HAWAI‘I

Throughout the preparation of this plan, it was clear to the consulting and planning team that sometimes Hawaiian beliefs, ideas, and values are best expressed in their native language. As such, you will find Hawaiian words and phrases woven throughout this plan. As ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) is recognized as an official language of the State of Hawai‘i, its inclusion here reflects both legal recognition and cultural appropriateness.

Many Hawaiian concepts carry layers of meaning that cannot be fully captured through English translation alone. Many Hawaiian words and phrases encompass cultural understandings and relationships that extend far beyond their literal translations. By retaining these terms in their original language, we honor their full meaning and acknowledge that some knowledge is best transmitted in the language in which it was conceived.

The use of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i in this plan also reflects the voices and perspectives of the many kama‘āina, trail stewards, and communities who contributed to its development. During our community engagement process, participants frequently used Hawaiian terms, understanding that these words carried the most accurate and complete expression of their thoughts, experiences,

and relationship to place. To translate these words and concepts into English would have diminished their meaning and disconnected them from their cultural context.

For readers who may be unfamiliar with ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, we have provided English translations or explanations where appropriate. However, we encourage readers to sit with these Hawaiian terms, to consider their deeper meanings, and to recognize that understanding Hawaiian words and concepts is part of understanding the cultural landscape through which the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail passes.

The presence of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i in this document is not ornamental—it is essential. These words represent living knowledge systems, ongoing relationships with place, and the continuation of Indigenous ways of knowing that have guided stewardship of these trails for generations. As you engage with this interpretive plan, we invite you to view the inclusion of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i not as foreign words requiring translation, but as integral expressions of the cultural heritage that this trail embodies and continues to nurture.

INTRODUCTION

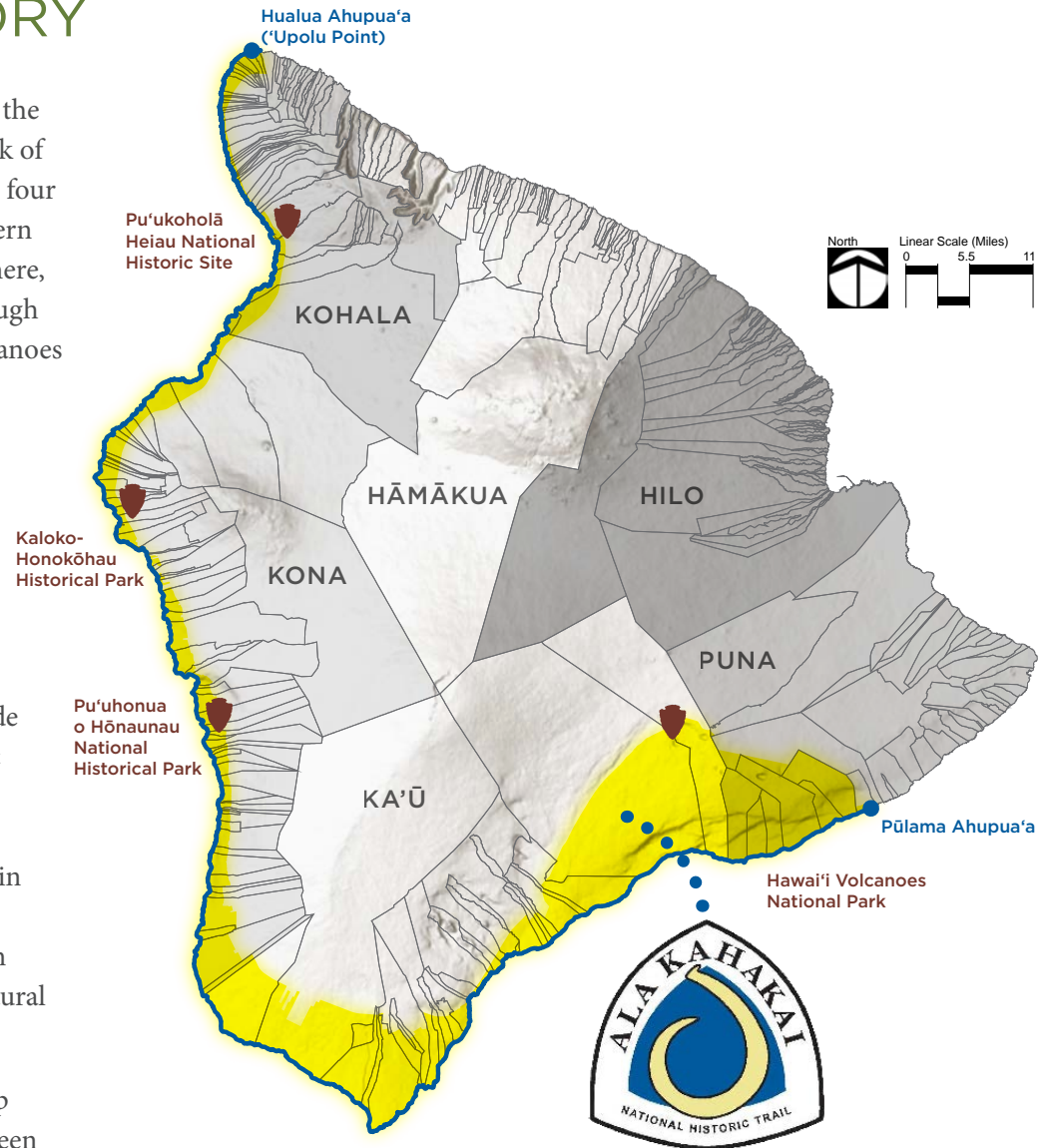
TRAIL DESCRIPTION & HISTORY

The Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor (or Trail) is a 175-mile corridor along the western and southern coasts of Hawai'i Island, encompassing a network of ancient, historic, and modern trails. The Trail Corridor passes through four of Hawai'i Island's six moku: Kohala, Kona, Ka'ū, and Puna. The northern terminus is in the Hualua Ahupua'a at 'Upolu Point in Kohala. From there, the Trail stretches along the western and southern coasts, passing through Kona and Ka'ū, and extends into the eastern boundary of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park in Puna where the eastern terminus lies in the ahupua'a of Pūlama.

The National Park Service (NPS) established the Trail Corridor as a National Historic Trail in 2000 to “preserve, protect, interpret, reestablish as necessary, and maintain” this portion of Hawai'i Island's ancient and historic trail system. Ala Kahakai is a modern Hawaiian name given to the Corridor; it means “trail by the sea.”

As part of the National Trails System, the NPS is responsible for trail-wide administration, while responsibility for management and care of specific segments lies with various government, private, and community entities along the route. In the case of the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor, federal administration is limited to approximately 17% of the Trail that lies within the boundaries of the four national parks along the corridor. Nonfederal trail segments and sites become official components of the NHT through management agreements with the NPS that ensure the protection of cultural and natural resources and the authenticity of interpretation.

While the Trail Corridor is administered by the NPS, the legal ownership of the historic trails belongs to the State of Hawai'i. In October 1892, Queen Lili'uokalani signed what is known as the Highways Act of 1892. This Act, which has persisted throughout history into the present as HRS 264-1, determined that the ownership of all public highways and the land, real estate and property of the same, shall be in the Hawaiian Government in fee simple.



The definition of public highway includes all existing trails at the time or “hereafter opened, laid out or built by the Government, or by private parties, and dedicated or abandoned to the public as a highway, and hereby declared

to be public highways.” Furthermore, “All public highways once established shall continue until abandoned by due process of law.” In addition, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes (HRS) 264-1(b) furthers the intent of the Highways Act of 1892. It states:

“All trails, and other nonvehicular rights-of-way by the Highways Act of 1892, or opened, laid out or built by the government or otherwise created or vested as nonvehicular public rights of way at any time hereafter, or in the future, are declared to be public trails. A public trail is under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Land and Natural Resources - unless it was created by or dedicated to a particular county, in which case it shall be under the jurisdiction of that county. All State trails once established shall continue until lawfully disposed of pursuant to Chapter 171, HRS.”

Essentially, if the State can document the existence of a trail prior to 1892, and the feature has not been disposed of pursuant to HRS Chapter 171, the State, in particular the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), has legal ownership of the trail. The Nā Ala Hele Trails and Access Program, which is a program within the Division of Forestry and Wildlife of the DLNR, manages the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor as well as all other trails and access ways deemed public by the Highways Act of 1892 in support of providing and preserving their vital public services.

Nā Ala Hele is mandated by the State to inventory all trails and access routes within the state, encompassing both public and private lands and those

under or outside of the DLNR’s jurisdiction. However, only a few of these trails are able to be designated as Nā Ala Hele Program Trails, due to legal status, safety concerns, sensitivity considerations, need for further research, or trail condition. Nā Ala Hele Program Trails are consistently managed and maintained by the program, offering protected access to recreational, educational, and cultural opportunities.



A close partner and advocate for the Nā Ala Hele Program is E Mau Nā Ala Hele. A non-profit comprised of trail and access rights champions have been taking action to protect and perpetuate ancient and historic trails since before the State's trails and access program inception. In the 1990's, E Mau Nā Ala Hele advocated for federal adoption of the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail. To this day, the group conducts research, stewardship, and seeks funding in support of Hawai'i trails.

Kānaka Maoli (Indigenous, full-blooded Hawaiians) have long used these routes to facilitate connection and exchange between upland (mauka) and coastal (makai) areas and across and among ahupua'a. Ka po'e ali'i (chiefs) once travelled and lived among these trails, as did nā akua (gods and goddesses), and po'e kūpua (supernatural beings). The trails have served as information and social networks connecting families and communities across the island. These practices, in some areas, continue today.

In fact, the Kānāwai Māmalahoe, also known as the Law of the Splintered Paddle, memorializes and institutionalizes the public right of use of trails and access ways. This law, which was enacted by King Kamehameha I, was a result of his transformative encounter with maka'āinana residing at Pāpa'i, a fishing village near the boundary of the Hilo and Puna districts.

While on his campaign to unite the islands under his rule, Kamehameha I and his court were stationed near Kaipalaoa in Hilo, at which time they dedicated Kahale'iole'ole Heiau. To complete the dedication ceremonies, Kamehameha and his court sailed east along the coast of Hilo searching for a human sacrifice. Spotting some fishermen near Pāpa'i, he leapt into the ocean to attack them. As he reached shore and began to chase them, his foot became lodged in a crack in the pāhoehoe. In an attempt to protect themselves and their village, the fishermen struck Kamehameha over the head with a heavy wooden canoe paddle, splintering the paddle and inflicting serious pain on the ali'i.

Barely escaping the attack, Kamehameha was escorted by his attendants to a nearby coconut-thatched house. Here they met an elderly man who shared his wisdom and advice with Kamehameha. Years later, after his unification of the Hawaiian Islands, Kamehameha reflected on the words shared by the elderly man. He summoned the fishermen whom he had attacked and pardoned them and proclaimed the famous Kānāwai Māmalahoe in 1797.

King Kamehameha declared that within his unified aupuni, the innocent and defenseless shall be safe from unprovoked attack, even from their own chiefs. He pledged that from then on, the people of Hawai'i should move freely everywhere under his control, and feel safe on the roadway (trails). The law was written as follows:

E nā kanaka, e mālama 'oukou i ke akua a e mālama ho'i i kānaka nui a me kānaka iki; E hele ka 'elemakule, ka luahine, a me ke kama a moe i ke ala, 'āohe mea nānā e ho'opilikia. Hewa nō, make!

The Kānāwai Māmalahoe was also included in the 1978 State Constitution, showing Hawai'i's concern for the safety and welfare of all of its people, and ensuring protected livelihoods and access to the land along the various trails and roadways across the islands— including those of the Ala Kahakai. (<http://hawaii.edu/uhelp/files/LawOfTheSplinteredPaddle.pdf>)

The Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor includes sections of the ancient Ala Loa and the historic Alanui Aupuni, as well as other coastal alignments. The Corridor also encompasses interconnected mauka-makai trails. Such trails are named or identified using localized nomenclature that takes into account the trail's geographic location, gradient, and topographic context, as well as a person's position relative to the trail. Examples of this include: ala pi'i i uka (trail ascending to the uplands), ala pi'i mauna (trail ascending toward the mountain), and kaolo (descending trail).

Trail construction and surfaces vary along the corridor. In some places, the Trail is a sandy shoreline of beach or a grass path along the shoreline. Other surfaces, construction methods, and materials include:

- ‘Āā and pāhoehoe lava;
- Waterworn stepping stones;
- White coral placed intermittently to illuminate the pathway at night;
- Curb-lined trails with causeways that facilitated travel by horses, donkeys, cattle, and other livestock;
- Wider stone-paved trails that accommodated horse-drawn carts; and
- Dirt and macadamized roads for travel by jeep and other early-age automobiles.

The differences reflect local terrain, available building materials, and the design choices of those who built, managed, and maintained the Trails. They also reflect historical developments in the island’s economy, political leadership, social structures, and modes of transportation.



There are innumerable historic sites and culturally important landscapes and viewsheds along the Trail. These include heiau, burial sites, shelter caves, petroglyphs, fishponds, freshwater springs, and salt collection areas. Many of these places are named and storied, carrying the ancestral knowledge of those who lived, worked, and sustained themselves in these areas—as well as those who continue to carry these traditions today.

The Trail Corridor is also home to critical habitat for indigenous and endemic species of flora and fauna. These unique natural landscapes and coastal ecosystems are foundation of the Trail’s significance and the reciprocal relationship between the Kānaka Maoli, ‘āina, and all living and non-living beings of these places.

This relationship is central to Hawaiian cultural values and practices. Traditionally, it was maintained through the ahupua‘a system of localized land management and stewardship, which ensured the sustainability of the land and its people, where all communities took responsibility for the ‘āina that sustained them, practicing and living the principle of mālama ‘āina. The Trail’s history is inextricably linked with the development, function, disruption, and regeneration of the ahupua‘a system.



PROJECT BACKGROUND

In May 2009, the NPS completed a Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) for the Ala Kahakai NHT. It provided a vision for the future and a management framework to guide decisions about Trail development, management, use, and education. The NPS has worked to implement the CMP's recommendations over the past 15 years.

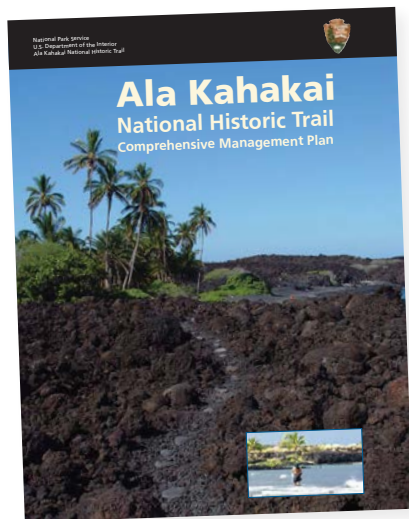
The CMP process included robust community consultation with lineal descendants, cultural knowledge keepers, and local residents. Following their guidance, the NPS has approached the development and management of the Ala Kahakai NHT within a descendant-led, community and ahupua'a based, Trail System.

As described in the CMP, this system follows the traditional Hawaiian practice of land management and stewardship, grounded in "specific stewardship concepts and values embedded in the Hawaiian culture and

expressed in words of the Hawaiian language." The CMP identifies those concepts as listed below.

The responsibility for management and care of nonfederal partner trail segments is generally defined by ahupua'a boundaries. The process for developing management agreements is required to include "kūpuna or other knowledgeable and concerned Native Hawaiians associated with a particular ahupua'a" and "kama'āina or persons with historic kinship with or knowledge of the land."

Community consultation during the planning process also shaped the development of foundational concepts to guide future development of the Ala Kahakai NHT. These concepts are articulated in the CMP as statements of purpose and significance, a community vision for the Trail, and five interpretive themes.



‘āina: the living earth

aloha: “sacred breath of life,” love, passion

aloha ‘āina: love of the land, reverence for all living things

ho’okipa: hospitality

ho’okupu: tribute as a sign of honor and respect, gift exchange

‘ike: knowledge

kōkua: “pulling with the back,” pitching in to help, volunteering

kuleana: responsibility, implied reciprocity

laulima: “many hands working together,” cooperation

lōkahi: unity, balance, harmony

mahalo: gratitude, thanks

mālama: take care of, care for, preserve

mana’o’i’o: respect for nature

pono: balance, proper, right, just, fair, integrity

PROJECT PROCESS

This Interpretive Plan builds on the strong foundation laid by the 2009 CMP for the Ala Kahakai NHT. The consultant team respects the culturally centered, community-based process that informed the CMP and recognizes the love and care that have guided its implementation. We honor that process and the people who contributed to it, while also building on it.

From January 21-25, 2025, an interpretive planning team with representatives from NAH, the NPS, PBR HAWAII, Hoa‘āina Heritage Services, and 106 Group participated in a site visit to inform development of the Interpretive Plan. During **Site Visit 1**, team members experienced and documented Trail sites and segments from North Kohala to Ka‘ū. They met, talked story, and learned from Trail ‘ohana representing various moku and ahupua‘a. ‘Ohana representatives included those with ancestral and family connections to the Trail corridor, community knowledge keepers, and Trail advocates, champions, and stewards.

The Trail also told its own stories, speaking through its shapes, forms, colors, and materials, as well as smells, sounds, textures, and viewscapes. Team members learned from ‘āina, rock, water, plants, animals, sun, clouds, rain, wind, and sky.

Following the site visit, the project team convened online for a **virtual planning workshop** on February 5, 2025. The outcomes of Site Visit 1 and the online workshop were documented in a **Trip Report (March 5, 2025)**. On March 20, 2025, the project team hosted an **online community meeting** for Trail stakeholders and stewards.

The interpretive planning team conducted a second site visit from May 27-29, 2025. **Site Visit 2** included **two community meetings** to gather formative input via workshop activities and group conversations. The team also visited additional Trail segments and learned from knowledge keepers about sites and relationships along the corridor.

Review Notes: Community Stakeholders

Please provide feedback on this Revised Draft IP by September 26, 2025.

To share your input, follow the instructions provided by the person or organization who circulated this document for review.

Invitations to Contribute

A **recurring comment icon** (right) marks where we especially want to invite formative feedback from community reviewers. This is still a draft document. We welcome substantive input and will incorporate it into the Final Plan.



Approach to the Interpretive Plan

This Interpretive Plan is designed to be adaptable rather than prescriptive. It combines guiding principles and recommendations with multiple options for how to implement them. It aligns with the NPS approach to Trail management, which is decentralized, community-led, and ahupua‘a-based.

Next Steps

After receiving stakeholder input, the project team will meet virtually to discuss the feedback and clarify the path forward. We will then revise the document into the Final Interpretive Plan.

In January 2026, the project team will complete the interpretive planning process by presenting the Final Plan during a last site visit. This site visit also will provide an opportunity to request guidance and gather ideas for the next phases of interpretive development along the Trail Corridor.

Vision for the Final Plan

The Final Plan will add an **Implementation** section. It will provide additional guidance to help document users develop and implement interpretive initiatives. It is envisioned to include:

- Recommendations for the implementation process;
- A planning worksheet and suggestions for combining components into a custom interpretive framework;
- Examples of existing and potential initiatives that demonstrate different ways of implementing this interpretive framework; and
- Suggested next steps.

The Final Plan will also include guidance for implementation via appendices, including existing NPS and NAH guidelines on historic preservation, sign installation, and accessibility.

INTERPRETIVE FOUNDATIONS

FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS

For any planning project, it is essential to build on solid kahua. To set the kahua for the Ala Kahakai Interpretive Plan, the project team has asked a set of guiding questions, outlined below.

The answers to these questions have come in part from the 2009 CMP. They also have emerged from project team meetings and workshops and through consultation and conversation with community members.

Purpose, Vision & Goals

Why does the Trail exist?
Why should we interpret it?

Audiences

Who is Trail interpretation for?

Context & Conditions

Where do things currently stand?

Interpretive Messages

What is the interpretation about? What should interpretive experiences communicate?



PURPOSE, VISION & GOALS

Why does the Trail exist? Why should we interpret it?

Purpose of the Trail

As established in the 2009 CMP, the purpose of the Ala Kahakai NHT is:

To preserve, protect, reestablish as necessary, and maintain a substantial portion of the ancient coastal ala loa (long trail) and associated resources and values, along with linking trails on or parallel to the shoreline on Hawai‘i Island; and

To provide for a high quality experience, enjoyment, and education—guided by Native Hawaiian protocol and etiquette—while protecting the trail’s natural and cultural heritage and respecting private and community interests.

Community Vision for the Trail

During the process of developing the 2009 CMP, the NPS invited communities located along the Trail Corridor to share their vision for its future. Collectively, they envisioned that the Ala Kahakai NHT will:

- Preserve ancient and historic trails within the corridor and tell the stories of those who use them;
- Provide access to practice traditional lifestyles and mālama ‘āina (care for the land);
- Protect sacred sites, historic places, and natural areas;
- Become a living classroom for educating Hawai‘i’s people and visitors;
- Offer opportunities for community partnerships based on the ahupua‘a concept;
- Create safe and well-kept places for spiritual, cultural, and recreational practices; and
- Unite local communities around common goals to preserve Hawai‘i’s culture and environment.



Interpretive Goals

Organizational goals state what the NPS and NAH seek to accomplish through implementation of the interpretive plan. **Visitor experience goals** express what kind of interpretive experiences people should be able to have and what they should take away with them as a result of their experiences.

Organizational Goals

Interpretation of the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor will:

- Support the preservation, protection, and understanding of the cultural heritage and landscapes that are part of the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor;
- Foster connections among Trail ‘ohana and facilitate partnerships between ‘ohana and organizations with shared values and goals;
- Support stewardship and land management practices along the Trail Corridor that are rooted in the ahupua‘a system; and
- Facilitate the restoration of reciprocal relationships between people and ‘āina on Hawai‘i Island.



Interpretive Experience Goals

All people who engage with Trail interpretation will:

- Have a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the history, heritage, land, and enduring cultural values that are connected to the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor;
- Realize the connections between the past, present, and future along Hawai‘i’s trails;
- Recognize that Hawaiians continue to live in an interdependent relationship with ‘āina along the Trail Corridor; and
- Feel moved to act in ways that respect, protect, and preserve the landscapes along the Trail.

Those with **ancestral, familial, or community relationships** to the Trail will also:

- Be encouraged to connect, reconnect, and deepen their connections with the values and practices that maintain responsible relationships with āina;
- Find opportunities to connect and commune with each other; and
- Feel inspired to become active stewards of the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor and the sites and landscapes along the Trail Corridor.

Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park Flickr



AUDIENCES

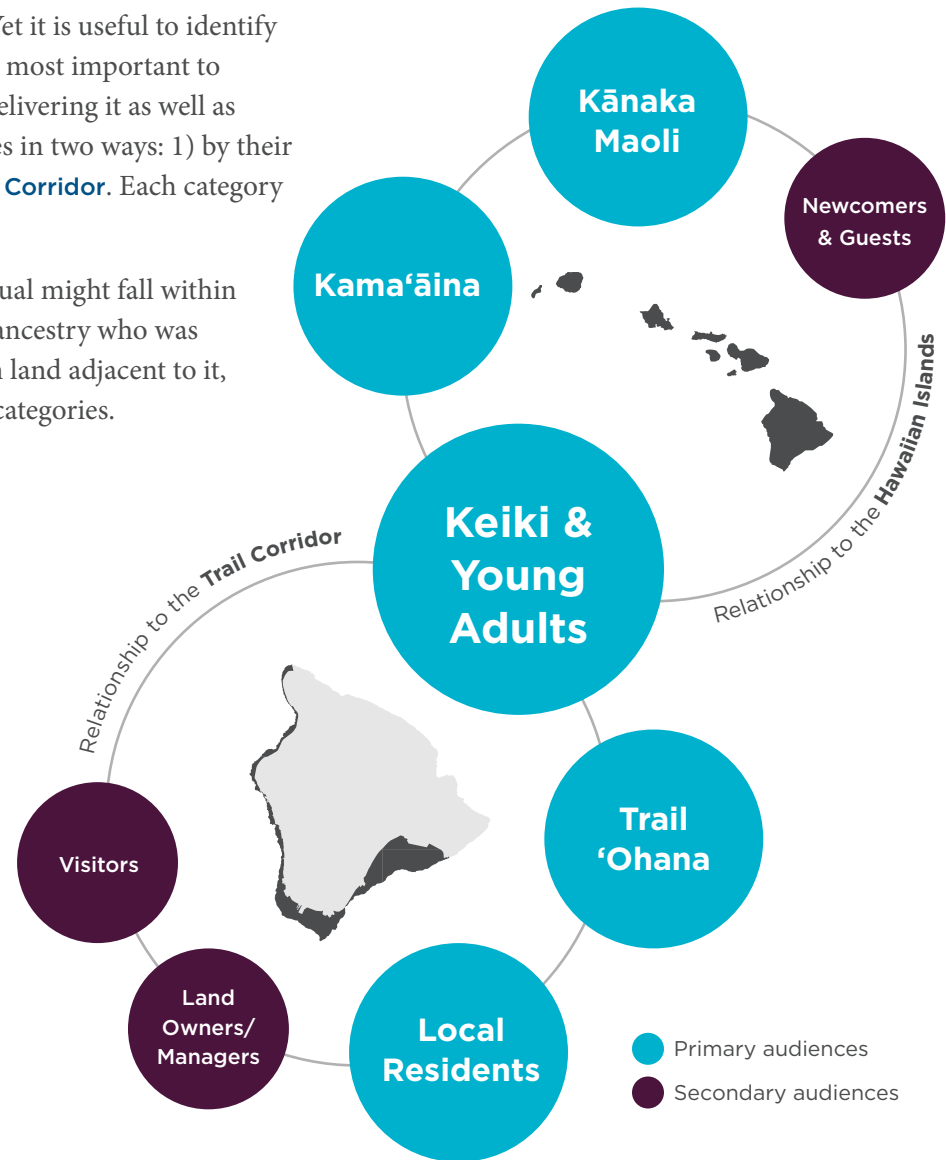
Who is Trail interpretation for?

Interpretive experiences should be accessible and meaningful for everyone. Yet it is useful to identify both who is most likely to engage with those experiences as well as those it is most important to reach. This helps focus interpretive communication and tailor methods for delivering it as well as prioritize where to devote time and resources. This Plan categorizes audiences in two ways: 1) by their **relationship to the Hawaiian Islands** and 2) by their **relationship to the Trail Corridor**. Each category includes both **primary and secondary audiences** for Trail interpretation.

Note that **these audience categories are not mutually exclusive**. An individual might fall within multiple categories. For example, a person of Native Hawaiian and Japanese ancestry who was born in Hawai'i might currently live near a section of the Trail Corridor, own land adjacent to it, and regularly take hikes along it. This person would be part of five audience categories.

Keiki & Young Adults

Children and young adults of Kānaka Maoli ancestry and Kama'āina youth who live near the Trail are a critically important audience for interpretation. Interpretive experiences could deepen their relationship to 'āina and strengthen their ties to their 'ohana. As they grow older, keiki might become active stewards and advocates for the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor and other trail landscapes and guardians of the ahupua'a system. Young people's ability and willingness to embrace their kuleana to mālama the Trail and 'āina will determine whether these landscapes and the life that depends on them can thrive in the future.



Relationship to Hawai‘i

Primary Audiences

Kānaka Maoli

Kānaka Maoli are the Indigenous people of Hawai‘i. They are lineal descendants of the first people of these islands, whose lifeways and identity became inextricably intertwined with this place. This long history with the land has built a close relationship with Trail landscapes and sites.

Since the early 1800s, Kānaka Maoli have suffered profound losses, including their sovereignty, access to the land and resources that sustained them, and the freedom to practice and perpetuate the full expression of their culture. These losses have fractured communities and disrupted the sharing of ancestral knowledge across generations. As a result, it has become difficult to maintain their responsible relationship with the land. This history and its consequences are reflected all along the Trail Corridor.

In recent decades, Kānaka Maoli have worked to revitalize and reclaim their cultural knowledge, values, practices, and relationship to ‘āina. This work is expressed at sites along and connected to the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor. It includes leadership of efforts to actively steward and manage sections of the Trail according to the ahupua‘a system. Trail interpretation can encourage and raise awareness of this work for cultural and environmental restoration.

Kama‘āina

Kama‘āina are long-time, island-born residents who are closely connected to Hawai‘i, regardless of their ancestry. They include Native Hawaiians and the descendants of immigrant families as well as those of other diverse backgrounds who are deeply rooted there.

Kama‘āina can have complex historical, ancestral, and personal relationships to Hawai‘i. More than simply a marker of geographical birth or residence, the term also indicates a sense of relationship to the land that has sustained them—to ‘āina. Trail interpretation can support and strengthen that relationship.



Secondary Audiences

Newcomers & Guests

More recently arrived residents typically have much to learn about Hawaiian history, culture, heritage, and landscapes. Trail interpretation can provide opportunities to increase their understanding and deepen their connection to place. It also can encourage them to engage in more responsible, reciprocal relationships with ‘āina. For those who are visiting Hawai‘i temporarily, interpretive messages and experiences can help them understand how to behave mindfully and respectfully, and be good guests.

Relationship to the Trail Corridor

Primary Audiences

Trail ‘Ohana

The Trail’s extended families includes Kānaka Maoli whose Indigenous lineage is tied to Hawai‘i Island as well as all Kama‘āina with family members, ancestors, and/or land connections that are related to the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor. Trail ‘ohana also include other people who have become advocates and stewards of the Trail and those committed to practicing the cultural values and responsibilities required to care for its landscapes and communities. The interpretive planning process and the resulting Plan are intended to support and strengthen the network of Trail ‘ohana.

Local Residents

Local residents live in close proximity to a section of the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor. They may or may not currently be aware of the Trail’s existence or realize its significance. Trail interpretation can add to their knowledge of local landscapes, foster their understanding of Hawaiian cultural heritage, and deepen their sense of place.

Secondary Audiences

Land Owners & Managers

Land along and adjacent to the Trail Corridor alignments are owned and managed by a complex mix of entities. Besides individual resident landowners, they include developers, hotels and resorts, non-profit organizations, and county, state, and federal government agencies. Interpretation can educate land owners and managers about the Trail’s significance and the need to preserve and protect it. It can provide messaging and guidance for entities like hotels and resorts that share historical and cultural information with visitors.

Visitors

This category includes anyone who is a non-local visitor to a particular section of the Ala Kahakai NHT corridor. They might be tourists or temporary or seasonal residents in the area. They might also be residents of Hawai‘i with ancestral or family connections to other places.

Interpretation can help manage access to the Trail and protect areas that are physically vulnerable, culturally sensitive, or otherwise should not be open to general public use. Where visitors access the Trail, interpretation can invite them into respectful experiences that align with Hawaiian cultural values and local protocols.

CONTEXT & CONDITIONS

Where do things currently stand?

Good planning requires a clear-eyed assessment of where the Ala Kahakai Trail currently stands and the context in which it is being developed. This section identifies the Trail's most significant stakeholders: those who are deeply invested in what the Trail is, what it becomes, and how it is experienced and interpreted. It also documents some of the challenges faced by Trail administrators as well as the opportunities and resources they can draw from while working to implement this Interpretive Plan.

Stakeholders

- People with ancestral and family connections to the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor or other interconnected trails on the island
- Individuals, families, groups, and organizations that have been actively stewarding sections of the Trail
- Individuals, families, groups, and organizations that have been caretaking and educating about the cultural sites and landscapes within and adjacent to the Trail
- Individuals and organizations that have advocated or worked for trail access, protection, preservation, or education, such as E Mau Nā Ala Hele
- Land owners and managers along the Trail corridor, including:
 - › NPS
 - › DLNR
 - › DHHL
 - › Ala Kahakai Trail Association
 - › Hawai'i County
 - › Kamehameha Schools
 - › Hawai'i Island Land Trust
 - › Queen Lili'uokalani Trust
 - › Resorts and hotels
 - › Developers
 - › Other large landowners
 - › Non-profit organizations
 - › Individual resident landowners



Challenges

Length and Variety

- The Trail Corridor is 175 miles long and passes through four moku and many ahupua'a.
- The people of each moku have a distinctive collective character, identity, and way of doing things.
- Each ahupua'a varies significantly in terms of:
 - › Trail construction and condition;
 - › Landscapes;
 - › Awareness, access, and use; and
 - › Family and community relationships and levels of stewardship.
- Trail names and other place names have changed over time and can vary by location, community usage, or family tradition.

Land Management & Access

- There are many complex layers of land ownership and management that include individual, corporate, non-profit, and government entities.
- Public access to the Trail Corridor, including shoreline sections, exists in principle but is complicated in practice.
- Much of the Trail Corridor is currently not accessible because of legal status and/or physical condition. This often poses challenges for the NAH in their endeavors to establish these trails or corridors as official NAH Program Trails.
- While building community capacity for trail management, there also is a need to foster community economic development in ways that generate revenue, develop services and products, and incorporate inclusive systems for decision making.

Threats to Cultural Landscapes

- In some areas, unmanaged access, over-tourism, and/or disrespectful use damages or destabilizes Trail landscapes and sites.
- Trail structures and sites remain vulnerable to damage or destruction by housing, hotel, and resort development.
- Trail landscapes, waterways, and plant and animal life are threatened by pollution, invasive species, and the effects of climate change.



Opportunities & Resources

Diversity & Distinctions

- The Trail's length and variability, while posing challenges for interpretive planning, offers a rich diversity of landscapes and sensory experiences.
- The differences and transitions between the moku can be highlighted in interpretation and reflected in how design is implemented along the Trail.



History & Stories

- The Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor is connected to and reflects the entire human history of Hawai'i Island.
- Significant historical events, developments, and people as well as ancient cultural myths and stories have direct connections to the Trail.
- People have family stories that they are proud of and willing to share.
- Community members have deep personal and emotional connections to the Trail and its history.

Trail Advocates, Stewards & Partnerships

- Descendants, families, community groups, and local residents along the corridor have been stewarding, protecting, and preserving knowledge about the Trail Corridor for generations.
- Trail advocates and activists like E Mau Nā Ala Hele have worked for decades to preserve trails, raise awareness, and increase access.
- NAH volunteer and outreach programs engage with local communities, organizations, schools, and keiki to encourage the next generation of trail stewards and advocates.
- Private landowners and Community Partnerships who maintain sections of the Corridor for public use.
- Public agencies such as County and State Parks, National Parks and NAH who maintain and foster access to sections of the Corridor.
- The NPS has committed to an ahupua'a-based, hyper-localized approach to Trail stewardship and management. This approach provides a model to follow for interpretive planning and implementation.
- NAH and the NPS have established a strong, dynamic partnership grounded in a shared commitment to protect and preserve the Trail Corridor through community-centered processes.
- Conservation, education, 'ohana, and other non-profit organizations are current or potential partners in stewarding and managing Trail segments.

INTERPRETIVE MESSAGES

What is the interpretation about?
What should interpretive experiences communicate?

Two levels of interpretive messages have emerged thus far from the foundational planning process: A “big idea” and a set of interpretive themes. Together, they provide essential focus for the content that will be created in later stages of exhibit and program development. As written here, these messages serve internal planning purposes. They may or may not be communicated directly in interpretive materials, or if they are, they might not be expressed in these exact words.

The **big idea** is the main message that interpretive experiences communicate, in whatever form they are experienced. It is the core concept that infuses everything. **Themes** are interpretive threads, spun from the main message, that weave throughout the visitor experience. Each theme might be expressed through a variety of methods—at locations along the Trail, in communities, in print, or online— and any experience might communicate multiple themes.

This Draft IP articulates **six interpretive themes** for the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor. Five of them build directly on the interpretive themes included in the 2009 CMP, developed through extensive community consultation during the comprehensive management planning process. An additional, new theme emerged from additional community engagement during the interpretive planning process in 2025.

Each interpretive theme is paired with an **audience invitation** for those who engage with Trail interpretation. Each theme also is connected with a **statement of significance** from the CMP that explains the Trail’s importance for understanding and preserving Hawaiian cultural heritage. Finally, for each theme there is a list of **suggested topics** for the interpretation to focus on.

Together, the themes, invitations, statements of significance, and topics articulate the core concepts that interpretive experiences will communicate to those who engage with them.



Big Idea

The Ala Kahakai Trail embodies and perpetuates the enduring values and relationships embedded in the ahupua‘a system while carrying the history and stories of the Hawaiian people.

Themes

Topics

Theme 1



Theme

The Trail is the Embodiment of an Enduring Culture.



Invitation


Connect with the enduring lifeways and values of the Hawaiian people.

Statement of Significance

The Ala Kahakai Trail protects and provides access to natural, cultural, and recreational resources that together express the Native Hawaiian culture and way of life, past and present.

Possible Topics to Interpret

- The cultural values, practices, and protocols that anchor Hawaiian people's relationship with the land and each other and how they have been embedded and expressed within the ahupua'a system along this Trail Corridor
- How the disruption of that system has undermined Hawaiians' ability to maintain their responsible relationship with the land along this Trail Corridor
- How Hawaiians have worked to reclaim and revitalize their cultural values, practices, and relationship with the land along the Trail
- How 'Ōlelo Hawai'i is embedded and expressed along the Trail Corridor
- How the ahupua'a system continues to shape life on the island today
- The ways that Hawaiians are continuing to live and pass on their culture today
- Where and how Native Hawaiians can access places to practice their cultural values and traditions along the Trail Corridor



I view trails as this really important indicator of how our kūpuna thought ... Today, we're trying to get back to these Hawaiian ways of thinking. – Lā Crivello

To be able to have access again ... it's freedom of my feet ... and freedom of the mind. – Boyd Bond

This place helps you to reach a maturity. It makes you think and makes you aware of who you are. – Māhealani Pai



Theme 2



Theme

The Trail Tells the Story of the Hawaiian People.



Invitation

Feel Hawaiian history and stories come alive as they are shared along this trail.

Statement of Significance

Along the coastal ala loa events took place that are significant to Hawaiian history and culture.

Possible Topics to Interpret

- The significant and historical events, developments, and people that have been connected to the Ala Kahakai Trail over time
- The stories told by archaeological, historical, and cultural sites along the Trail
- The building and maintenance of the Trail and how its construction and use evolved over time
- How to “read” the Trail and interpret the information conveyed by its physical structure, alignment, and materials
- How and why Hawaiian land and trails became inaccessible to most Hawaiian people over time
- The personal and family stories that are connected to the Trail and what they mean to people today
- The importance of preserving and protecting places of historical and cultural significance



It is the history of my ‘ohana in physical form. – Kaleo Paik



Every spot, every rock, every little inlet has a story. – Matt Clark

What happened to Hawai‘i? Why are people not walking the trails now? – Abel Nazara



Theme

The Trail Connects Us to the People of the Past.



Invitation

Follow in the footsteps of the ka po‘e kahiko (people of old) along the Ala Kahakai.

Statement of Significance

The Ala Kahakai Trail contains the oldest and best remaining examples of the ancient ala loa, the major land route connecting the reaches of the coastal settlement zone of most ahupua‘a on the island of Hawai‘i. The ala loa was essential to the movement of early Hawaiians from place to place.

Possible Topics to Interpret

- How early Hawaiians lived within the ahupua‘a system that structured their societies
- How and why early Hawaiians used the ala loa and other intersecting trails across the island
- How physical trails on the land are connected to water trails on the ocean, star trails in the sky, and the trails left by the ancestors through place names in the Hawaiian language
- The spiritual/mythic/metaphysical aspects of early Hawaiian belief systems and how/where they are connected to the Trail Corridor
- The genealogical and ancestral ties that connect Hawaiians to the land along the Trail
- How being and moving along the Trail connects Hawaiians to the ancestors
- Language, chants, music, songs and stories that evoke the ancestors at places along the Trail



*I can understand what other eyes
would have seen.* – Lehua Alapai



[Trails are] the traced footsteps of my ancestors. – Kamuela Plunkett

*We’re always looking for clues:
What did our ancestors leave for us?* – Māhealani Pai

Theme 4



Theme

The Trail Connects Us to Each Other.



Invitation

Discover how Hawai‘i’s trails bring people together.

Statement of Significance (shared with Theme 6)

The Ala Kahakai Trail is a dynamic, living cultural resource reflecting the values of an island people and their continuing responsible relationship with their community, land, and ocean resources.

Possible Topics to Interpret

- All the ways the trails are places for people to connect and commune: with community, family, ancestors, people of history and legend, human and non-human beings
- How trails continue to lead people to each other, as they always have
- The family memories, stories and songs that connect Kānaka Maoli, Kama‘āina, and local residents to the land along the Trail
- The opportunities to make new memories through shared experiences along the Trail
- The power of sharing stories in community
- What the Trail and its landscapes mean to people of different cultures and backgrounds
- How to build and strengthen relationships with ‘ohana and local communities along the Trail



Trails are relationships. – Ramsay Taum

The trails, they bring me back to my kūpuna. – Nicole Keaka Lui

*They’re that vessel and that
conduit to each other.* – Lā Crivello





Theme

The Trail Connects Us to ‘Āina.

Invitation

Listen and learn as the land speaks its stories.

The ‘āina is the curriculum. – Māhealani Pai

The rock has spirit. – Nicole Keaka Lui

The coral is my ancestor.

She’s my relative. – Shane Akoni Palacat-Nelsen



Statement of Significance

The Ala Kahakai Trail passes through and provides opportunities to protect significant natural areas and ecosystems with indigenous and endemic species along its route.

Possible Topics to Interpret

- Learning how to live in responsible relationship with ‘āina and with all interconnected beings
- The waterways that are connected to the Trail Corridor and how they have sustained life here
- The plant and animal life and the ecosystems that are indigenous and endemic to areas along the Corridor
- How Hawaiians historically used and stewarded the land and resources along the Trail Corridor within the ahupua‘a system
- How native ecosystems have been disrupted and damaged over time, with lasting consequences
- How people have worked to restore and protect the land along the corridor and reestablish responsible relationships with it
- Exploring your relation to and responsibility for the land and beings along the Trail Corridor; finding your place in the system of interdependent relationships here
- How you can live in responsible, reciprocal relationship with the land and other beings



Theme

The Trail Calls for Stewardship.



Invitation

Care for the Trail and the people, places, and landscapes it connects.

Statement of Significance (shared with Theme 4)

The Ala Kahakai Trail is a dynamic, living cultural resource reflecting the values of an island people and their continuing responsible relationship with their community, land, and ocean resources.

Possible Topics to Interpret

- The need to respect, protect, and preserve Trail landscapes and cultural sites, including why some places are not open for public access
- Where and how to experience the Trail in ways that respect, protect, and preserve Hawai'i's natural and cultural heritage
- Where and how local residents can become involved in protecting and restoring the landscapes along the Corridor
- How advocates and stewards have worked to protect, preserve, restore, and ensure access to the Trail Corridor
- The need to inspire kuleana for the trails by the next generations
- How to become an active advocate, defender, and/or steward of the Trail Corridor
- How to connect with and support Trail and land stewards across 'ohana, ahupua'a, and organizations



Ka Wa Ma Mua, Ka Wa Ma Hope
(*In working one learns*) – 'Ōlelo No'ēau

How can I contribute? How can I belong? – Māhealani Pai

For me the trails have continued to be an enduring priority to protect. – Debbie Chang



Theme

The Trail Is Not a Museum.



Invitation

Use the Trail to perpetuate Hawaiian values and regenerate sustainable communities.

Statement of Significance

An ahupua'a-based Trail management system promotes sustainable community development grounded in Hawaiian values and reciprocal relationship with 'āina.

Possible Topics to Interpret

- How community-based management of the Trail network requires regeneration and activation of the Hawaiian ahupua'a system
- How regeneration of the ahupua'a system requires a commitment to values-driven, descendant-led, locally-controlled processes
- How Trail management, stewardship, preservation, and interpretation can contribute to self-reliant, sustainable economies
- How use of and active connection with the Trail system supports the healing, health, well-being, and safety of people and 'āina
- How Hawai'i Island's people and trails regenerate each other within a living, interdependent system
- The need to connect and collaborate across 'ohana, ahupua'a, organizations, and communities to manage and steward Trail landscapes and cultural and natural resources



Engage community to take on their kuleana. – Shane Akoni Palacat-Nelsen

Trails always have a beginning. Where it ends, still rides upon our shoulders. – Lily Anne Leolani Souza

INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

ONE TRAIL, MANY ROUTES: A FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORK FOR INTERPRETATION

The previous section of this document laid the kahua for interpretive planning along the Ala Kahakai Trail corridor. The next step is to build a framework for future interpretive development and implementation.

- **How and where will messages be communicated?**
- **How will interpretation be experienced? What forms will it take?**

These are the questions addressed by an interpretive framework. Typically a framework would attach messages to selected locations and identify methods for sharing them with certain audiences. The more circumscribed the space, the more focused, precise, and detailed the framework can be.

In this case, a one-size frame definitely will not fit all. This is generally true for NHT units within the NPS system, which require a more distributed approach to interpretation than a park or monument. The NPS and NAH commitment to community-based management of the Ala Kahakai Trail requires an even more decentralized approach.

A wide variety of agencies, organizations, and other entities might use this document to develop and implement interpretive initiatives. They include:

- The National Park Service
- State of Hawai‘i/ Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program
- County and local government agencies
- Private landowners and land managers
- Nonprofit organizations, community groups, and families
- Schools and other educational entities

To serve this range of users and support community-led development, this document offers **customizable options**, structured by **core guidelines and recommendations**. It provides a toolkit or ala carte menu for the development and implementation of interpretive initiatives along the Ala Kahakai Corridor. Together, the kahua and this flexible framework set Trail-wide parameters while supporting a range of **hyper-local choices**.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These principles should guide the development of interpretive initiatives, regardless of who develops them or how they are experienced.

Community-Based & Ahupua‘a-Managed

This interpretive framework follows the example set by the NPS in its approach to management of the Ala Kahakai NHT. As laid out in the 2009 CMP, while responsible for overall Trail administration, the NPS supports management of Trail sections by descendent-led communities, generally defined by the ancient ahupua‘a system of land divisions, stewardship, and responsibility. The further planning, development, and implementation of interpretive initiatives should also be driven by descendant-led communities on an ahupua‘a by ahupua‘a basis.

Hawaiian-Centered & Inclusive

Trail interpretation should be centered in Hawaiian values, priorities, and perspectives. Content should incorporate ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, particularly when expressing Hawaiian concepts and worldview. Where appropriate, content also should include the stories of historical immigrants, Kama‘āina, and others who are an integral part of Hawai‘i Island's history as connected to the Trail. Where the audiences for a given initiative include non-Hawaiians, interpretation should offer ways to connect to the story and the place.

‘Āina-Grounded & Restorative

All interpretive initiatives should be grounded in aloha ‘āina, fostering kuleana for the landscapes and waterscapes along the Trail corridor. Interpretation should work to restore reciprocal, responsible relationships between people and the land and sustainable, self-sufficient systems of living on Hawai‘i Island. It should facilitate the protection and restoration of the ancient and historical trails and the cultural and natural heritage within the Ala Kahakai Corridor.

Capacity-Building & (Re-)Generative

The processes of planning, developing, implementing, and managing interpretive initiatives should contribute to multi-faceted capacity building within local communities. They should foster knowledge and practices that support stewardship, management, and regeneration of ecological, cultural, and economic resources. Interpretive initiatives should generate paths to family and community stability. Where possible, they should offer employment, provide income, and help build transferrable job skills.

FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS

The following pages outline the five core components of an interpretive framework for the Ala Kahakai NHT.

- 1. Audiences
- 2. Locations
- 3. Content
- 4. Methods
- 5. Design

Each of these components includes multiple **options and variations**. They can be mixed, matched, and combined in different ways, depending on particular goals, local conditions, or other circumstances. Choosing from these options, the developers of an interpretive initiative can construct a custom framework that is built to purpose and adapted to their needs.



1. Audiences

Questions to Consider

- Who do you want to engage or reach through a given interpretive initiative?
- Who do you seek to connect with the Trail?

The answer for a given initiative might include any one or more of the following audiences.

AUDIENCE OPTIONS/VARIATIONS

- Kānaka Maoli
- Trail ‘Ohana
- Newcomers
- Keiki, Youth, and Young Adults
- Kama‘āina
- Longtime Residents
- Visitors/Guests
- Land Owners/Managers

See the [Foundations: Audiences](#) section for further definition of these audiences in relation to Trail interpretation.

2. Locations

Questions to Consider

- Where will the interpretive initiative take place?
- Where will your audiences encounter interpretive messages or materials or have experiences?

The Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor encompasses complex layers of land ownership, management, and access. It varies widely in terms of environments, features, and physical conditions. Each of these variables affects the consideration of locations for interpretive experiences.

LOCATION OPTIONS/VARIATIONS

Along the Trail Corridor

NPS Site

- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park
- Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park
- Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park
- Pu'ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site

State/NAH-Managed Trail Section

County or City-Managed Trail Section

Restricted/Managed-Access Trail Section

Public Shoreline Access Area

Private Development

- This category includes hotels, resorts, and housing developments with public access easements.

Private Educational or Interpretive Site

- Examples include Kaleamanō Interpretive Center and Kamehameha Schools' Kahalu'u Ma Kai property in North Kona.

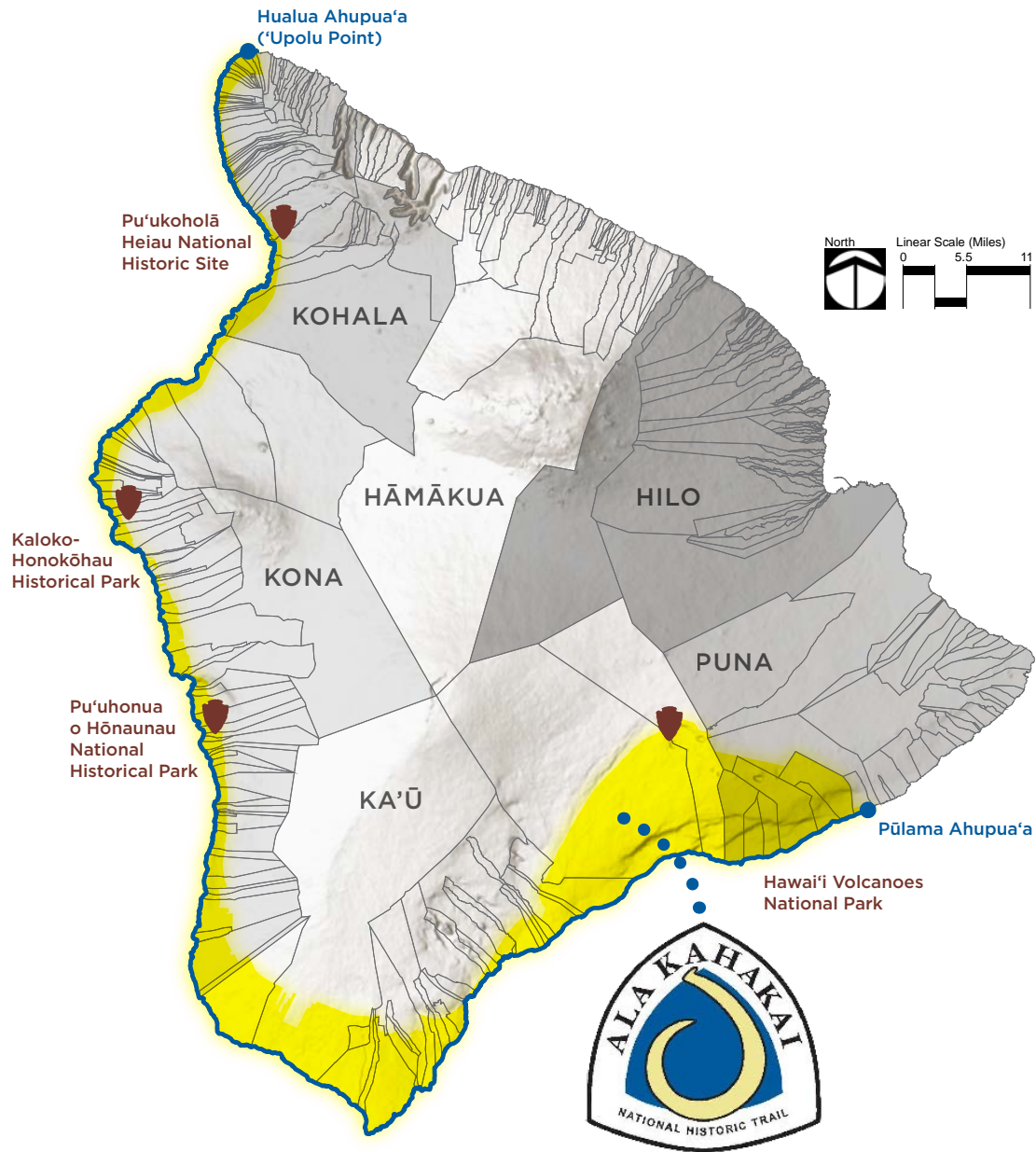
Outside the Trail Corridor

Nearby Community Public Space

- Possibilities include a community center, library, post office, park, or other indoor or outdoor public gathering place.

School Campus

Online



Variations in trails, landscapes, and features, as well as conditions of land ownership, management, and access will determine what kinds of interpretive initiatives are appropriate for different locations along the Corridor.



Privately managed sites like Kalaemanō Cultural Reserve are good locations for āina-based education.



Already-developed public access areas could be good locations for interpretive signs.



3. Content

Questions to Consider

- What do you want to communicate through interpretive experiences or materials?
- What types of content do you want to share?

CONTENT OPTIONS/VARIATIONS

Interpretive Themes

The developers of an interpretive initiative might choose to focus on one or more of the themes presented in this Interpretive Plan:

1. The Trail is the Embodiment of an Enduring Culture.
2. The Trail Tells the Story of the Hawaiian People.
3. The Trail Connects Us to the People of the Past.
4. The Trail Connects Us to Each Other.
5. The Trail Connects Us to ‘Āina.
6. The Trail Calls for Stewardship.
7. The Trail Is Not a Museum.

See the [Foundations: Interpretive Messages](#) section of this document for more on the themes and corresponding potential topics.

Content Types

Each of these content types will express themes, communicate messages, share ideas, and engage and affect people in different ways. Some might be more appropriate for certain audiences, best implemented by particular groups, or better suited to specific locations.

○ Mo'olelo 'Āina

A mo'olelo 'āina interweaves natural and cultural history to tell a story of the relationship between people and place.

○ Place-Based Story

This category includes Hawaiian history and legends, family histories, personal memories, and stories of human and non-human beings connected to specific locations.

○ Resource-Specific Interpretation

Trail resources include historical sites, cultural resources, natural features, landscapes, waterscapes, and viewsheds.

○ Historical Context

Interpretation might share aspects of Hawaiian history that provide broader context for understanding Trail resources or place-specific stories. It also might share the history of the ahupua'a system, Hawaiian trail networks, or the Ala Kahakai Trail itself.

○ Cultural Grounding

Interpretive content might express Native Hawaiian concepts, values, or ways of thinking. An interpretive initiative might engage Kānaka Maoli in experiences that reconnect them with their language, 'ohana, kupuna, ahupua'a, or other aspect of their ancestral cultural heritage.

○ Ecological Knowledge

An interpretive initiative might share knowledge about how to maintain or restore the environment or teach people how to grow, tend, or gather plant and marine resources.

○ Behavioral Guidance

Content might focus on encouraging or discouraging certain behaviors to protect 'āina, preserve resources, follow protocol, control access, or serve other purposes.

○ Call to Stewardship

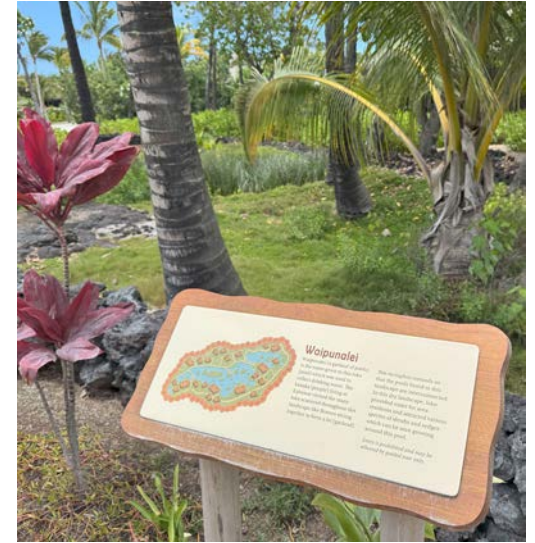
Content might invite or encourage people to become active stewards of the Trail, its associated resources, and/or the landscapes it passes through.



Place-based stories and Hawaiian history can be shared through huaka'i hele.



Site-specific signs can interpret natural and cultural resources while also guiding behavior.



Public access areas are good locations for behavioral guidance and safety information.

HOME ABOUT UPCOMING EVENTS SUPPORT NEWS & UPDATES RESOURCES CONTACT



The non-profit organization E Mau Nā Ala Hele calls people to stewardship on its website as well as through guided hikes, community work days, and other in-person, on-Trail programs.

4. Methods

Questions to Consider

- How will you connect your audiences with the Trail?
- How will you communicate messages and share content?
- What kinds of experiences do you want people to have?

Interpretive content can be shared and messages communicated through many creative methods and a variety of experiences and physical forms. This Plan recommends the methods outlined here as particularly well suited for interpretive initiatives related to the Ala Kahakai Trail Corridor.

5. Design

Most of the methods recommended here would involve some level of graphic and/or structural design. Design choices should suit each initiative's unique combination of audience, location, content, and method.

See the [Design Guidance](#) in the next section of this document for graphic design guidelines and recommendations.

METHOD OPTIONS/VARIATIONS

○ Communing along the Trail

Interpretation of the Trail Corridor is not just about communicating messages. It is about fostering communion, with the trails, kūpuna, 'ohana, and 'āina. The most powerful initiatives bring people together along the Trail to share communal experiences while connecting with the land, water, rocks, plants, and animals.

These experiences can foster intergenerational knowledge transfer and build cultural and economic capacity within communities along the Ala Kahakai Corridor. They can help restore sustainable, self-sufficient ways of living that are grounded in Hawaiian values and organized through the ahupua'a system.

Huaka'i Hele

Kama'āina-led, guided walks share place-based knowledge about landscapes and cultural heritage sites as well as Hawaiian history, stories, and values. They allow descendant-led communities to choose where and how people access and learn about the Trail.

'Āina-Based Education

Keiki and youth can engage in place-based, experiential learning along the Trail through school and community-led programs that connect them with their cultural heritage and their kupuna.

Other communal Trail experiences might include:

- Mālama 'Āina Activities
- Trail or Resource Stewardship
- 'Ohana Social Gatherings
- 'Āina-Based Subsistence Practices
- Indigenous Foodways
- Speaking 'Ōlelo Hawai'i
- Other Cultural Expression (Chants, Songs, Dance, Storytelling)
- Sharing of 'Ike Kūpuna
- Practicing Protocol

○ Art

Art can communicate messages, evoke emotions, and connect people with place, with or without words. A **design motif** or **illustration** might be incorporated into a graphic panel or an **artwork** might be combined with other forms as part of an interpretive exhibit. An artwork or **art installation** also might stand on its own, occupying its own space. An interpretive initiative could engage people in cultural **craft making** or the collaborative creation of a mural or other **community art project**.

○ Curriculum

Educational materials could be developed to include in school curriculum. They might teach students about Trail history, landscapes, and cultural and historical sites. They could incorporate ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i and communicate Hawaiian values and concepts.



Sculpture and signage can work together to tell a story that connects people with place-based practices across time.

○ Printed Content

Printed materials like **brochures** or **booklets** still have their place in the digital age. Some people are not proficient with digital devices, while others prefer to limit their time spent on them. Not everyone has a mobile phone, a personal computer, or reliable internet access. Cell service is limited in some locations along the Trail. Some people prefer to read content or engage deeply with ideas in printed form. A **chapbook, zine, letterpress print, custom card deck/game, or coloring book** could be well-suited for certain audiences or events or incorporated into school curriculum.

○ Digital Content

Digital content can be included in physical exhibits via **audio-visual media** components or incorporated into school curriculum. It can be delivered via a **website** or **app** or incorporated into an **virtual exhibit** or **StoryMap**.



Indigenous art, language, and plant knowledge combine to evoke the Umonhon homeland in this exhibit on the Omaha reservation in Nebraska.

KI'I PŌHAKU Petroglyph Guide

6. LUPE – Kite

Depictions of kites are extremely rare in petroglyphs. The only known kite petroglyphs are located here in Ka'ūpūlehu, Kona, and Puakō, Kohala. The two airplane-like structures are in similar fashion made by the Māori of Aotearoa (New Zealand) and the Mā'ohi people of Huahine, Tahiti.



7. NĀ PE'A & KA LAWAI'A Canoe Sails and Fishermen

Six to eight Hawaiian canoe sails are present above this canoe fishermen. Multiple variations of the canoe sail, some only outlined, some shaded in, and some depicting lines indicating a weaving pattern. The canoe fishermen depicts a style of fishing with four mākau (fishing hooks). The shores of Kona were known to farm abundance of aku (skipjack tuna) and 'ōpelu (makrel scad).



8. KAME'EIAMOKU & THE FAIR AMERICAN

In ca. 1790, a trading American ship docked off the shore of Kahuwai Bay named the Fair American. Due to a previous offense from a prior arrival of an American ship, the high chief, Kame'eiamoku, a vindictive slaughter of the Fair American crew took place leaving one survivor, Issac Davis. His late Majesty, King Kamehameha I, absorbed the Fair American vessel into his fleet on his political advancement on unifying the Hawaiian islands. The Hawaiian Kingdom solidified under his Majesty's reign in 1810.

Printed brochures can bring the information from an interpretive trail to people who can't physically experience it.



A culture-based card game could teach about the plants, animals, and values connected to the Trail through Hawaiian language and art.



The mo'olelo 'āina or history of Kalaemanō is intimately tied to Ka'ūpūlehu Ahupua'a and the greater Kekaha region. We invite you to learn more about this area.

The history of this area has been gathered through the efforts of many individuals, who in a labor of love for their land, have shared this history with us so that it may be preserved, protected, and passed down to future generations.

Early native historians and old kama'āina to the lands of Ka'ūpūlehu and the greater Kekaha region shared a deep cultural attachment to their environment—their customs, beliefs, practices, and history were place-based. All things within the environment are interrelated. That which was in the uplands shared a relationship with that which was in the lowlands, coastal region, and even in the sea. This relationship and identity with place worked in reverse as well. The ahupua'a as a land unit was the thread that bound all things together in Hawaiian life.



KALAEMANŌ



KA'ŪPŪLEHU



KEKAHA

The Kalaemanō Cultural Reserve's website shares mo'olelo 'āina, resource-specific interpretation, historical context, cultural grounding, behavioral guidance, and a call to stewardship.



KapuKapu 'Ohana commune and mālama 'āina at Hikiau Heiau in partnership with Ho'āla Kealakekua Nui.

Leah Keller, kealakekua.org

Physical Exhibits

○ Indoor Exhibits

Indoor exhibits can range from simple wall panels in a single room to extensive multi-media and immersive environments that occupy an entire building. In addition to **audio-visual media**, they can incorporate **tactile elements** and **physical and digital interactive components**, all of which make the experience more accessible. An indoor exhibit might be designed as a short-term pop-up experience or a medium-term temporary or long-term permanent attraction. A small traveling exhibit could move from place to place.

○ Outdoor Exhibits

Small markers might communicate a single focused message or provide practical information, such as navigational signs. **Larger signs** might interpret a specific resource, provide historical context, or communicate multiple messages. A concept design process could create a **custom family of signs** for the Trail.

A group of conceptually related signs might be organized along an **interpretive trail**. Signs might be combined with other physical forms in an **interpretive node**. A node could include works of art, landscaping, benches, walls, or other built features that communicate interpretive messages through design.



Exhibits don't need high-cost, high-maintenance technology to provide engaging, immersive experiences. An interactive map and intimate historical photos allow people to share place-based knowledge and memories. A simple play feature invites children to build tactile relationships with native plants, illustrated by an Indigenous artist.



Small markers need few words to guide behavior and communicate values.



Interpretive trails can be constructed to protect resources while sharing information.



Interpretive signs can take a variety of forms, built from sustainable, site-appropriate materials. Focused topics and short text help limit their size and prevent signs from overwhelming the landscape. QR codes, printed brochures, and guided tours and programs allow interested people to learn more.



DESIGN GUIDANCE

INTERPRETIVE DESIGN

Creation of a fully formed design style will come in later phases of Trail development beyond this Interpretive Plan. These later phases of concept planning and design development will establish the visual “look and feel” for Trail interpretation, select physical forms and materials, and establish approaches to 2D design elements and templates. This chapter of the Interpretive Plan provides preliminary guidance to inform later phases of design work.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

These principles should guide development and implementation of a design style for the Ala Kahakai Trail.

1. Graphic design should **integrate brand elements from the two partner organizations** responsible for overall Trail interpretation: the National Park Service and the State of Hawai‘i’s Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program of the Department of Land and Natural Resources. At the same time, the **Ala Kahakai NHT should have its own distinctive graphic identity** that sets it apart from other NPS and NAH trails and locations.
2. Use of recurring design elements should contribute to a **cohesive visual experience** along the length of the Trail as well as in print and online media.
3. Visual design for Trail corridor interpretation should be **grounded in and guided by ‘āina**.
4. Where interpretive forms may be installed along the Trail (e.g., signs, sculptures, seating, or other physical structures), they should **complement and integrate with the landscape** rather than dominating or distracting from the viewshed or ambience.
5. Materials and methods used to construct and install physical forms along the Trail should be **as sustainable as possible**. Sustainability should be considered holistically, including environmental, human, and financial impacts.
6. Trail interpretation should be **accessible and inclusive** for all its intended audiences.
7. Interpretive text should **incorporate Hawaiian words and phrases**, written in consultation with language and culture knowledge keepers. Hawaiian words should not be set in italics or placed in parentheses, since ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is not a foreign language; rather, it is the Indigenous language of this place.

DESIGN INSPIRATION

The appropriate design inspiration is key to building a meaningful and site-specific interpretive experience. It sparks stylistic ideas and informs design choices that let people know they are in the right spot, feel a part of the environment, and absorb intended messages.

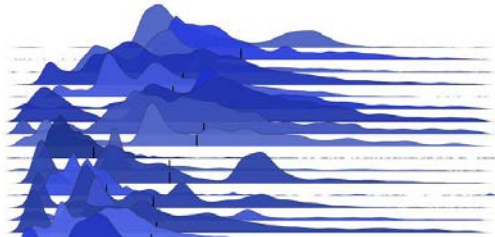
Through early planning phases and the immersive site visit, the interpretive team has drawn inspiration from these sources:

- Āina—the landscapes and waterways along the Trail corridor and their unique qualities in particular locations;
- The plant and animal life that āina sustains;
- The passion, intentionality, and storytelling of those deeply connected to the trail; and
- The energy of open spaces and vast connection between land and sky.

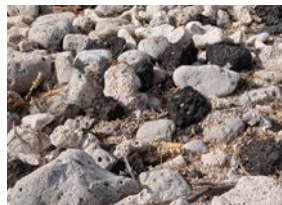


Design Words & Mood Board

This page represents the above inspirations through descriptive **design words** and a **mood board** of images. These tools begin to build a distinctive look and feel for Trail interpretation, which can be further developed in later phases of interpretive design.



Energetic



Earthen



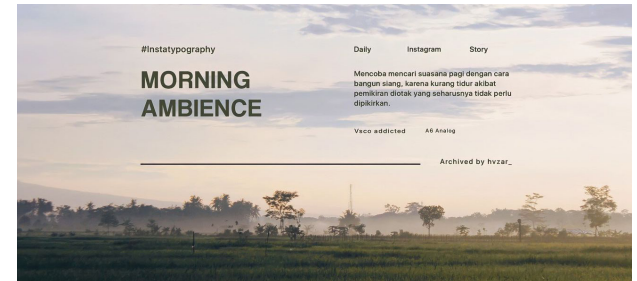
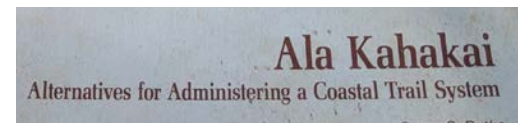
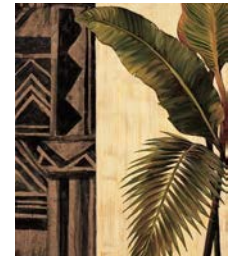
Authentic
Expansive

Reflective

PLAY WITH SKY



Vibrant
Optimistic
Connective

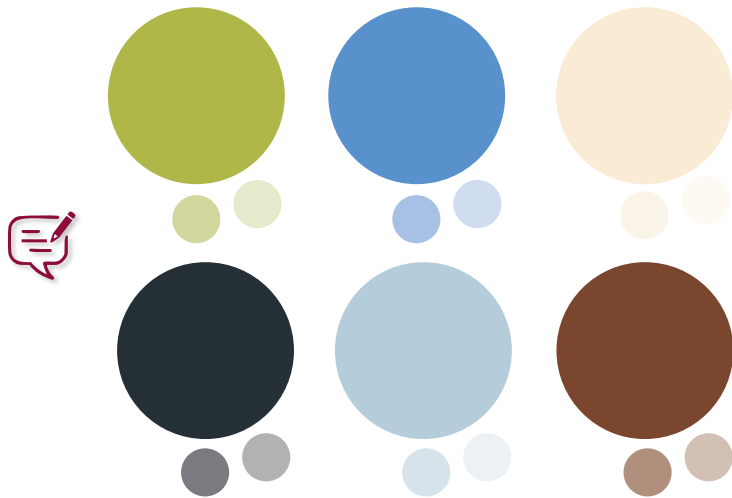


DESIGN ELEMENTS

Using the design inspiration as a foundation, more formal design elements can be explored. This section offers guidance for a color palette, typography, graphic composition, and brand identity for Ala Kahakai interpretation.

Color Palette

Inspired by studying the color story of the moku the Trail passes through (right), the palette shown below will help provide a cohesive interpretive experience, regardless of delivery method or location.



By combining colors in different ways, interpretive design can also reflect the distinctive landscapes and identities of the moku the Trail passes through. The following pages suggest how to apply the palette by moku (North Kohala, South Kohala, North Kona, South Kona, and Ka'ū/Puna). Each application varies by the **emphasis** of certain colors in the palette, with the **addition of secondary colors** that are unique to that moku.

Graphic design, forms, and materials can all draw from this palette. Different hues of each color can create variety and improve legibility, contrast, and other considerations.

North Kohala



South Kohala



North Kona



South Kona

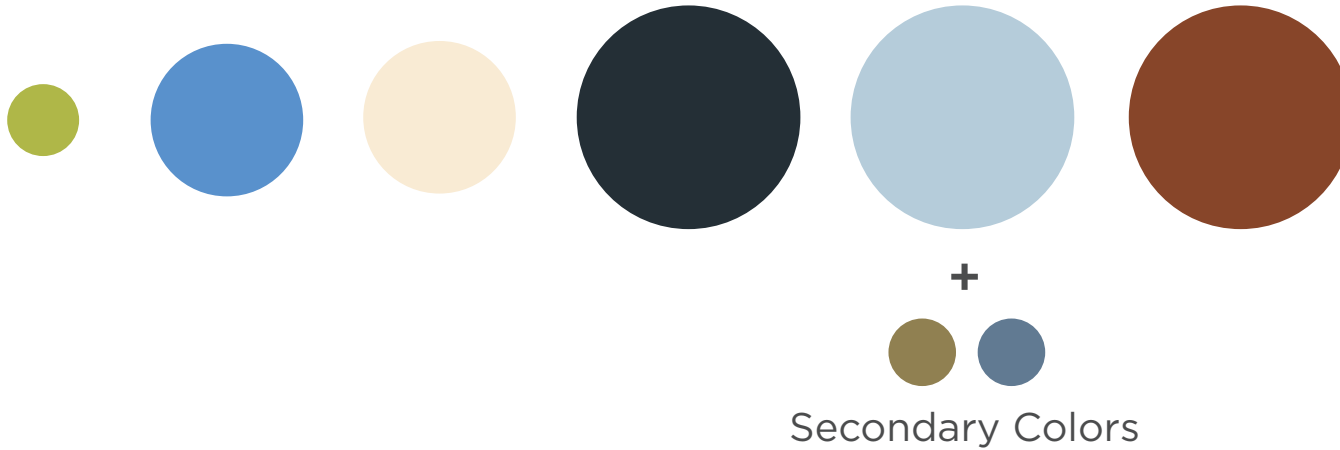


Ka'ū & Puna





North Kohala Emphasis

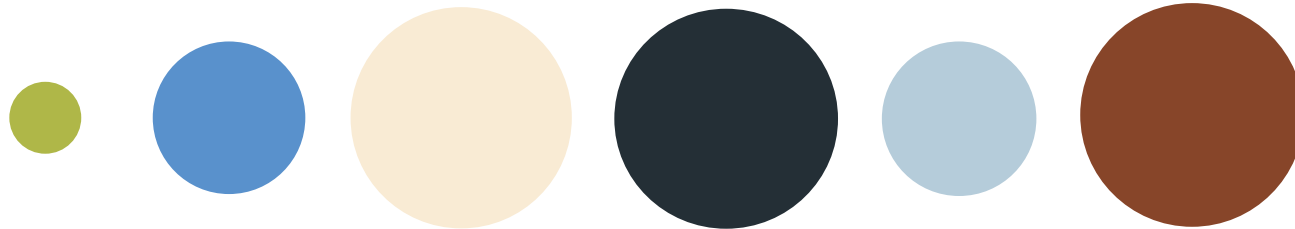


Application Guidance

- Emphasis: Lean more on the earthen colors of the palette (like dark red, pale blue, and rich black/brown).
- Secondary Colors: Introduce some saturation with a richer hue of green and/or blue.



South Kohala Emphasis



+



Secondary Colors

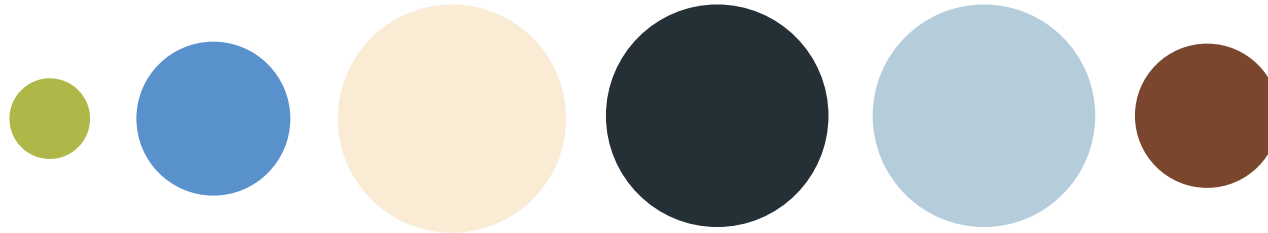


Application Guidance

- Emphasis: Lean more on the earthen colors of the palette (like dark red and rich black/brown), while keeping things lighter overall.
- Secondary colors: Introduce some saturation with a lighter blue and/or tint of orange.



North Kona Emphasis



+



Secondary Colors

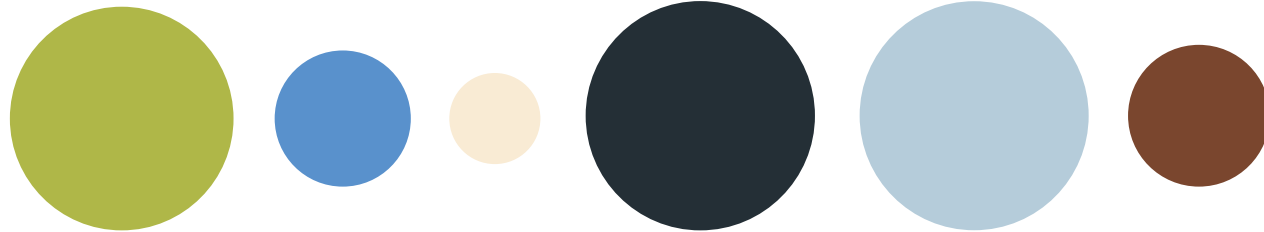


Application Guidance

- Emphasis: Lean more on the cool colors of the palette (like pale blue, beige, and brown) and play with the contrast between dark and light.
- Secondary Colors: Introduce more blue and a darker, richer brown.



South Kona Emphasis



+



Secondary Colors

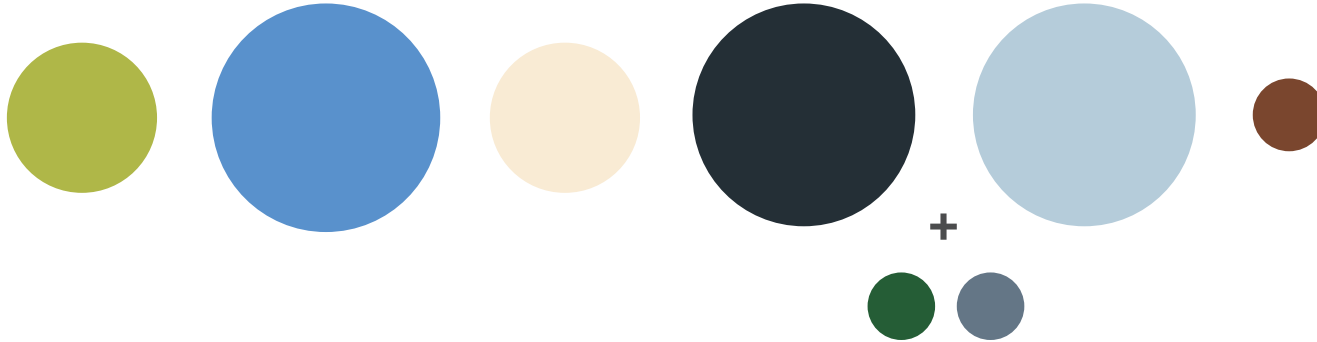


Application Guidance

- Emphasis: Lean on the cool, saturated colors of the palette (like green, blue, and black).
- Secondary colors: Pops of peach or coral provides additional vibrancy and warmth.



Ka'u & Puna Emphasis



Secondary Colors



Application Guidance

- Emphasis: Lean heavily on the blue and black in this palette.
- Secondary colors: The introduction of dark green or gray will reinforce the monochromatic feel.

Typography

A typeface's personality, along with its legibility, letterforms, and weight, combine to effectively convey messaging. Taken together, these elements of typography lend continuity as a visitor moves through physical and virtual interpretive spaces.

Typography for the Ala Kahakai Trail should:

- Support the glyphs and diacritics found in the Hawaiian language. The NPS uses HFrutiger, a version of its standard Frutiger font, because it includes Hawaiian diacritics.
- Use a family of typefaces, where one is a display font and the other one or two are sans-serif or serif fonts (like HFrutiger). A display font is a big-personality font used for headers, subheads, and short, high-impact messages. Sans-serif and serif fonts are suitable for larger quantities of text.
- Use fonts that provide good contrast to one another while communicating the look and feel of the Trail's design inspiration.
- Be sized appropriately for viewing height.

Composition

How components are placed, arranged, and treated stylistically could be a recognizable component of the Trail's design identity. While on site, the interpretive team was struck by the energy created by open spaces and the urge to take the deepest of breaths within landscapes that opened their arms in welcome.

Compositionally, interpretive design for the Ala Kahakai Trail might:

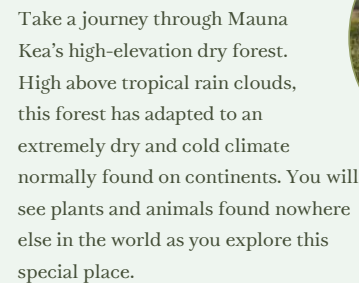
- Make full use of negative space.
- Allow imagery and visuals to carry messages; avoid large blocks of text that could overwhelm the reader.
- Emphasize lateral lines more than vertical lines.



Examples of display fonts used on NAH and NPS signage: Banana Yeti (left) and Arvo (below).



Examples of sans-serif and serif fonts used by NAH and NPS for large quantities of text: Tryst (left) and Frutiger (right).



Take a journey through Mauna Kea's high-elevation dry forest. High above tropical rain clouds, this forest has adapted to an extremely dry and cold climate normally found on continents. You will see plants and animals found nowhere else in the world as you explore this special place.

South Kohala Trails

The National Park Service welcomes you to the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail and beautiful Honoka'ope Bay in 'Anaeho'omalu, Waikoloa, South Kohala.

Ala hele (coastal trails) here have been used to travel this coastline for many centuries, connecting fishing grounds, ancestral villages, field systems, water sources, ceremonial sites, upland trail networks, and access to the ocean for travelling the blue trails by wa'a (canoe).

Please care for this ancient trail by being respectful, staying on the trail and not touching archaeological sites and features.



Brand Identity

The NPS and NAH seek to develop a graphic style for the Ala Kahakai Trail that incorporates elements of their organizational brands while also establishing a unique identity for the Trail. This process will extend beyond the completion of the Interpretive Plan. Yet it is helpful to begin thinking about how graphic design can contribute to the development of a distinctive visual identity for interpretation and other communication.

The table on the following pages outlines how selected design elements are currently used by the NPS and NAH. The right column offers recommendations on how those elements might be combined or adapted for the Trail Corridor.

DESIGN ELEMENT	NPS	NAH	ALA KAHAKAI NHT RECOMMENDATION
Logo Inclusion & Placement	Unit name and NPS logo in black band	Many logos and/or funding statements are often gathered in a band along the bottom of a panel.	<p>Provide space and flexibility for inclusion of multiple logos, which might include the Ala Kahakai Trail, NPS, and NAH logos as well as other partner organizations and/or land owner or land manager entities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine which are necessary case by case. • Group them together in proximity on the panel. • Standardize the location where they might exist on a panel. • Allow space within standard design templates for inclusion of additional logos where needed. <p>Creation of a new logo that is specific to the Ala Kahakai Trail is another tool to reinforce Trail branding as a whole. If the team would like to create one in the future, earmark plenty of time for development, ideation, and revision, as an initiative of that magnitude is no small feat.</p>
Organization of Layout	Unigrd system	Use of a grid and subdivison of columns is evident.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While rigid grid systems help to organize information, consider breaking some of these boxes to better accommodate design inspirations for Trail interpretation. • Reducing levels of graphic hierarchy will allow content to breathe and help define a distinct design style for the Ala Kahakai Corridor.

DESIGN ELEMENT	NPS	NAH	ALA KAHAKAI NHT RECOMMENDATION
Map & Icon Style	NPS Wayside Exhibit Map Standards	Most popular map style appears to be photo-realistic. They do not overwhelm with information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the purpose of the map: is it for orientation, for context of a larger area, for navigation? This can influence design. Consider the base map style: is it a topographic export, real-life photos, an illustration? There is room to expand beyond simple line work. NPS icons are well-known and user-friendly. It is recommended to use this icon set, as developing one's own icon set can be a lengthy process. Perhaps use them in softer colors as needed instead of the standard black.
Typography	NPS Rawlinson, Frutiger and HFrutiger, NPS Wayside Exhibit Typographic Standards	A mix of fonts are being used, with notable addition of a slab-serif font.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recommend HFrutiger, a variant of the Frutiger typeface, for body copy and captions. It includes Hawaiian diacritical marks, making it easier to incorporate 'Ōlelo Hawai'i. Consider using a unique, big-personality, display typeface for headers, subheads, and key messages to better communicate the Trail's design inspirations and brand identity.
Multilingual Interpretation	NPS Wayside Exhibit Typographic Standards	Current interpretation supports Hawaiian language and is integrated well with English.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the order of languages in the hierarchy? Keep that consistent. It is often helpful to treat the languages different stylistically so it is clear which language is which. Teams should decide which amount of translation suits the goals of the project (translation of all content, only a select few phrases or words, only translation in certain locations, etc.). Dual languages take up at least double the space of one, sometimes triple. Plan accordingly for designing interpretive graphics.
Editorial Style Guidelines	HFC Editorial Style Guide	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the HFC Editorial Style Guide.
Accessibility	Follows the Programmatic Accessibility Guide	Some principles are in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the NPS Programmatic Accessibility Guide and additional ADA guidance where appropriate.