The Ancient Hawaiians' Sustainable ways



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Note: ‘Hawaiians’ refers to the people that were living in Hawaii before the overthrow.

Water flows down a mountain, branching off high up in the stream. It branches off again from there into multiple directions, all going downhill. Moving into a descended area of mud, *lo’i kalo* (taro) will grow bigger and better thanks to the hydration of the stream. In the meantime, the extra water in the lo’i will just go to another taro patch, and maybe another, but then all the extra water just goes back to the stream that it originally came from, leaving no water wasted. This is a *lo’i kalo irrigation system*, made by the Hawaiians, and this is one of the unique things they did to help the environment. They also did other somewhat unique things to help protect their environment such as create water protection rules, conserve fish, and develop sustainable farming practices.

One of the most unique things about Hawaiian’s sustainability was their water conservation and water protection rules. First of all, Hawaiians tried hard to conserve the water they got. One way they did that was making irrigation systems, such as the lo’i kalo irrigation system, as I explained earlier. Also, the Hawaiians took notice of limited water and created strict kapu to make sure nobody got *too* much water, because then it wouldn’t really be conserving. As with all kapu, death could be a consequence. Overall, Hawaiians were very careful of their water usage.

Hawaiians also protected fish a lot, at least enough to never run out of fish to eat. One of the kapu they had, and still have today, was that some types of fish were allowed to be caught at a certain period of six months and the other types of fish in the other period of six months. They had this because they needed enough time to catch fish, but also enough time for the fish to reproduce. Also, fish of a certain size couldn’t be caught because it will probably be a baby and would be better to use later. Also, to aid in catching fish, they built fishponds. With the fishponds, they could keep fish trapped so they could be caught any time the Hawaiians needed some extra fish. It was essentially a refrigerator holding live fish. In conclusion, the Hawaiians conserved enough fish to have a steady source of protein without overfishing.

Another practice of sustainability that the Hawaiians did was that they farmed a lot. Most of these crops that came from farming were mostly taro, and also some sweet potatoes. ¾ of the Hawaiians’ diet was plants, so that helps keep the population of animals good! (Not that there was many animals besides fish to eat though.) Their way of farming taro is by using the lo’i irrigation system, which hydrated the lo’i without wasting water. Hawaiian farming cultivated healthy crops, while not wasting natural resources.

Once again, Hawaiians tried very hard to keep Hawaii in a sustainable environment. They achieved this by doing several sustainable practices. With fish, they kept enough to have them reproduce, so they could have a steady source of fish to eat. With farming and water, they made and used the *lo’i kalo irrigation system* to efficiently hydrate the taro farms, leaving no water wasted. In the end, however, the influx of Westerners and their belief systems stopped the sustainable practices of the Hawaiians. Westerners planted sugar and did

not conserve water or the land. Now we have to import most of the food we eat from the U.S. mainland, which creates pollution. To sum it up, the Hawaiians established many kapu (rules) and built natural systems to help them, while keeping the environment in good condition.

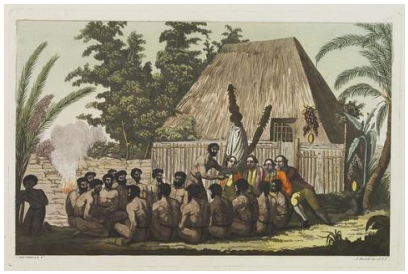
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