

## **Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage at Kalaupapa National Historical Park: A Manager's Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

*Kalaupapa, an isolated peninsula with no road access, is situated on the north shore of the island of Molokai, Hawai'i. Though it has a long history of Native Hawaiian occupation, it is most well-known for its history as a Hansen's disease (leprosy) settlement. Through the former patient's advocacy efforts and concerns for their home and sacred place, the peninsula eventually became a National Historical Park in 1980. The Hawai'i state Department of Health (DOH), who co-manages the peninsula with the National Park Service (NPS), has rules that have essentially created an informal marine protected area containing resources with important indigenous cultural values. Due in part to its history, topography, and geography, Kalaupapa has been saved of wide-scale development providing us with outstanding preservation of maritime historic properties. Expanding maritime resources to include maritime and underwater cultural heritage values and biocultural heritage resources allows the NPS to more inclusively manage the site and provide stewardship opportunities, in light of inevitable change in the future.*

**Keywords:** Kalaupapa, Maritime, Underwater, Cultural Heritage, National Park, Management

### **Introduction**

Nestled between Maui, Lana'i, and O'ahu, in the Hawaiian Island chain is the island of Molokai. On its north shore lays the Kalaupapa peninsula. Isolated and remote, its geologic, geographic and human histories have shaped the land and its adjoining valleys into a National Historic Landmark, National Natural Landmark, and an internationally sacred site. Its layered histories and abundant resources are permeated with significant heritage. With inevitable change approaching, Kalaupapa faces unique challenges in the years to come. At the forefront is ensuring that Kalaupapa retains its essence for future generations.

The island of Molokai was first formed by the eruption of two shield volcanoes. It then endured a cataclysmic landslide, around 1,400,000 years ago, that dropped the northern third of Molokai into the sea, generating a 2,000 ft. high tsunami (Satake et al. 2002). A subsequent eruption of a small shield volcano, about 230,000 years ago (Stearns and Macdonald 1947), rose from the sea floor and abutted the rest of the land resulting in the island we see today and the north shore peninsula known by most as Kalaupapa, though also referred to as Makanalua and Kalawao peninsula at various times throughout history.



*Fig. 1: The island of Molokai showing the peninsula of Kalaupapa and the NPS boundary in yellow. Author: NPS image*

Kalaupapa has a long history of Native Hawaiian occupation (see McCoy 2007), but it is most well-known for its history as a Hansen's disease (leprosy) settlement. Bounded by deep water on its three sides and 3,000 ft. cliff (*pali*) to the south, the peninsula is in effect, a 'natural prison'. This combined with its perceived abundant agriculture, made Kalaupapa the ideal place to relocate those with the feared disease. The period of forced isolation stretched the years of 1866 through 1969, also resulting in the native people of the peninsula, the *kāma`āina*, to be dislocated from the land (Greene 1985). The renowned work of Father Damien and Mother Marianne were also completed within the era of forced isolation. Both individuals have since been canonized into sainthood, Saint Damien in 2009 and Saint Marianne in 2012.

Kalaupapa remains the home to a declining population of people who were once afflicted with Hansen's disease and banished to the location. Through the former patient's advocacy efforts, the peninsula eventually became a National Historical Park in 1980. Presently, the peninsula is co-managed between the National Park Service (NPS) and the Hawai'i state Department of Health (DOH). Management responsibilities are divided with the NPS handling the utilities, grounds, historic preservation and natural resource conservation, and the DOH primarily providing care to the remaining former patients. Inevitably, the former patients will one day reach the end of their era, and when they do, the DOH will no longer have a reason to remain in Kalaupapa. The NPS is in the midst of drafting a general management plan (GMP), which

provides guidance for park operations for the next 15-20 years and at the point of DOH's eventual departure (see [www.nps.gov/kala](http://www.nps.gov/kala)).

For the protection and privacy of the remaining former patients, Kalaupapa Settlement Rules have been established and created in concert with the Patients Advisory Council. The rules are governed by the DOH as per Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), Chapter 326. The DOH's rules for Kalaupapa Settlement are highly adhered to and greatly restrict access; enforce a limited resident population; and unless one is a former patient or employed at Kalaupapa, it also limits fishing and prohibits hunting and shellfish extraction, among other things. Furthermore, commercial activities within the park boundary must adhere to the NPS's enabling legislation at Kalaupapa, which states that former patients have "first right of refusal to provide revenue-producing visitor services" (Public Law 96-565, Section 107). Today, only two patient businesses exist, one that provides a guided day tour of the site and a second that provides janitorial services contracted by the NPS. Commercial dive boats and fishing vessels are not present in Kalaupapa's waters.

Kalaupapa's history is also free from large industry endeavors like cattle ranches; pineapple plantations; sugar plantations and wide-scale tourism. Combined with the history and its remoteness, this has left the peninsula with excellent examples of archaeological landscapes, historic architecture, and healthy natural and native ecosystems. In fact, it could be said that the combination of its remote location, history as a leprosarium, lack of extensive development, and restrictive rules have left Kalaupapa's waters to have haphazardly created a marine protected area.

This paper will look at a variety of maritime and underwater cultural heritage (MUCH). It will consider three categories of MUCH at Kalaupapa: 1) maritime and underwater historic properties, 2) biocultural resources and 3) maritime and underwater cultural heritage values. The paper will briefly identify how they are currently being managed and provide some discussion on why broadening one's understanding of maritime and underwater cultural heritage is beneficial to park managers, stakeholders and the general public.

## Maritime and Underwater Historic Properties at Kalaupapa

Poking above the waterline, even at high tide, are the remnants of the ship Ka`ala. Ka`ala was enroute to O`ahu from Maui with a cargo of lumber when poor weather hit and she put in at Kalaupapa for safe haven in 1932. The weather was too rough that day and Ka`ala ran aground. (Greene 1985). Among town, it is said that the patients salvaged the lumber cargo in the dark and quiet of the night. Due to heavy weather on this side of the island (including the tsunami of 1946), wreckage is broadly scattered. The core area of the wreck, however, is in good shape. Mapping of the site has begun as well as its initial condition assessment. An inspection schedule and further management recommendations will be forthcoming.



*Fig. 2: Crew of Ka`ala. Author: Kalaupapa Historical Society Photo Collection*

Canoe landings, ko`a (fishing shrines) and a possible navigation heiau (temple) are some of the maritime historic properties that also dot the landscape at Kalaupapa. Interestingly, one ko`a is considered to be a maritime historic property but found in the mountains (Summers 1971). These maritime historic properties have been inventoried and are on an inspection schedule to monitor their condition, possible threats, and any disturbances. They have been or will be mapped and photo documented as part of typical resource management practice.

## Kalaupapa's Biocultural Resources

Part of understanding biocultural resources is understanding the human environment. Through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a federal agency needs to consider, among other things, the human environment; that is, the cultural uses of the built and natural environments. Hawaiians are a sea-faring and maritime culture. There are *mo`olelo* (stories), *aumakuas* (family gods) and rituals that relate to the sea. For the purposes of this paper, biocultural resources are being defined as natural resources that are managed as part of a marine ecology resource management program and are also imbued with cultural value.

Subsistence practices such as fishing, salt, and *limu* (seaweed) gathering have important indigenous cultural value. A proposal has been put forward to create a community-based

subsistence fishing area on the northwest coast of Molokai, which would include Kalaupapa (Hui Mālama O Mo'omomi n.d.). To gain a sense of the importance of marine subsistence practices in Hawaiian culture, and especially the north shore of Molokai, the proposal points out that the local community are still defined by traditional Hawaiian values; that fishing is interwoven with all aspects of community life and



*Fig. 3: Boat Day, now known as Barge Day. Author: Kalaupapa Historical Society Photo Collection*

cultural identify; that household seafood consumption in this area is estimated to be about 10 times higher

than the island of O`ahu and that subsistence fishing comprises about 38% of the food consumed by residents of Hawaiian ancestry in this area. The proposal is in its early stages but community-based management persists to the extent possible in these north shore communities.

Kalaupapa is no stranger to the cultural importance of marine subsistence activities and the above cultural significance can be echoed here. Because of Kalaupapa's DOH rules, and the haphazard marine protected area it has created, Kalaupapa has one of the healthiest fish populations in the eight main Hawaiian Islands. The fish populations are similar to some of the fish communities in the remote and human uninhabited Northwestern Hawaiian Islands in terms of their numbers and size (Friedlander et al. 2008). Regular water quality monitoring, herbivory studies and all sorts of marine ecology inventories are undertaken as part of the NPS's marine ecology resource management program.

There are many other biocultural resources at Kalaupapa, too many to name in any detail here. Recall that Hawaiians are a maritime culture and so many aspects of daily life relate to the sea. While standard natural resource management methods are useful in tracking the health and stressors of these resources, the NPS has broadened its standard management practice to be more reticent of community concerns and cultural values. Some examples include scoping with the community before project implementation; sharing regular project updates at monthly community meetings; incorporating Hawaiian cultural protocol at the start of projects and at

other given times; and becoming adaptive and flexible to modifying projects in light of new information or community concern.

### **Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage Values**

Maritime and underwater cultural heritage (MUCH) is certainly not a new concept in the discipline. At Kalaupapa, MUCH values have been interpreted to be various beliefs, rituals, oral traditions and significant events. This interpretation also includes a timescape concept. More than a timeline, these are events that, over time, cumulatively provide a sense of place, location, feeling, or setting. The heritage values to follow are not tangible but are still important facets of Kalaupapa's history- and need to be managed into the future. The NPS must still make the attempt to determine if its undertakings may cause impacts to these MUCH values.

### **Surfing at Kalaupapa**

Kalaupapa has beautiful waves prime for surfing, called Pua`ō "onslaught of dashing waves", and was liked the best by the Molokai chiefs (Finney 1959: 347). It was said that "The waves are fearful but the boys of Kalaupapa that were skilled surf riders enjoyed riding on them. They are not mere things to be trifled with either." (Summers 1971: 194). Many would say that these waves, and surfing in particular, are culturally valuable.

At some point during the forced isolation era in Kalaupapa's past, surfing became prohibited. Typically such rules were created in order to protect the patient's health. Yet, the 'no surfing' rule persists today. Many of the same rules that were imposed on the former patients have in turn been imposed on the non-patient residents at Kalaupapa. Some former patients, and even some of the public, believe that surfing is a recreational activity and one not compatible with the sacredness of the peninsula. While a former patient community is still present, it will be up to them to decide whether or not they would like to change this rule. Once there is no longer a patient population, and the DOH leaves, the NPS will need to determine how best to manage surfing in the future. Fortunately, the NPS has identified the cultural (and conflicting) cultural values of surfing and will continue to gather information from the former patients and the public in order to inform this decision in the future.

### **Port of Entry, Port to Exile**

Many of us wonder, what it was like to be exiled from family and friends and forced to live in an isolated place knowing that you would never be allowed to leave. For many patients, the Kalaupapa Landing was their port of entry to a life of exile. The landing was a liminal zone, a place where one transitions from being on the 'outside' to being a resident patient. An invaluable

account, handwritten by Ambrose Hutchison, who was a patient at Kalaupapa from 1879, describes his experience of entering Kalaupapa from the landing:

...cast into jail like a felon and sent to Honolulu in a sailing vessel and taken to the leper detention station....and put aboard a steamer named Mokolii... which put to sea, and the following morning came to anchor in the roadstead and put into a boat as human cargo and rowed ashore, and finally dumped at the landing place, a crevice in the rock-flat and left to the tender mercy of the officials in charge of the leper settlement...such is the fate men, women and children over whom the pronouncement of a Government physician the magic word leper, sealed their doomed, these afflicted and adjudged exiled for life from home and all they hold dear, to enter into a Penal Institution over its portal is inscribed the words: 'He or she who enters here leave hope behind' with all ambition and hope banished. Yes, to the wicked and sinners all too true, but not to penitents, hope lingers in their bosom. The sight that meet the eyes of a new exiled, comer, the disfigured ulcerated faces deformed, maimed, ulcerated hands and feet of the sufferers you meet. Your future associates make the heart sink and sick at the sight of suffering humanity. Contrast differently from that of the landscape panoramic view of promontory publicly known as Kalaupapa, rocky and treeless tract of land, but nevertheless clothed in the beauty of its surroundings, nature's handiwork, make a lasting impression on the mind of an exiled stranger that after all it was not a bad place to live in. [Hutchison 1931: 64-65]

Retaining the sense of isolation, setting, feeling and place will be imperative in honoring the story. Although not many people arrive to Kalaupapa by boat anymore, the peninsula still has no road access so anyone who has come to Kalaupapa has likely realized its peculiar logistical requirements. One's choices are to come in on a steep trail via mule or their own two legs, or to be flown in on a small plane. The sense of isolation and remoteness are still there. Other aspects of managing the isolated setting and feeling of the place may be inspired by the panoramic view that Hutchison describes. Park management should be thoughtful that this view does not become obstructed.

### **Regatta Day**

A 1948 publication gives a wonderful account of Regatta / Labor Day at Kalaupapa Settlement:

If one happens to be at the Settlement on Regatta Day in September, one may shout with the rest over the events of numerous spirited swimming races at the

wharf, with prizes of fresh cakes made by the girl patients themselves. All the contestants are young patients. The special event is the duck race in which ten or twelve white Pekin ducks are taken out in a boat and let out of their crate some thirty yards from shore. Without hesitation they turn and swim quietly for home until a dozen boys leap after them from the end of the concrete pier. Great is the shouting from spectators and splashing from both types of swimmers, the ducks often escaping by submerging like the good divers they are, and most of them managing to reach the rocky shore before being snatched up by neck and proudly exhibited by their captors. [Damon 1948: 43]

Regatta and Labor Day events are no longer present at Kalaupapa. These were very physical activities and the present former patient community is elderly. Regardless, the non-patient community in Kalaupapa has occasionally brought back historic events that went stagnant for decades. Knowing that such activities existed in the past is telling of the lively community at Kalaupapa, even in the years of forced isolation. The whole story is not just one of isolation and exile, but it is also a story of community, hope and solace. While many former patients strongly care about educating the public on the hardships that they faced, many patients also want to be remembered not for what they suffered through but how they lived. It is important that the stewards of the site retain balance when interpreting and educating on this era of history and that these community and energetic events of their history are not forgotten.

## Discussion

From a management perspective, widening our understanding of maritime and underwater cultural heritage to include, not only historic properties, but also biocultural resources, and other heritage values has helped us to learn more about the place we are protecting. The NPS is in the “forever” business; that is, protecting resources and their values, unimpaired, for the benefit of future generations. With Kalaupapa’s inevitable changes, (the final decline of the former patient population and the DOH’s departure) certain things will not be exactly the same as they were. It is necessary then, to understand Kalaupapa’s MUCH character and how best to retain it.



*Fig. 4: Opening of Regatta / Labor Day sports activities at Kalaupapa Pier, 1953. Author: Kalaupapa Historical Society Photo Collection*



Some of the abovementioned heritage values speak about Kalaupapa's character; the isolation and sense of community, for example. Management could also look at certain events, and the patient's interaction with them, to see if they may be indicative of character. We wouldn't want to recreate incidents such as the wrecking of Ka'ala for example, but through the patients salvaging the lumber, we see that the event is telling of resourcefulness and adaptation. Resourcefulness is character-defining value in Kalaupapa. We've seen it other places on the peninsula; through the reuse of bottle glass into blades; adapting everyday implements to create better tools for impaired bodies; and the reuse of fishing net into fencing.

### **Identifying MUCH Properties, Resources and Values**

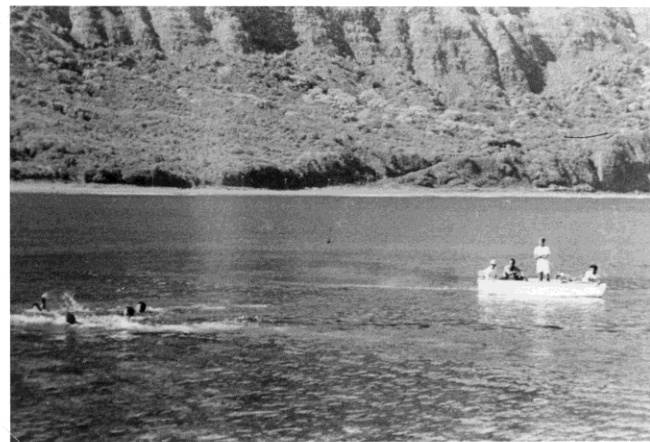
Obviously, the first step in understanding how to manage a site containing MUCH values is to identify what MUCH values exist. Expanding MUCH generally, has led to integrated resource management; acceptance that there is cultural value in many natural resources; and respect to stakeholders in how they interact with the natural environment.

Applying the human environment concept is helpful. Take salt gathering places for example. It's not just the locales that are significant, but also the roads and pathways to them. At Kalaupapa, where the primary stakeholder is an aging population, it's essential that those roads to salt gathering locations are accessible, especially since now, they are driven to by car.

It's also advantageous to be open to feedback and to realize when a mistake was made. Take the salt gathering locations again. Several jeep trails were created over time and a roadblock

was erected to allow the grass to grow back. Even though the proposal was brought to a community meeting, one key stakeholder was not in attendance. The roadblock obstructed the easiest road access to a salt gathering location. This was an easy-fix case, luckily, and the road block was removed.

Certainly, not all undertakings may have such an easy fix and it's essential that a manager be cautious and cognizant of potential cumulative impacts and even the cumulative effects of making mistakes. It



*Fig. 5: Regatta Day at Kalaupapa Pier, 1953. Author: Kalaupapa Historical Society Photo Collection*

would seem that the key is constant communication and being open to comment. Again, for

Kalaupapa resource managers, this is especially important now while the former patients are around so we can better understand how they interacted with the resources to inform our management into the future.

### ***Imua, Moving Forward***

Making the attempt to incorporate indigenous and former patient perspective into everyday management is important. Having these folks as a part of the NPS team is one approach in achieving this. Kalaupapa National Historical Park's enabling legislation actually states that native Hawaiians and former patients should receive training opportunities to enhance their chances of becoming managers and stewards of Kalaupapa. The enabling legislation also states the hiring preference for native Hawaiians. About half the NPS staff at Kalaupapa are native Hawaiians and they range through the various work departments and management levels.

Another method of incorporating indigenous and former patient perspective is through regular scoping, consultation and community meetings. We've also invited former patients to be a part of our planning teams. Many did join the team for the long-term general management plan. Others are commissioners on the NPS's advisory committee.

Further, more and more local and Hawaiian students are showing interest in resource management. The resource management departments at Kalaupapa have made a particular effort to engage with students from the rest of Molokai and Hawai'i universities. The NPS has regular interaction with University of Hawai'i students and every summer, Kalaupapa radiates a younger energy when they join the team and further their education in terrestrial and marine ecology; museum studies; and archaeology while providing the NPS with workforce.

There is certainly still room to grow. It can be echoed here that the acceptance of non-perfection; being open to feedback and being adaptive allows a manager to more effectively incorporate cultural values into management practices. Through the expanding MUCH at Kalaupapa, heritage values can more aptly be managed into the future ensuring that the landscape and character of Kalaupapa will be available to future generations.

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### **Biography:**

**Erika Stein Espaniola** earned her Masters of Maritime Archaeology from James Cook University in Queensland, Australia. She concentrated her thesis research on indigenous perspectives of WWII material in the Solomon Islands. Erika then worked as a contract archaeologist throughout the Hawaiian Islands before she joined the US National Park Service (NPS) in Kalaupapa. During her NPS tenure, Erika has been an archaeologist, the cultural resource program manager, and is presently the Superintendent at Kalaupapa National Historical Park. She has particular interest in maritime societies, indigenous cultures, and integrated resource management.