

Maunalei Valley Restoration Program to Begin in 2014

More than five generations ago, Maunalei Valley was a bustling agricultural center with an estimated population of 1,000 residents. With the help of many community partners, an initiative called Hui o Maunalei is developing a stewardship program, heritage park and living history program with the goal of once again making the valley accessible to the entire community.

Over the years, sheep and goats stripped vegetation from the Maunalei Valley walls causing diminishing water levels and landslides, which filled the lo'i kalo (taro patches). By 1924, wells and a pump house constructed by Hawaiian Pineapple Company were drawing water from the valley to supply Lāna'i City. Elder Hawaiians recall that 1948 was the last year water, by then just a trickle, flowed in the valley. Getting the water flowing again is one of several outcomes envisioned for Maunalei Valley.

The goal of Hui o Maunalei is the ecological and cultural restoration of Maunalei Valley, using the ahupua'a system of resource management to restore the rich natural resources of the valley and to perpetuate a living history that can be passed on to future generations. Some of the native Hawaiians participating in the program are descendants of those who originally built the lo'i kalo and 'auwai (water channel) of Maunalei, and their presence in Hui o Maunalei bridges a cultural legacy spanning many generations.

The Maunalei pump house and historic garden complex will become a living history center that will serve as a classroom



for sustainability on the 'āina (from mauka to makai) using Hawaiian practices, science and technology.

Programs will bring in experts in anthropology, geology, hydrology, native plant community restoration, erosion control and other sustainability initiatives. Pūlama Lāna'i will also develop a program to control deer and sheep in the area to support the success of natural and cultural resource management programs.

An interpretive/resource manager program will ensure informed and safe visits to Maunalei and stewardship project opportunities.

Planting a variety of crops is also planned for the valley, including kalo (taro), 'uala (sweet potatoes), 'ulu (breadfruit), kō (sugarcane), 'awa (Piper methstycium), māmaki (Pipturus spp.), hō'i'o (Diplazium arnottii), and other native Hawaiian plants to feed our kūpuna and families, and to perpetuate traditional Hawaiian practices.

To learn more about the Hui o Maunalei program and volunteer opportunities, please call Pūlama Lāna'i's Culture & Historic Preservation office at 565-3301.