

## Mokauea Island, Oahu

Located next to the Honolulu International Airport and less than half a mile from downtown Honolulu, this tiny island is home to Oahu's last Hawaiian fishing village. Mokauea is the largest of 5 islands in the group, and is one of the only two traditional fishing villages left in the entire state of Hawaii (the other one is Miloli'i on the Big Island of Hawaii).

The island of Oahu is the most populous in the Hawaiian archipelago and by far the most developed. So it is quite amazing that right on the doorstep of Hawaii's largest metropolis, this tiny fishing village survived and managed to retain old Hawaii. Many Oahu residents have never heard of it.

In ancient Hawaii, fishing villages were wide-spread on all islands. Up until 1975, 14 fishing families lived permanently on Mokauea Island, which had its own aquaculture fishpond and was completely self-sufficient. Historical maps showed that up to 40 fishponds were active in the surrounding area. The families even grew produce such as taro, tomatoes and eggplant on this tiny spit of land, which encompasses a mere 10 acres. Today, only three families remain on the island.

For the island residents, going back and forth from Mokauea to Oahu to get supplies is a daily trip between the past and the present. Mokauea islanders use propane tanks for cooking and have generators for electricity. Running water is a fairly recent addition to the island. Going shopping means hopping on their boats and going over to Oahu. Mokauea has an old fishpond that was a major food source in the past. But it needs massive restoration work before it can be used again. Most people doubt that it can be, given scarce resources.

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the State dredged the area to make a runway for sea planes, cutting through the island of Mokuo'eo, dumping the sand on Maui Ola (thus the current name, "Sand Island"), and virtually cutting off the island from each other and from O'ahu. In the 1970s, this ancient fishing village was almost destroyed when the State wanted to make room to expand the airport. The government evicted the families on Mokauea, calling them "squatters", arrested some of them for "trespassing" and burned down five homes. This action, which made the local news, outraged many in the community. The fishermen, with the help of the non-profit organization Save our Surf, organized the Mokauea Fishermen's Association. Subsequently, the state conducted a study and later agreed to lease the land to the families and let them live there after it was determined that Mokauea was an important historical site and the families who lived there could trace their genealogical roots to the land in historical documents. Today, the mission of the Mokauea islanders is to revive their little fishing

village and continue to preserve it.

Ho'ola Mokauea, a local non-profit organization, is giving them a helping hand. The organization's mission is to preserve this historic fishing village and to protect the island, mainly from marine debris and invasive species. Their goal is to recreate a living example of a Hawaiian subsistence fishing village.

Ho'ola Mokauea is entirely run by volunteers. Many local high school students and others volunteers regularly visit Mokauea to help with the restoration efforts, which include fishpond repair, removal of marine debris and invasive species, and reintroduction of fish and native limu (seaweed). The island is visible from Oahu's shoreline (from Sand Island, which is accessible via Sand Island Access Road).

To become a volunteer and help with the restoration efforts, contact Ho'ola Mokauea at [Mokauea@gmail.com](mailto:Mokauea@gmail.com).

### **Directions to Mokauea**

From Nimitz Highway, take Sand Island Access Road until you pass some large storage tanks (on your right side). Go over the bridge and make your first RIGHT onto a small paved road. Follow the road as it makes a sharp right and go all the way down until you see a parking lot. There will probably be cars parked alongside the road. Look for a single vehicle parking spaces - you cannot park in the long spaces that are reserved for vehicles with boat trailers. If there are no single spaces available, you must parallel park alongside the entrance road. There is a restroom building on one side of the parking lot.

### **Bring:**

Sun protection

hats or visors

crocs or old tennis shoes

tabis for working in the fishpond

wear clothes that you don't mind getting wet and dirty

a bottle of water (we have jugs to refill)

the signed waiver

(This document was developed for a huaka'i by Halau Hula Kamamolikolehua in June 2015.)