

# Ancient Hawaiian aquaculture

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The Hawaiian people practiced aquaculture through development of fish ponds (Hawaiian: *loko i'a*), the most advanced fish husbandry among the original peoples of the Pacific. These fishponds were typically shallow areas of a reef flat surrounded by a low lava rock wall (*loko kuapa*) built out from the shore. Several species of edible fish (such as mullet) thrive in such ponds, and Hawaiians developed methods to make them easy to catch.

The Hawaiian fishpond was primarily a grazing area in which the fishpond keeper cultivated algae; much in the way a cattle rancher cultivates grass for his cattle.<sup>[1]</sup> The porous lava walls let in seawater (or sometimes fresh or brackish water, as in the case of the "Menehune" fishpond near Līhu'e, Kaua'i), but prevent the fish from escaping. Fishponds were located next to the mouth of a stream, so by opening a sluice gate the pondkeeper provided the fish with water rich in nutrients that had passed through inland, terraced pondfields and returned to the stream.<sup>[1]</sup>



Alekoko "Menehune" fishpond

Several fishponds have been restored in recent years. Although fishponds were developed on most islands, the largest number were found in Ke'ehi Lagoon, Pearl Harbor, and Kāne'ōhe Bay on O'ahu, and along nearly the entire south shore of Moloka'i. Few remain today, although Moloka'i offers the best opportunities to view a Hawaiian *loko*.

Three different styles of fish ponds are being reconstructed at the Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park on the Big Island of Hawai'i. The non-profit 'Ao'ao O Na Loko I'a O Maui is restoring Kalepolepo Fishpond also known as Ko'ie'i.e. in Kīhei using a mixture of volunteers and skilled stonemasons.

## See also

- Fish farming
- He'eia, Hawaii
- Stew pond

## Notes

- Tracie Ku'uipo Losch, Momi Kamahale, *Hawai'i: Center of the Pacific*.

## References

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