Human Impact on Maui’s Forest
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GIS 180 - Ecosystem Management

*Introduction*
Maui is a dynamic island rich in its beauty and diversity in the culture and the environment. With 10 out of 13 ecosystems on one island, Maui is home to around 144,500 residents with over 2.2 million visitors annually. With such high volume of visitors annually what impact has the environment gone through?

*Methodology*
The arrival of Captain Jean Francois De La Perouse (first to set foot on island) and Captain Cook in 1786, this was the first introduction to the western world. In 1848, the great Mahele. The introduction of money and private land ownership had changed the life style of the Hawaiians. This had a great impact on the natural environment.

In the following years of 1800 to present, Maui Land went through drastic changes due to the Sandalwood trade, sugar plantations, Pineapple plantation, Cattle ranching and World War 2, which contributed to the rapid growth in population and infrastructure.

After World War 2, Maui economy shifted from sugar and pineapple to visitors. This had a high demand for more infrastructure and natural resources. The population growth shows the impact on the surrounding environment. Most of the growth in population won’t decrease but the impact we have on the environment can.

There are countless organizations on the island that are working hard to reforest the regions that have been heavily impacted by rapid growth. Although the comparison to deforestation is greater than the reforestation. Hope is not lost, since 1995 there has been a big movement around the world for reforestation projects.

*Problem Statement*
Since the first documentation of Maui’s wild land we can see there has been a drastic impact from human activity from 1700-2010. With many factors contributions to deforestation over the years let’s take a look at the four key contributions.

The environment to pre-contact of the western world was a flourishing environment. The Hawaiians lived a sustainable life style based around the ahupua’a system. This was a resource management system from mountain to sea. With the understanding of their impact on the environment they sub divided the lands into 3 different sections. The uplands for the forest, midlands for farming and the lowlands were where the majority of the people lived. This helped preserved the forest because people believed that the spirits dwelled there.

*References*
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii
- Hawaiian Natural Heritage Program

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