

State of
Hawai'i
Department
of Land
and Natural
Resources

HILO

Historic Trails of Hawai'i 1992



Ancient Coastal Alaloa, North Kona, Hawai'i Island

The *Ala Kahakai* ("Trail by the Sea") ultimately would extend from Kawaihae to Kailua-Kona in West Hawai'i. It is a "demonstration trail" of the Nā Ala Hele Program. Still being developed, it utilizes, as much as possible, remnants of the ancient and historic coastal *alaloa*.

For more information on Hawai'i's ancient and historic trails, see:

Apple, Russell A., *TRAILS: From Steppingstones to Kerbstones*, Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1973.

Kamakau, Samuel Manaiakalani, *The Works of the People of Old*, Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1976.

Kirch, Patrick Vinton, *Feathered Gods and Fishhooks*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985.

Malo, David, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1976.

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The Nā Ala Hele Program

Nā Ala Hele (lit. "trails to go on") is the name given to Hawai'i's Statewide Trail and Access System which was established in 1988. **Nā Ala Hele** develops and improves mountain and shoreline trails and accesses, both historic and modern, throughout the State, while conserving Hawai'i's unique environment and cultural heritage. A most important challenge is to prevent damage to the resources we seek to enjoy as areas are made accessible to the public. Another is to minimize the liability risks to public and private landowners so that they will be encouraged to open their lands for public use.

Recent national studies show that America's fastest growing outdoor recreational activities are linear in nature and appeal to all age groups, such as walking, bicycling, jogging, hiking, and horseback riding. As such, providing trails and access for public enjoyment is a wise investment. More than just narrow strips of land, well-integrated and -managed trail systems help make our cities and towns more liveable by preserving open spaces and scenic resources so important to community identity and quality of life. Through trails people can become more physically fit, experience the natural world alone or in the company of family and friends, and relieve stress by getting a break from daily routines.

Nā Ala Hele works in partnership with public agencies, and private individuals and groups to realize its goals. All members of the public share the responsibility of caring for our public lands and facilities. The State's Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Forestry and Wildlife administers **Nā Ala Hele**. To learn more about **Nā Ala Hele** in general and to obtain addresses of each Island's office, contact the Central Office:

Department of Land and Natural Resources
Division of Forestry and Wildlife
Kawaiahao Plaza, Room 132

567 South King Street • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Phone: (808) 587-0058

(Neighbor Islanders can call toll free: 1-800-468-4644)



The Honorable John Waihe'e
Governor of Hawai'i

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Historic Trails of Hawai'i



Kohala Ditch Trail, North Kohala, Hawai'i Island

Men with mules have been using the Kohala Ditch Trail since the ditch's opening in 1906. The trail enables maintenance of 22.5 miles of open ditch, flumes, and tunnels capable of carrying 45 million gallons of water daily from Honokāne Nui Stream and its tributaries to other regions in Kohala.



While our modern orientation to trails is largely recreational, we should realize that when these historic trails were created, they were the only means of overland transportation. Although the canoe was a principle method of travel in ancient Hawai'i, human survival depended on extensive cross-country networks that enabled gathering of food and water, and harvesting of materials needed for shelter, clothing, medical care, tools, canoe building, religious observances, and much more.

Trails and their surrounding historic sites provide clues to how communities were linked socially, economically, and politically; which areas were important in early settlement, commerce, and religion; where particularly powerful chiefs resided; and where valuable forest or sea resources were once located.

Ancient and historic trails have best survived in remote and rugged surroundings and provide mute testimony to the labors of past trail builders. Respect of their achievements is coupled with awe when one appreciates the tenacity and ingenuity that was required in the absence of modern tools and equipment.

Ancient Trails

Ancient trails are those developed prior to Western contact. They facilitated trading between upland and coastal villagers, and communications between districts, *ahupua'a* (ancient land divisions), and extended families. Ancient trails were usually narrow, following the natural topography of the land, and sometimes paved with smooth, waterworn stepping stones (*'alā* or *pa'alā*). There were strict rules, punishable by death, governing access to the precious resources of the mountains and ocean. Trail use restrictions were according to the laws of the chief ruling over the particular land division(s) in which the trail was located. However, the *alaloa* (long trails), circumscribing the island, were open to all in times of peace.

Hawaiian historian, Samuel Kamakau, lists a number of Hawaiian words relating to trails. *Alanui* refers to trails in general. There were many types of *alanui*. The *ala'au* is a path going through a stream. The *alanui kaka'i pali* extends along the crest of a cliff, while the *ala pili pali* goes along the side of a steep slope. An *ala 'oki* is a shortcut, and the *ka'ele wa'a* is a short path in a gully. An *alanui aupuni* is a government road or trail.



Kohala Ditch Trail, North Kohala, Hawai'i Island

Trail surfaces are as diverse as the landscapes over which they pass. Shaded and embraced by Christmas Berry trees, and large enough for mule and horseback riders, the trail combines beauty and function.



Kalaupapa Trail, Kalawao, Moloka'i Island

It began as a precipitous and narrow ancient foot trail but has been repeatedly repaired and widened to meet the needs of the residents of Kalaupapa peninsula. In the early 1900s, cattle were driven down the steep trail to supply beef to the Hansen's Disease settlement. Today, this trail is the main route out of the peninsula when ocean conditions are too rough for boats, and planes are unable to land.

Historic Trails

Historic trails are those developed after Western contact. Overland travel was predominantly by foot throughout the 1830s. Only the chiefly class and missionaries are described as having traveled by horseback at that time. Sereno Bishop observed in 1830 at Kailua-Kona, *"None of the natives in those days had horses except the princely class of chiefs, and they were generally carried on litters by scores of human bearers."*

During this period, Western travelers were amazed by Hawaiians' use of trails which were located in extremely hazardous terrain. One such account by Gorham Gilman of a canoe voyage in 1845 along the sheer cliffs of Kaua'i's Nāpali Coast describes Hawaiians deftly ascending the face of a cliff using a roughly hewn, narrow path and a ladder made of coconut trees and rope.

"There I was, my chief support a little projecting stone, not sufficient to afford a hold for my whole foot, and my hands clinging with a death grasp to the rock, and in this situation overhanging a gulf, that was foaming and boiling, as the surf broke over the rocks some sixty or seventy feet below me, and which would have proved my death place, if I had made the least mistake or slip. I had strong curiosity to go forward, but discretion prevailed, and I returned. I was then told that few white men had gone as far as I had, and that none had ever passed up the ladder."

With the expanding use of horses and mules from the 1840s onward, many ancient foot trails were modified by removing the smooth stepping stones which caused the animals to slip. Trail and road-building in the kingdom was done by "forced labor," prisoners, and as a form of tax payment. Sometimes trail builders were paid laborers. New, wider trails had to be constructed to accommodate two horses passing each other and eventually horsedrawn carts. Unlike the ancient foot trails, these trails could not simply conform to the natural, sometimes steep slopes. Dips in the terrain needed to be leveled, and sections of trail built-up and raised. Western surveying techniques led to straight and direct routes. These more modern trails were often bordered with kerbstones to help confine the animals to the trail. This was especially helpful when trails were used to drive cattle several miles to the nearest shipping point or to greener pastures.

What Remains Today

The effects of changing modes of transportation — from foot travel, to horse and mules, to carts, and finally to horseless carriages — can be observed today in ancient foot trails meandering across those built later for saddle-pack animals. Four-wheel drive roads can be seen that roughly parallel ancient foot trails, obliterating or incorporating them in places. Some of our modern highways follow earlier historic routes.

Hawai'i's ancient and historic trails and the events associated with them are a special heritage worthy of protection and further study. The trails link us to our distant and not-so-distant past. If you know of an ancient or historic trail in need of repair, don't attempt to fix it as these trails are archaeological sites. Instead, notify the nearest Nā Ala Hele office (see back cover) of the problem. The State's Nā Ala Hele Program and the Historic Preservation Division are working together to give Hawai'i's trails the attention they deserve.

ABOVE PHOTO

Ancient Foot Trail in Kapu'a, South Kona, Hawai'i Island

Expert placement of stones forms a level, fitted surface which is aesthetically pleasing. Early trail builders were less concerned with the trail's appearance than with its sturdiness and utility.

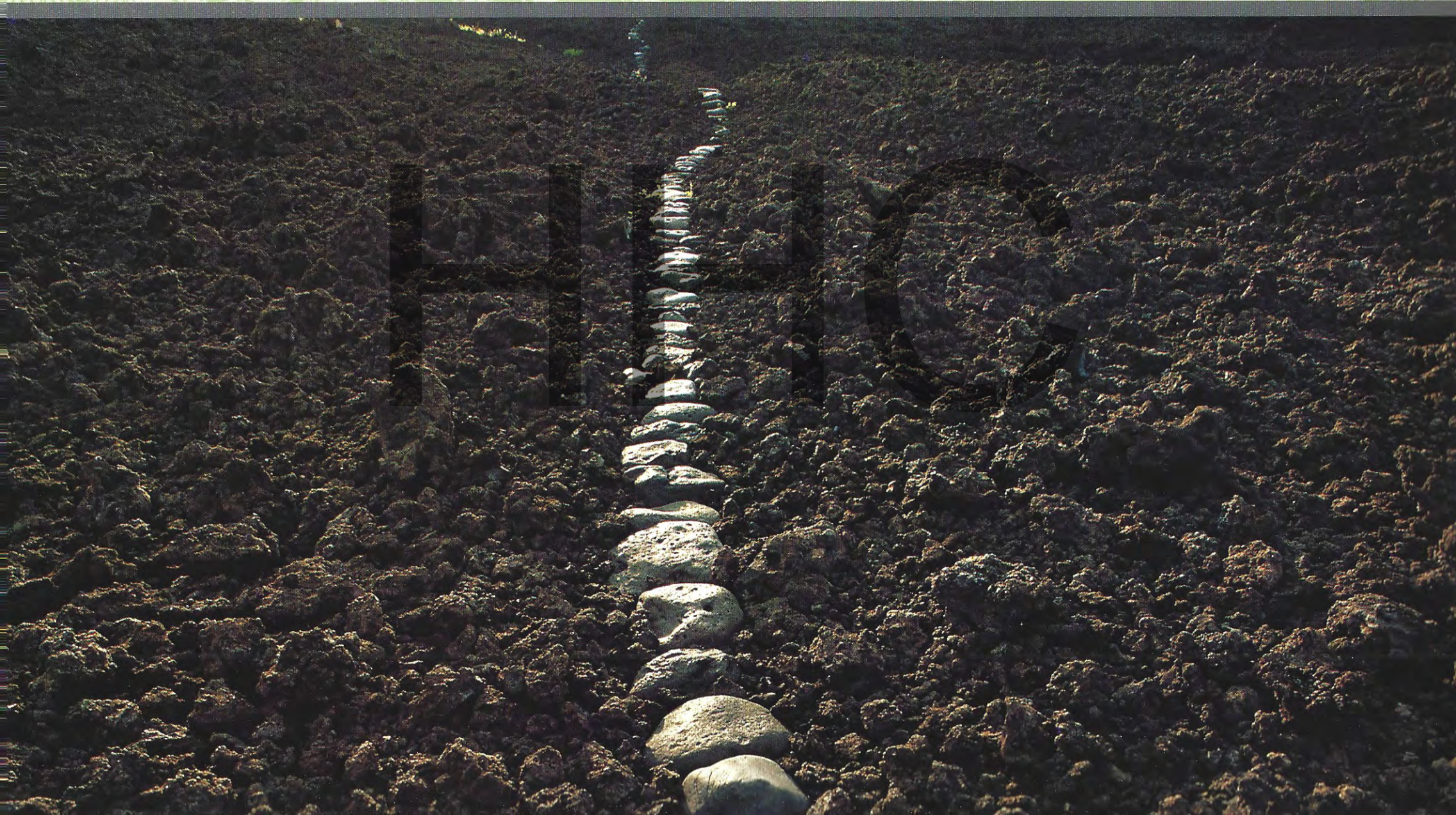
FRONT COVER

Kohala Ditch Trail in Pololū Valley, North Kohala, Hawai'i Island

The Kohala Ditch Trail runs behind the 800-foot-high Kapoloa Falls at approximately its midpoint. The trail fell into disrepair following the close of sugar cultivation in Kohala. Its present owners are restoring the waterway and trail system, but have not yet determined how and when to open the trail to recreational use.

January

1



February

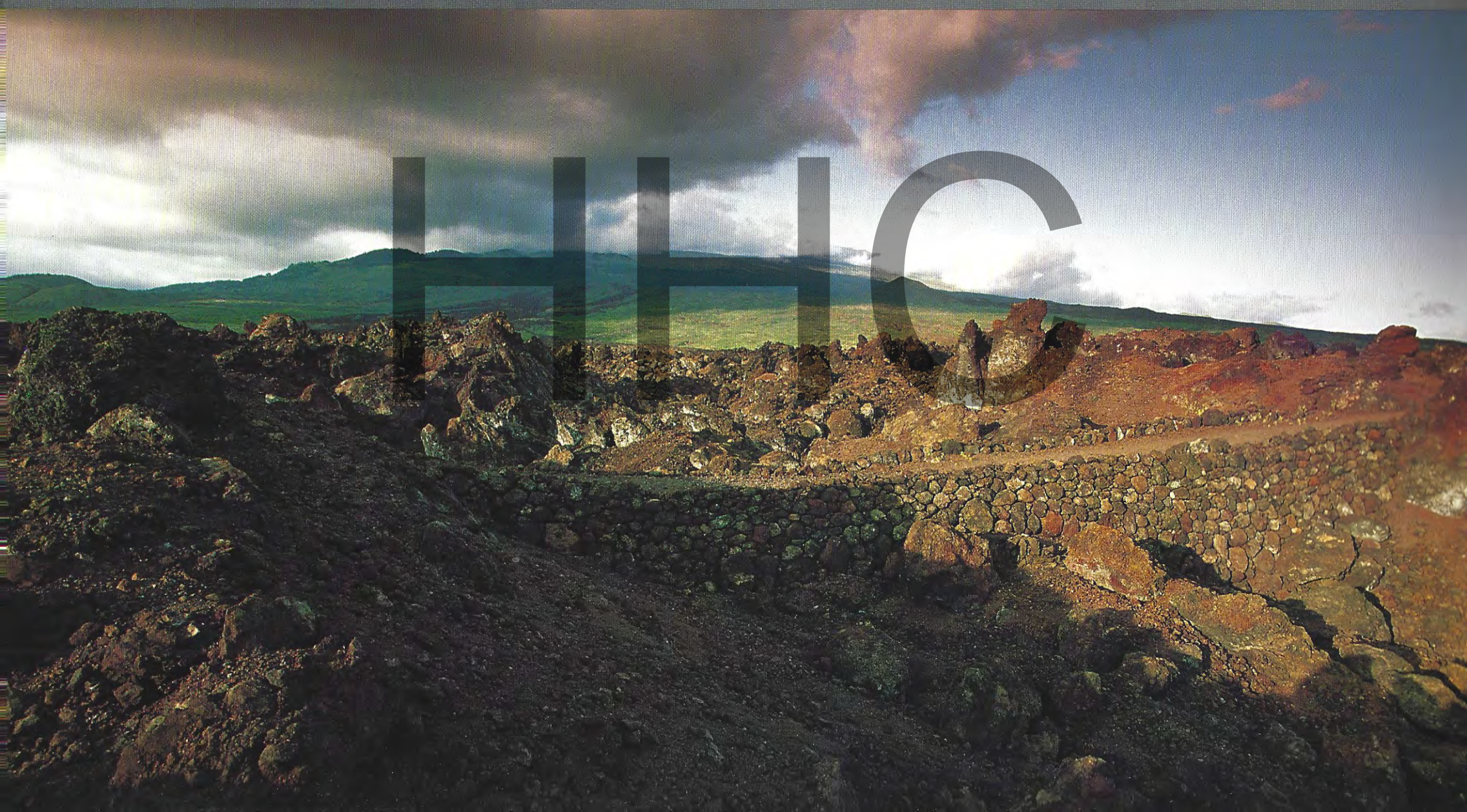
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March

3

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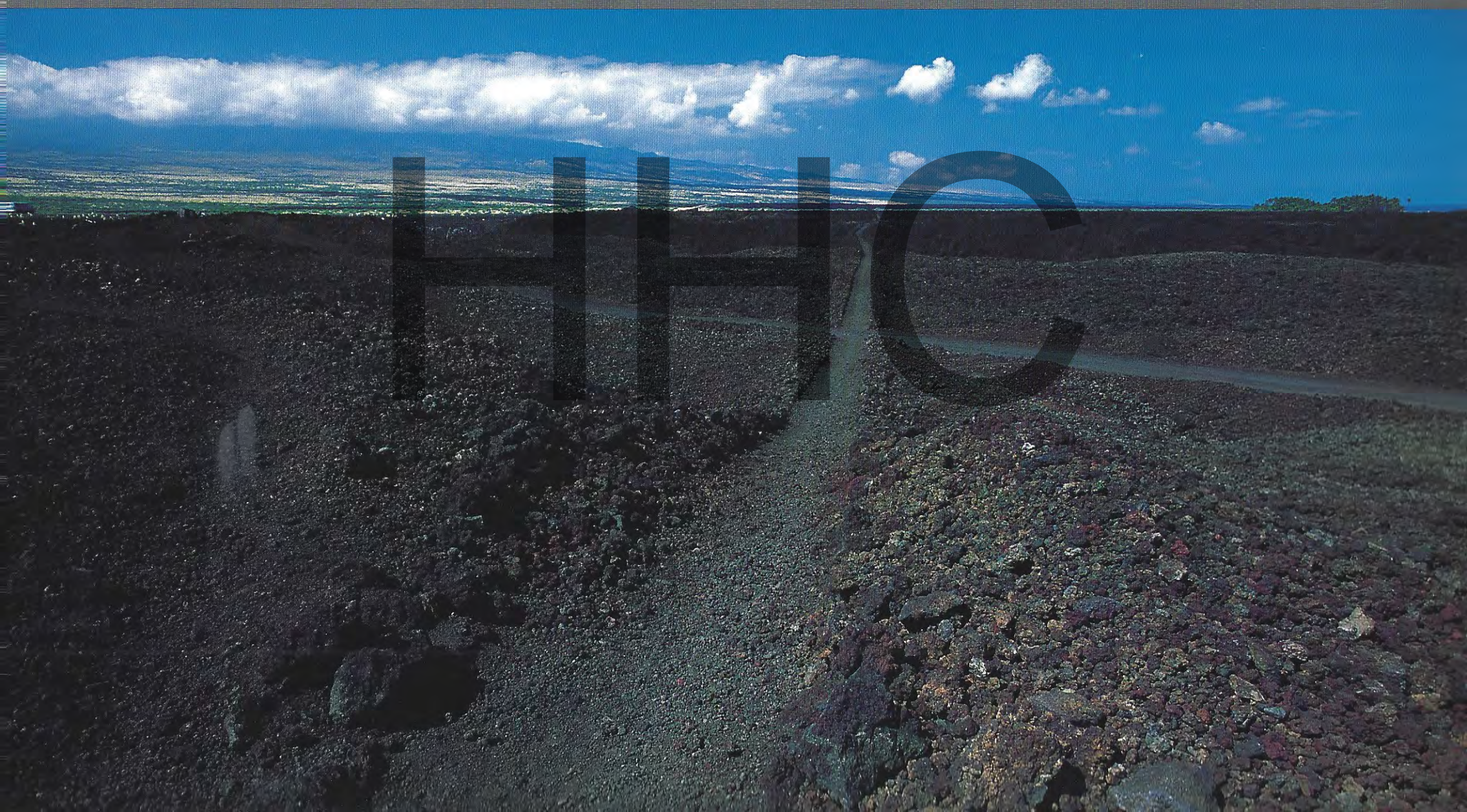
April

4



May

5



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June

6

HNHC



July

7

HHHC



August

8



September

9



October

10

HHHC

A landscape photograph of a mountain range. In the foreground, there is a dark, jagged volcanic ridge. The middle ground shows a deep valley with a forested floor, surrounded by rolling hills and mountains. The background features a range of blue-toned mountains under a cloudy sky. The text 'HHHC' is overlaid in the center of the image in a large, dark, serif font.

November

11



December

12

PHIC

A photograph of a dark, cracked volcanic landscape, likely a lava flow. The ground is dark and textured with numerous small, irregular cracks. Sparse, dry, yellowish-brown grasses are scattered across the terrain. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights, suggesting a low sun position. The word 'PHIC' is overlaid in large, semi-transparent black letters across the center of the image.