Before any humans lived here Mānoa Stream flowed along a path similar to what we see now, but ended in swamps about where Date Street is.

For over a 1,000 years Native Hawaiians lived here and grew kalo (taro) and other crops … a few sacred temple sites and taro terracing walls survive today.

During this time Mānoa had many royal residences, and crops were used to feed King Kamehameha’s army — lots of kalo was grown here.

Legends also show how important Mānoa was … Kahalaopuna was the daughter of Mānoa winds and rain and lives on as a rainbow here, while her unworthy lover is said to be the sleeping giant on Wa‘ahila Ridge.

In the early 1800s Queen Ka‘ahumanu helped end the kapu system which put restrictions on how water was used in the valley. She died at her home in Mānoa Valley in 1832.

In the 1800s, the valley was used for ranching by many non-Hawaiians (which was especially devastating to the native vegetation and affected the way the water cycle worked here) … wild pigs, goats and cattle on ranches all stripped vegetation and eroded soil.

In the late 1800s there were taro fields, dairy ranches, a poi factory — and only a few residences … between 1890-1940 many houses were built for the haole residents (the cottage-style homes still seen around Mānoa today).

Stream water was diverted for new farms & this new land use changed the quality of run-off water, affecting how different species lived or died here.

Early 1900s the denuded watershed lands of the upper valley were planted … ironwood, eucalyptus and silver oak grew well but did not retain the run-off that was needed for water conservation … erosion continues to this day.

In 1919, 124 acres were purchased by Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association to develop supplies of water for a potential sugar plantation in Mānoa, but sugar was phased out here in the 1940s.

Pig farms and flower orchards were also present in the 1900s and many exotic plants were introduced at the university campus and Lyon Arboretum.

1901 an electric trolley opened up Mānoa Valley to more housing development … it ran from Punahou and Wilder Avenues and stopped on ‘Anuenue Street near middle Mānoa … the fare was a nickel … this was phased out for less environmentally friendly buses in 1933.

As population grew, farms disappeared, and pollution of the water cycle got worse and worse … unwanted plants and animals are thrown in Mānoa Stream along with litter … runoff from roads and driveways puts oil, radiator fluid, & car wash soap into the stream … yard poisons, fertilizers & heavy metals trickle into the stream … bacteria from rats, boars & dogs also live in the stream and cause leptospirosis and planaria which can kill a person if the bacteria enter through an open wound.

At present, several community & state activist groups, UH projects and schools in the area have been monitoring and trying to revitalize Mānoa Stream for many years, & succeeded in protecting Wa‘ahila Ridge Park.
Ahupua'a Field Trip Activity

1. Listen to the speaker talk-story about your ahupua'a, and imagine what it looked like 200 years ago. Make a 3 minute sketch of it below (map or drawing).

2. Observe what the ahupua'a looks like now. List 5 or more changes you think happened in the last 200 years which had a lasting affect on the watershed and water quality.

3. Imagine what this ahupua'a will look like when your grandchildren are your age (in about 50 years). Take 5 minutes to make 2 sketches showing the “Best Case” and “Worst Case” views of the future of this ahupua'a.

4. Write what you will do to try to make sure the future in your ahupua'a will be the “Best Case” one.

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