

## A Just Transition

### Incorporating Equity into Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in Hawai'i<sup>1</sup>



#### Equity and the State's Climate Commission

At the Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation's inaugural annual conference, Ha O Ke Kai, keynote speaker Dr. Beverly Scott addressed issues of climate change and equity. Her main message was to incorporate equity from the beginning into climate change work, work that is really an "all out, all in war on climate change."<sup>2</sup> This reflects Act 32's mandate for the Commission to "identify vulnerable people, communities, industries, ecosystems, and the potential economic ramification for climate change related impacts." As Hawai'i moves forward on its clean energy and climate change goals, it needs to keep in mind the Commission's mission statement, to pursue "...ambitious strategies that are clean, equitable and resilient."<sup>3, 4</sup>

#### A Just Transition-- at COP24

The values in the Commission's mission statement echo from the Global Commission on Economy and the Climate's *New Climate Economy Report 2018* and the COP24's Just Transition declaration. The G20 adopted "strong, sustainable, balanced, and inclusive growth" as its goal. As we move to a net-zero carbon economy, a just transition ensures that the harmful impacts are minimized or eliminated. This means taking steps that are politically, culturally, and morally acceptable to ensure that no one is left behind.

To achieve such a transition, the *New Climate Economy Report* advocates a people-centered approach where gains are shared equitably.

"We have a remarkable window of opportunity to do so now, given the major structural changes the world faces, notably rapid urbanization, increasing globalisation, shifts to service-based economies, and increasing automation. The opportunities are great, but so too is the potential for stranded assets, stranded communities, and stranded workers. The transition to a low-carbon, resilient economy is just one part of this broader transformation, which – if managed well – has the potential to deliver more equitable and prosperous growth."

The Report goes on to recommend that "... all governments should establish zero-emission Energy Transition Plans, working with energy companies, trade unions, and civil society to ensure a just transition for workers and communities." As Hawaii implements the Paris Agreement, and its own stated goals, its Climate

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<sup>1</sup> This draft document is produced by the Hawaii Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Coordinator, with input from various colleagues, for purposes of supporting and informing discussion at the Hawaii Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation commission's meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Please do not quote or cite. For questions, contact: Anukriti.s.Hittle@hawaii.gov

<sup>2</sup> For a full video recording of Dr Scott's presentation, see: <https://vimeo.com/album/5688436/video/311811597>

<sup>3</sup> The Climate Commission's mission statement can be found here: [Climate.hawaii.gov](http://Climate.hawaii.gov), and is as follows: Hawaii's Climate Commission recognizes the urgency of climate threats and the need to act quickly. It promotes ambitious, climate-neutral, culturally responsive strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation in a manner that is Clean, Equitable & Resilient

<sup>4</sup> This portion is excerpted from the paper: *Coming Clean: Addressing our Emissions Reductions from Transportation*, written for the State Climate Commission's inaugural annual climate conference, Ha o ke Kai, held on January 14, 2019.

Commission can ensure these strategies are indeed equitable, address climate and related policy impacts that are felt unequally, and determine who will take action for limiting these effects on vulnerable people.

## Climate Justice in Hawai'i

To start, there are several questions to ponder: How can climate policies— mitigation policies that advocate a low carbon future, as well as those that deal with adaptation and resilience—make communities stronger and help them have more access to pursue a decent livelihood?<sup>5</sup> What does an equity framework look like for Hawai'i in the context of a low-carbon economy, and for adaptation and resilience? How to operationalize this framework?

### 1. For Mitigation/Low Carbon Economy

Following 'smart growth' tenets embodied in *Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities: Strategies for Advancing Smart Growth, Environmental Justice, and Equitable Development* (2013)<sup>6</sup> which aims to build on past successes and offer low-income, minority, tribal, and overburdened communities approaches to shape development that respond to their needs and reflect their values, we hope to develop a framework relevant to Hawai'i's situation. The framework provides "a menu of land use and community design strategies that bring together smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development principles and that community-based organizations, local and regional decision-makers, developers, and others can use to revitalize their communities." On this menu, strategies are grouped under seven elements that address and connect environmental justice, smart growth and equitable development. However, for its climate mitigation goals, since the Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission's focus is on ground transportation options, strategies that address equity in transportation, and facilitate meaningful community engagement in planning and land use decisions that lead up to such options will be crucial.<sup>7</sup>

Equitable transportation involves addressing many aspects<sup>8</sup>: displacement and fracturing of communities due to urban sprawl infrastructure, and the jobs-housing imbalance that results in lack of affordable housing near workplaces; mass transit inadequacies in low income neighborhoods, and the movement of goods that release hazardous particulates into (usually low-income) neighborhoods. For all of these aspects, the impacts and relevance for Hawai'i need to be articulated.

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<sup>5</sup> Building Climate Equity: Creating a New Approach from the Ground Up. Klinsky, Sonja et al. 2014. WRI report.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/creating-equitable-healthy-and-sustainable-communities>

<sup>7</sup> Strategies are grouped under seven common elements that connect environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development: \* Facilitate Meaningful Community Engagement in Planning and Land Use Decisions \* Promote Public Health and a Clean and Safe Environment \* Strengthen Existing Communities \* Provide Housing Choices \* Provide Transportation Options \* Improve Access to Opportunities and Daily Necessities \* Preserve and Build on the Features That Make a Community Distinctive

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/advancing-environmental-justice-through-sustainability-planning>. This brief is one in a series that PolicyLink and the University of Southern California Program for Environmental and Regional Equity are assembling for the federal Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI), an interagency effort coordinated by the U.S. EPA, the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The series is intended to support a learning community of regional and local governments focused on integrating equity (economic, social, and environmental) into plans and projects.

## 2. For Adaptation, Disaster and Resilience

According to EPA's smart growth strategies for disaster resilience and recovery, development planning can be used as a strategy for addressing resilience.<sup>9</sup> How and where growth occurs can be instrumental in how well communities can prepare for and recover from natural disaster events. How can Hawai'i move ahead on equitable development planning for adaptation, disaster and resilience preparedness and recovery? As global temperatures rise, climate-related events are predicted to become more frequent and more intense. In such future scenarios, it will be essential to ensure vulnerable populations have equitable access to disaster preparedness and recovery.

### Next Steps: Form a Permitted Interaction Group

For climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience:

1. **First, we must characterize the problem for Hawai'i.** Who will bear the burdens of climate change issues and policies? What resources will they need/do they have to address these issues and the impacts of these policies? To paint a full picture, we will look to existing data and filling any gaps, to outline and detail the situation in Hawai'i.
2. **Next, we need strategies to address the issues.** How will affected communities be involved in the shared solutions and decision making that follows? Developing strategies will take intense and meaningful discussion within communities, and at the county and state levels. This means coordinating with the State's Climate Change commission as it moves forward on its mitigation and adaptation goals.

An informal working group of subject matter experts has met and discussed a few initial concepts to bring to the Climate Commission's meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup>, and seeks to begin high level discussion amongst the Commissioners, through a Permitted Interaction Group. This Group could investigate the issues of how to recognize and address the inequitable distribution of benefits and burdens caused by climate change impacts and policy, and questions such as:

1. What are the marginalized and vulnerable groups in Hawaii?
2. How will/can our policies and practices impact these groups?
3. What are examples of climate change policy centered on equity?

Going forward, the Group would report findings that help develop an equity framework for the State as it responds to climate change mitigation and adaptation.



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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-strategies-disaster-resilience-and-recovery>