



**DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SEA GRANT**

JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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**STATE CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION COMMISSION ADOPTS
RECOMMENDATION FOR IMPROVING DISASTER RECOVERY PREPAREDNESS**

(Honolulu) – During its July meeting the Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (Climate Commission) and in advance of several tropical storms headed toward the state, the following new strategy was added to its five-point statement on sea level rise adaptation. The Climate Commission recognizes that disasters threaten resiliency.

“Encourage all State and county agencies together with community to develop, strengthen, and expand pre-disaster recovery plans and policies that incorporate opportunities to adapt to climate change and sea level rise through disaster recovery.”

At a previous meeting in September 2018 meeting, the Climate Commission adopted a mission statement that recognizes the urgency of climate threats and the need to act quickly in a manner that is clean, equitable and resilient.

The added strategy comes in response to recently completed *Guidance for Disaster Recovery Preparedness in Hawai'i* (guide) by the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) in partnership with DLNR and the state Office of Planning (OP). The guidance was developed to assist State and county governments in developing or expanding resilience-focused recovery practices and policies before a disaster strikes to enable communities to recover quickly while also adapting to climate change and sea level rise.

The Climate Commission recognizes that climate change and sea level rise will intensify the impacts of disastrous events including hurricanes and tsunamis, as well as extreme high-wave and rainfall events.

The more thoroughly that recovery issues can be contemplated in advance, the greater will be the efficiency and quality of post-disaster decision-making, which will then lead to more resilient community recovery.

“Collaborations like this through the Climate Commission can bring relevant expertise and resources, like the new guide that was rolled out at this month’s meeting”, said Suzanne Case, Co-chair of the Climate Commission and Chair of DLNR. “It is imperative that Hawai’i prepare as much as possible for increasing impacts of coastal storms with climate change and sea level rise, and the addition to the Commission’s statement reinforces that.”

While emergency responders plan for, practice, and respond to save lives and restore critical infrastructure immediately following a disastrous event, county and state planners together with communities must address how to prepare for longer-term disaster recovery in a manner that is efficient and equitable, improves community resilience, and protects the environment.

Dr. Brad Romine with the UH Sea Grant Program and leader of the project that developed the guide notes, “It is no secret that our shorefront development is highly vulnerable to hurricanes and other events. Impacts from flooding, high waves, and erosion will worsen in coming decades with sea level rise and other climate change related effects. Our emergency management agencies are well-prepared and have worked tirelessly in their response to recent disasters. However, we need to improve our preparedness, particularly for longer-term recovery and rebuilding following a disaster. Disasters provide critical windows of opportunity and funding for improving resilience to future disasters and changing conditions with climate change and sea level rise. Plans and policies need to be in-place before disaster strikes so we build back safer and smarter.”

This guide and a companion *Guidance for Addressing Coastal Hazards and Sea Level Rise in Community Planning* (in development, due April 2020) are examples of interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration and resulting tools needed to prepare Hawai’i for climate change and sea level rise and form a critical next step towards a more resilient and climate-ready state.

The guide was developed through consultations and workshops with federal, state, and county agencies around Hawai’i and subject matter experts around the country. The work was funded through the NOAA 2016 Regional Coastal Resilience Grants Program and DLNR. The guide was written by Tetra Tech, Inc. through a contract with Hawai’i Sea Grant in cooperation with DLNR and OP.

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RESOURCES

Guidance for Disaster Recovery Preparedness in Hawai’i (Hawai’i Sea Grant):
<http://seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/disaster-reconstruction-planning/>

Hawai’i Climate Change Portal (DLNR):
<http://climate.hawaii.gov/>

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