2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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Mission Statement

Hawai‘i’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 and resilient.

Priority Statement: Mitigation¹

The Commission recognizes that ground transportation contributes significantly to Hawai‘i’s share of greenhouse gas emissions. It supports a price on carbon, and mechanisms to reduce overall vehicle miles traveled, as well as converting all remaining vehicle-based ground transportation to renewable, zero-emission fuels and technologies.

Priority Statement: Adaptation²

The Commission recognizes the serious impacts of sea level rise on Hawai‘i. It supports legislation to address development along beaches, as well as funding programs that assist in planning and implementation; urges the incorporation of the sea level rise exposure area into counties' general and development plans; and recommends that agencies identify and prioritize their assets that lie within this area.
New Statement on Guidance for Investment in Resilient Infrastructure

This statement of the Hawai‘i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (Commission) from July 2021 aims to provide guidance to all Hawai‘i State and county governments and their agencies; and recommendations on how to translate Hawai‘i’s robust climate policy framework to decision making and investments to address the current climate emergency.

A Climate Ready Hawai‘i is a clean, equitable, and resilient Hawai‘i.

The Commission emphasizes that nature-based solutions, green infrastructure, and carbon-smart practices must be implemented now and prioritized in all planning and future actions as part of a climate ready Hawai‘i. By doing so, it supports State sustainability and climate resiliency which provide a multitude of economic, environmental, and social co-benefits.

Climate Ready Priority A: The ambitious mitigation of greenhouse gases through elimination and reduction of emissions.

Recognizing that this must be done through decarbonization of the energy sector by eliminating and reducing emissions from power and transportation — which includes energy efficiency, renewable energy, electrification of ground transportation, and renewable fuel switching for aviation and shipping — and land-use reform, the Commission urges agencies, government, business and community partners to work towards the goals and actions.

Climate Ready Priority B: The preservation of our cultural, biological and public resources through adaptation.

Recognizing that human life and health, natural and built infrastructure, biological and cultural resources, and communities in Hawai‘i are under
existential threat from the impacts of climate change, the Commission urges all departments and planning organizations to help integrate adaptation and resilience into their programs and operations, and to plan for and implement climate change adaptation projects for critical infrastructure and natural environments.

**Climate Ready Priority C: The accelerated sequestration of carbon, production of local foods and protection of public health and ecosystems.**

Recognizing that mauka and makai croplands (including lo‘i kalo and loko i‘a), forests, and ranchlands paired with climate-smart practices can reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increase carbon sequestration, and provide additional economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits, the Commission urges partners in the Greenhouse Gas Sequestration Taskforce and the Hawai‘i Natural and Working Lands (NWL) hui to develop and refine strategies, programs, and projects that focus on: (1) the sustainable increase of agricultural productivity and incomes, and (2) the reduction and removal of GHGs.

**Climate Ready Priority D: The adoption of nature-based solutions and building of resilience to climate change.**

Recognizing that managing lands for soil health can protect waterways and nearshore reef ecosystems and increase resilience in the face of other stressors such as increased ocean temperatures and acidification, and recognizing that Hawai‘i’s oceans and reefs are local and international treasures that drive Hawai‘i’s economy and provide coastal protection, the Commission recommends climate-smart land management practices that focus on building soil health to provide ecological and economic resilience for agricultural communities throughout the islands and increase food system resilience, a key social determinant of public health.
2021 Highlights: Co-Chairs’ Message

Aloha kakou,

In this second year of the Climate Decade, we recognize that the time is now, to lead the change we want to see and to stay true to the values that underpin our State. The pandemic has shown us how intimately we are connected to each other. In Hawai‘i, we have always known this—the power of being connected, having an ethic of care, responsibility, and respect in the way we face the future.

Recognizing this interconnectedness, at the State’s Climate Commission, we are also eager to join the dots. The 2021 session of the State Legislature declared a climate emergency in Hawai‘i. Several laws were enacted to address the climate emergency—from disclosure on real property transactions, and vulnerability analyses for State infrastructure, to transportation, sidewalks and more. In support, the Commission’s latest statement issues guidance on where to direct investment so that both crises can be addressed in a manner that is clean, equitable and resilient.4, 5

By folding the guiding principles of the Commission into COVID-19 recovery efforts, we know we can address present day health, and economic and climate change impacts to prepare for our common future. Through its Climate Ready Hawai‘i Initiative, the Commission is shaping climate action in Hawai‘i from international to local levels by:

- **Ratcheting ambition around the world.**
  Through our close involvement with the 25-governor U.S. Climate Alliance, the IUCN and the World Conservation Congress, the global regional partnership of the Under 2 Coalition, and our strong presence at COP26, we continue to inspire climate ambition abroad and at home.
Building a social and climate vulnerability framework for use at home.
Using the Commission’s statement on equity as a starting point, we initiated development of a climate and social vulnerability framework for State government operations in light of the intertwined nature of climate change, resilience, and recovery.6

Assembling priority infrastructure projects for climate readiness.
To support the new statement on infrastructure investments, we built a list of priority projects statewide for mitigation, adaptation, resilience, and sequestration, and accompanying sources of grants.

Expanding capacity for member departments through our VISTA team.
Through a six-member Climate Ready Hawai‘i AmeriCorps VISTA, supported four key departments in implementing climate change priorities: from addressing energy and transportation affordability and equity, developing outreach and communications materials on climate change issues, to increasing capacity for climate change projects and meetings.

Constructing a policy toolkit for emissions reduction from transportation.
To address the Commission’s mitigation priority, we built a toolkit consisting of policy-related strategies and synthesized data for reducing vehicle miles traveled, that reinforce GHG reduction, resilience, and equity.

Highlighting nature-based solutions to address climate change.
In a collaborative effort with key departments and experts, we synthesized resilience efforts in Hawai‘i, through the Nature-Based Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change in Hawai‘i Working Paper, which emphasized the need to use nature-based solutions.7
Briefing departments on sea level rise adaptation at the parcel level.
We briefed over 100 staff from 22 different State and County departments on guidance and new tools to incorporate sea level rise in planning and permitting at the parcel level.

Engaging our communities on the latest climate information.
Through a speaker series focused on climate change, and in partnership with UH’s Better Tomorrow Speaker Series, we brought the latest climate science and policy work to Hawai‘i. Our expanded website, community slide decks, fact sheets and social media content, and monthly updates to the community synthesize complex information into understandable concepts and materials for our partners.

Taking Hawai‘i’s message to COP26.
Governor-led delegation from Hawai‘i spent time at COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, relaying Hawai‘i’s world-leading ambitions through High Impact Actions, and a strong message that net-zero is not enough—we must go beyond zero to save islands.

This year, again, the Commission, its member departments, its staff, and its first VISTAs are honored and proud to support Hawai‘i’s public, legislative and executive branches in service of Act 32.

With aloha,

Suzanne D. Case
Co-Chair, Hawai‘i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission
Chair, Department of Land and Natural Resources

Mary Alice Evans
Co-Chair, Hawai‘i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission
Director, Office of Planning and Sustainable Development, Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism
Operationalizing Climate Ready Hawai‘i

The Commission’s guiding principles embodied in its various statements are operationalized in its Climate Ready Hawai‘i initiative. These projects and efforts summarize Climate Ready Hawai‘i.

**SUMMARY OF WORK**

**FUNDS SOUGHT AND AWARDED**
External grants enabled capacity expansion

**GRANTS TO PROJECTS BRIDGE**
Compiling lists of priority projects and grantors

**MITIGATION**
Reducing how much we drive alone; multimodal mobility hubs

**ADAPTATION**
Sea Level Rise online tools development, supporting legislation

**RESILIENCE**
Highlighting nature-based solutions in Hawai‘i

**SEQUESTRATION**
Sponsoring the resurrection of the GHGSTF; work on climate-smart practices

**SOCIAL AND CLIMATE VULNERABILITY FRAMEWORK**
Characterizing climate vulnerabilities in Hawai‘i

**A. Funds sought and awarded:**
External grants enabled capacity expansion even as budget shrank.

This year, the Commission’s General Fund allocation shrank from $205,000 to $170,264. Even so, capacity to do climate change work increased as AmeriCorps granted the equivalent of $225,000 to support ten VISTA members in seven Commission member department offices: Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism – Hawai‘i State Energy Office (3) and Hawai‘i Green Infrastructure Authority (1), Department of Transportation (1), Department of Health (1), and one each in the counties of Kaua‘i,
B. “Grants-to-Projects Bridge” supports the new statement on infrastructure investment.

The Grants-to-Projects Bridge supports the Commission’s statement to help direct funds to priority climate-smart infrastructure in Hawai‘i. With the help of the Climate Ready VISTA cohort, and many colleagues, State and County active transportation projects, and resilience projects for natural and working lands were assembled into a searchable online format. Grants information was also compiled to potentially make a bridge to funding priority projects. It is hoped that this resource will help make grant and project information more accessible to community members and government agencies, and coordinate funding to ensure these projects are completed and so, move to a Climate Ready Hawai‘i.

Hawai‘i, and Maui. The current year’s VISTA cohort’s profiles and projects are on the Commission’s site. In addition, funds were reassigned for a 2-year specialist position that will implement strategies to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) from the VMT toolkit project.

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**GRANTS-TO-PROJECTS BRIDGE**

Compiling lists of priority projects and grantors

- Supports the Commission’s statement to help direct funds to priority climate-smart infrastructure in Hawai‘i
- Complies state and county active transportation projects, and resilience projects for NWLs
- Accompanied by a grantor list
- Helps make grant and project information more accessible to community members and government agencies

OPERATIONALIZING CLIMATE READY HAWAI‘I
C. Mitigation work focuses on reducing emissions from vehicle miles traveled.

i. Driving down emissions

Experts agree that electrification of transportation alone will not be sufficient for Hawai’i to achieve its climate change and clean energy goals. Strategies are needed to get people out of cars, and into transit, biking and walking—that is, to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The Commission’s priority to reduce emissions from ground transportation was addressed through a VMT Reduction Strategies Toolkit project, funded by the EPA. This project developed a toolkit for implementing how to reduce motor vehicle VMT in Hawai’i and increase metrics from other modes, such as bus/transit and bicycles. The toolkit contains: nation- and statewide best practices, specific examples that are helpful for Hawai’i, recommendations for how to implement such reduction, how to measure and track progress, and messaging and communication of multimodal VMT as a metric.

ii. Multimodal mobility hubs

Our multimodal mobility hub work was initiated through a cost-share grant from the O’ahu Metropolitan Planning Organization. The project, focusing on multi-modal transportation, fits into the...
Commission’s priorities to curb emissions from ground transportation by proposing to develop a plan for assessment of State parking facilities on O‘ahu that will allow for multi-modal use. It proposes to identify and describe State parking facilities, including their utilization rates; evaluate and price various ways to make better use of these State assets in ways that encourage the use of alternative transportation and mobility options; and overall, help optimize State and County goals for clean transportation while maximizing the public benefit.

**D. Adaptation work: Development of Sea Level Rise tools and supporting legislation.**

In collaboration with the Hawai‘i Sea Grant program, the Commission staff was able to provide hands-on briefings and discussion to the sea level rise guidance document and tools that were developed earlier this year. These tools are intended to assist with permitting at the parcel level, taking sea level rise issues into account. The briefings engaged over 100 participants, from 22 different offices for this work.

In addition, the Commission provided research and testimony in support of critical adaptation bills that were enacted into law.

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Downtown Honolulu has overbuilt parking for cars (The Walker Study, 2016).

Planning and implementing smarter strategies for parking are needed to reach the State’s goals for a clean energy future.

Underutilized parking spaces could be used as a hub for multimodal transportation – such as mode share hubs for transit, bikes, dockless scooters, AVs, EVs, and more.

Such hubs could reduce GHG emissions while also becoming the hub of a development instead of an ancillary use that supports just the driving side.
Acts 178 and 179 dealing with sea level rise disclosure on private property, and vulnerable infrastructure on public property addressed the Commission’s adaptation priorities.\textsuperscript{14, 15}

E. Resilience work: Highlighting nature-based solutions for Hawai‘i.

\textit{Nature-based Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change in Hawai‘i (2021)}, a Climate Ready Hawai‘i Working Paper, highlighted actions in Hawai‘i that rely on nature-based “green-blue” strategies to adapt to and mitigate climate change. This collaboratively produced paper identified ongoing efforts in the state, and key action areas for next steps that enhance climate readiness. Along with reiterating the role that Hawai‘i’s mauka-makai lands and waters play in resilience, the paper highlighted the role of soils and food security in resilience and adaptation. This is something the Commission has not addressed thus far, and the working paper offers up a starting point for this discussion. It is hoped that this document that involved a team of 25 partners and Commission staff will be used by decision makers, planners, communities, businesses, and scientists as a guide for climate change resiliency work in Hawai‘i.

The Working Paper highlights efforts that help meet Hawai‘i’s climate change goals, per HRS 225P-3(i):

“\textit{The commission shall identify existing climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts at the federal, state, and local levels and make recommendations for how to meet or exceed Hawai‘i’s state mitigation goals and shall adopt a liberal approach in preparation, so as to minimize future risk to the people and environment of Hawai‘i.”}

Through the Commission's Climate Ready Hawai‘i VISTA program, the Commission sponsored the resurrection of the Greenhouse Gas Sequestration Taskforce. The assigned VISTA member provided logistical support to the Taskforce, which has been understaffed since 2019.

The Commission also worked with the US Climate Alliance’s Hawai‘i Natural and Working Lands Research Team to bring together key departments to coordinate priorities for resilience and sequestration action.

G. Building a social and climate vulnerability framework for Hawai‘i.

To further the Commission’s mission statement and issued statement on equity, this project was initiated to help conceptualize social and economic dimensions of vulnerability to climate change through the gathering of relevant data on key climate change threats to Hawai‘i.¹⁶ This project, in partnership with the University of Hawai‘i’s Institute for Sustainability and Resilience, aims to conduct research on the operationalization and application of data/index approaches as well as other spatially-explicit data tools. Such research will help to understand the social and physical factors that are important in shaping dimensions of
vulnerability to different climate shocks and stressors, including
the spatial distribution of such vulnerability. It aims to help
bridge the gap between vulnerability and resilience by
distinguishing between the

drivers of chronic and transitory vulnerability, identifying the
opportunities and constraints in capacity to adapt, as well as social
and physical limitations at different scales.

SOCIAL AND CLIMATE VULNERABILITY FRAMEWORK
Characterizing climate vulnerabilities in Hawai‘i

- Project initiated to further the Commission’s mission statement and issued statement on equity
- Through partnership with the UH Institute for Sustainability and Resilience, aims to conduct research to understand the social and physical factors that determine vulnerability to climate shocks and stressors
- Aims to help bridge the gap between vulnerability and resilience
Information and Engagement: Critical to Climate Action at Home and Abroad

A. Information for Hawai‘i’s communities.

Through its climate change portal (climate.hawaii.gov), social media accounts, webinars, presentations, briefings, blogs, and articles, the Commission provides the latest climate change information to Hawai‘i’s communities. Under supervision of the Commission staff, these are, in large part, supported by the Climate Ready Hawai‘i VISTA assigned to DLNR. 2021 highlights include:

i. Commission Meetings

This year, because of the pandemic situation, all Commission meetings were held virtually, where members of the Commission provided updates on climate work being conducted in their respective departments. The meetings were recorded and made available on the Commission’s website. The remote nature of the meetings has increased the Commission’s reach to the public. The April 2021 meeting had 202 views, and the July 2021 meeting had 99 views as of August 2020. This is in contrast to about 50 or so people who could attend in-person meetings in the pre-pandemic era.
ii. Speaker Series
This year, because of the pandemic situation, in lieu of a conference, the Commission entered into a partnership with UH’s Better Tomorrow Speaker Series to organize a series of informational events on climate action. The collection of events, titled “Hā O Ke Kai,” meaning “Breath of the Sea,” is paired with the Commission’s statewide conference series of the same name. It was also intended to coincide with planning for a strong Hawai‘i presence at the United Nations Climate Change Summit (COP26).

iii. Climate Legislation List
This new section on the web portal contains climate change related laws enacted in Hawai‘i since 2018. This section is intended to help communities not only understand the enabling laws that provide a framework for climate action, but also displays the breadth of issues that intersect with climate change.

iv. Community Informational Materials
The portal now contains slide decks, videos, and fact sheets on a variety of “Climate Ready Hawai‘i” topics such as Vision Zero, multi-modal mobility hubs, and climate change impacts in Hawai‘i.
v. Monthly Updates
A new feature on the web portal allows members of our community to sign up to get monthly updates on the Commission’s work. This highlights blog posts on topics of interest, projects initiated by the staff, and other updates on climate change information.

vi. Social Media
A social media strategy was developed for the Commission, and includes the rationale for the Commission’s social media accounts, outreach strategy, and guiding principles. The Commission’s two social media accounts (on Instagram and Facebook) continue to generate activity and engagement. An increase in engagement was observed during campaigns such as Earth Week, which resulted in a +1.77% in followers and over 2,200 views for “Our Common Future: Climate Action in the Climate Decade” with Governor David Ige.

vii. Mini media campaigns
Campaigns for Koloa Iki, Earth Week and the Drumbeat to COP26 helped to bring attention to Climate Ready Hawai’i issues at moments that align with world events, and connect Hawai’i to the global community.

Our mascot and logo for the Koloa Iki campaign, a little Hawaiian duck with a serious message about resilience and climate change.
B. Engagement at international, national, sub-national levels

The Hawai‘i Climate Commission continues to engage actively in global action to combat climate change:

i. At the international level, through active participation at COP26, at the IUCN’s World Conservation Congress, and through the Under 2 Coalition’s work with regions and states all over the world;

ii. At the national and sub-national, level through the US Climate Alliance’s many working groups, and engagement with the White House; and

iii. At the state level, with other states on specific issues on projects relevant to Hawai‘i.

The IPCC’s Sixth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis* was released as this annual report was being compiled. Its main message is dire for Hawai‘i and neighbors in the Pacific, the IPCC report warns “[u]nless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach.”

C. COP26 Engagement and Hawai‘i’s High Impact Actions

A Governor-led delegation to COP26 relayed Hawai‘i’s world-leading ambitions through High Impact Actions, and a strong message that net-zero is not enough—we must go beyond zero to save islands. Through addresses and panels with other local and state government officials from around the world, and governors of the US Climate Alliance, Hawai‘i helped raise ambition. According to The Climate Group, 55% of states and regions with a 2030 emissions reduction target are showing greater ambition than their national counterparts. Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, California, Hawai‘i, Washington, Virginia, Oregon, and Maine have all passed legislation to get to 100% carbon-free electricity by at least 2050.
As part of the 25-governor US Climate Alliance, Hawai‘i has committed to specific and new High Impact Actions that will accelerate greenhouse gas emission reductions and drive the real, impactful implementation and results needed to make the US climate targets a reality. These priority areas include: Power, Buildings, Industry, Transportation, Just Transition and Equity, Resilience, Natural and Working Lands, and the Social Cost of Greenhouse Gases.

### High Impact Actions include:

- **100% net-zero operating emissions government buildings** by 2030.
- **100% ZEV new light-duty sales** by 2035.
- **100% zero-emission light-duty public fleets** by 2035.
- **100% zero-emission public/government-owned transit bus fleets** by 2030.
- **100% zero-emission med- & heavy-duty public fleets** by 2040, where technically feasible.
- **100% net-zero operating emissions government buildings** by 2030.

### Promote sustainable communities

- That provide a range of affordable housing and transportation options that increase access to opportunity and reduce vehicle miles travelled (VMT).

### Empower disadvantaged communities

- And foster leadership to develop climate/clean energy solutions and policies through training, facilitation, and funding.

### Commit to a just transition

- That provides for sustainable livelihoods for those reliant on the fossil fuel economy in the shift to more sustainable systems and practices.

### Integrate racial and gender diversity

- In developing environmental solutions to the climate crisis.

### Conserve at least 30% of land and coastal waters

- By 2030.

### Commit to large scale restoration

- Of forests and other locally indigenous ecosystems.

### Increase tree canopy

- In disadvantaged and/or heat vulnerable communities by at least 40% by 2030 to mitigate urban heat island effects.

### Increase consumption of food produced

- Within the jurisdiction to at least 20-30% of food consumed by 2030.
Commission members’ HI Impact Actions – over seventy in all, and continually increasing—are listed on the Commission’s website under the categories of equity, mitigation, adaptation, sequestration and resilience, mirroring the Commission’s statement on resilient infrastructure.22

As climate change continues to pose an existential threat to Hawai‘i, and the world comes together in this decade of climate action, Hawai‘i helped ratchet up ambition abroad at COP26 and buckled down to work on adaptation actions at home. Hawai‘i’s Climate Commission also aims to continue joining the dots of actions being undertaken to limit warming to under 1.5°C.
“[B]y the Senate of the Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021, the House of Representatives concurring, that this body acknowledges that an existential climate emergency threatens humanity and the natural world, declares a climate emergency, and requests statewide collaboration toward an immediate just transition and emergency mobilization effort to restore a safe climate...”

-Senate Concurrent Resolution 44, Thirty-first Legislature
Reference Links


14. Act 179 (2021) requires that mandatory seller disclosures in real estate transactions include identification of residential real properties lying within the sea level rise exposure area: https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2021/bills/GM1307_.PDF

15. Act 178 (2021) requires OPSD to identify existing and planned facilities vulnerable to SLR and assess options to mitigate its impacts: https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2021/bills/GM1306_.PDF
Reference Links


17  https://climate.hawaii.gov/hi-commission/commission-meetings/

18  https://climate.hawaii.gov/hi-news/climate-legislation/

19  The Commission’s Instagram account (@HI_Climate) can be found at: https://www.instagram.com/hi_climate/

20  The Commission’s Facebook page (@hiclimate) can be found at: https://www.facebook.com/hiclimate


22  https://climate.hawaii.gov/hi-mitigation/goals-and-progress/

23  https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2021/bills/SCR44_HD1_.htm