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PUBLIC HEALTH**

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THE ECONOMY**

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OUR COMMUNITY**

CAPITOL CONNECTION

DECEMBER 2021

From the governor: A new phase and climate action

Congratulations, Hawai'i! We've survived another year of COVID-19, managed the Delta surge and vaccinated 71.1% (adjusted on 11/29) of our state's population. Although we need to stay vigilant, Hawai'i continues to have one of the lowest COVID-19 infection rates in the nation. We've worked hard together to reach this point, with the hope of better days ahead. *Let's celebrate the holidays with care as we look ahead to 2022.*



HAWAI'I AT COP26: Governor and Mrs. Ige with state delegation members Suzanne Case, Anukriti Hittle and Scott Glenn.

Q. Hawai'i seems to be in a very good place at this point in the pandemic. Does your latest emergency proclamation reflect that?

A. Yes, I'm really proud of the people of Hawai'i and optimistic for the year ahead. Three months ago, we were facing a surge that could have overwhelmed our healthcare system. Today we're seeing some of the lowest COVID case numbers in our hospitals and across the state. We've gotten off to a good start with our COVID-19 boosters and keiki vaccinations. We still want to remind people to remain vigilant, but we're focused on getting people back to work.

Q. What does this new phase represent, especially for restaurants, bars and social gatherings in the individual counties?

A. It signals a return to a more normal emergency situation in which the counties take the lead, and the state provides guidance and support. We've left in place the statewide indoor mask mandate and the Safe Travels program. But now the county mayors can implement appropriate measures for social gatherings, restaurants and other venues, including lifting capacity restrictions. However, we're still encouraging people to get vaccinated and make smart choices about activities to keep everyone safe.



People can apply for 130 openings in a new Kupu 'Āina Corps 'green jobs' program. For details, go to <https://www.kupuhawaii.org/aina/>.

Q. Why was it important for you to go to COP26, the UN climate change summit?

A. I wanted to share Hawai'i's story on a world stage and show that our state gets it — that not only are we leading in setting high aspirations and taking action to fight climate change, but that other communities are following our lead. In 2015, our state was the first to commit to clean, renewable energy for electricity. Now there are 12 states or territories that have made the same promise. As part of the U.S. Climate Alliance, Hawai'i and other states are saying we aren't waiting for national agreement. We're already committing to aggressive action against global warming, and many people are recognizing Hawai'i as a leader.

Q. How will Hawai'i benefit from the federal \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill?

A. The state stands to receive at least \$2.8 billion over the next five years to improve roads, bridges and high-speed internet as well as for clean energy and broadband. Because our state has been so aggressive on climate action, we're very well-positioned to get our fair share of funds — not only those allocated by formula to the states but also to compete for other funds that will be good for our economy and our communities.

Q. For 2022, what is the outlook for the state's budget priorities?

A. We're in good shape as a state after nearly two years of the pandemic. Now it's about restoring funds to programs that suffered budget cuts and providing more support to help our residents recover. We also want to continue the momentum for major infrastructure projects — the most direct way for government to create jobs for community benefit.

DOH urges vaccinations for keiki and boosters for adults

The state Department of Health's push for free COVID-19 vaccinations continues, especially among children recently approved to receive the Pfizer vaccine. "The priority right now is getting those 5 to 11 years old vaccinated to help further mitigate the spread of COVID in our community and help us get back to where we want to be," said Dr. Elizabeth Char, DOH director.



Children's vaccinations will be available at some 200 locations statewide, including medical facilities, community health centers, pharmacies, pediatricians' offices and more than 130 public, private and charter schools. Details on where children's vaccines are available will be updated regularly at <https://hawaii-covid19.com/vaccine/>. Under new booster rules, anyone 18 or older can choose a Pfizer or Moderna booster six months after their last dose. For those who got the single-dose J&J vaccine, the wait is just two months. All adults, especially those 50 and older, are urged to get their boosters.

Also, COVID-19 underscored the importance of having community health workers who can connect to populations disproportionately affected by the pandemic. **DOH has been awarded a \$2.2 million grant** from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to grow this workforce, help address health disparities and build resilience for future public health emergencies.

New international travel, local COVID-19 rule changes



Effective Nov. 8, **international travelers are subject to new federal requirements**, with air carriers responsible for screening passengers prior to departure. "International travelers are required to be fully vaccinated **and** provide proof of a negative COVID-19 viral test administered within 72 hours of departure," said Governor Ige. However, additional travel restrictions have been announced related to the new Omicron variant. For the latest rules, see the Centers for Disease Control site at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/international-travel/index.html>.

As for Hawai'i-specific rules, the governor's most recent emergency proclamation relating to COVID-19, effective Dec. 1, includes the following:

- **Unchanged measures** - The Hawai'i Safe Travels program and the indoor mask mandate continue statewide. Also the vaccination or testing requirements for state executive branch and county employees, contractors and visitors to state facilities remain.
- **Major changes** - 1) Counties will no longer need to obtain the governor's approval prior to issuing county emergency orders; 2) the statewide limits on social gatherings, restaurants, bars and gyms are no longer in effect, so counties can determine the limits and appropriate measures needed for health and safety; 3) there are no further extensions for driver's license renewals, instruction permits and replacements, so residents need to make sure their licenses are up to date.

DLIR opens offices statewide for in-person service

The state Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) is opening offices statewide, with services for all programs available Wednesdays through Fridays. Telephone appointments for general unemployment insurance and claims adjudication will continue on Mondays and Tuesdays. Those seeking in-person services must show proof of full vaccination or testing prior to entry at all offices as well as follow social distancing guidelines and mask wearing.



Services are available by phone and in person.

"We're expanding to include in-person service in light of decreased COVID-19 case counts and increased vaccination rates in Hawai'i," said DLIR director Anne Perreira-Eustaquio. "We'll continue to assess departmental operations with an eye to completely reopening during all regular state business days." For more details, visit <https://www.hawaiiunemploymentinfo.com/>.

NGA grant for digital job skills | \$365M in CIP projects

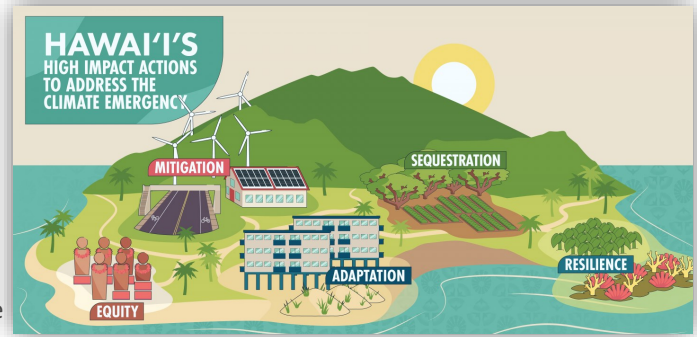
Hawai'i is one of six states to receive up to \$100,000 for digital literacy as part of a National Governors Association Workforce Innovation Network. The grant will be used to create a plan to advance digital skills statewide. "This grant supports our vision of a diversified economy with a focus on digital access and equity," said Governor Ige.

The state public library system will lead the team, which includes representatives from the Office of the Governor, Office of Broadband and Digital Equity, the Workforce Development Council and community-based non-profit organizations.

More funds for affordable housing and new lots for DHHL homestead leases . . . public school improvements statewide . . . projects for hospitals, airports and public safety. Those are just some of the uses for the \$365 million in capital improvement funds appropriated by the legislature and released by the governor recently. For a list of the projects, go to <https://governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/October-2021-CIP-Release-Amended-1.pdf>.

COP26: Hawai'i wins praise for action in climate crisis

Pledges are easy; achieving them is a lot harder. But on a world stage such as last month's COP26, the UN climate change conference in Scotland, **Hawai'i was recognized for producing real results as a leader** in the climate change effort. Governor Ige and a delegation of environmental advocates showed how a small island state like Hawai'i can move the world with innovation, big ambition and action. **Governor Ige emphasized, "We in the islands feel this sense of urgency about the climate crisis.** In Hawai'i, reversing climate change is critical to preserving our way of life and unique biodiversity and culture. That's why we became the first state in the nation to embrace the 2015 Paris climate agreement in law. We also led the way in announcing a state goal of 100 percent renewable energy for electricity by 2045. We showed in Scotland that island communities matter, and Hawai'i has an important leadership role to play at the 'super-national' level."



As part of the 25-governor U.S. Climate Alliance, Hawai'i has committed to specific, new **High-Impact Actions in priority areas,** including power, transportation, equity, resilience, natural and working lands and the social cost of greenhouse gases. A list of what Hawai'i is working toward and the state's Climate Commission progress, highlighted at the summit by co-chair Suzanne Case, can be viewed at <https://climate.hawaii.gov/hi-mitigation/goals-and-progress/>. Major initiatives to prepare for a "Climate Ready Hawai'i" include:

- **Hawai'i Clean Energy Initiative** - Under the Ige administration, the state has already surpassed its 2020 goal by generating 34.5% of renewable electricity through a combination of solar, wind and other clean energy sources — with a goal of 100% by 2045. In the past, Hawai'i has been the nation's most fossil fuel-dependent state but now is becoming a green energy leader.
- **Sustainable Hawai'i Initiative** – The action plan, announced by the governor in 2016, provides a framework for the islands' natural resource management. The progress covers protection of the state's watersheds, nearshore ocean waters, local food production, renewable energy and Hawai'i's first Interagency Biosecurity Plan to control invasive species.
- **State joins One Trillion Trees movement** – The state has pledged to conserve, restore and grow 100 million trees in Hawai'i by 2030 — part of a worldwide effort to achieve net-negative carbon goals and encourage carbon sequestration.
- **Nature-based solutions for transportation, jobs and sustainable communities** – The governor and the state legislature have made state electric vehicles a priority, provided for more EV charging systems and are pursuing other carbon-smart practices, including conversion of aviation and marine transportation. See the public recommendations at <https://hawaii2050.hawaii.gov>.

During the summit, **CNN commentator Fareed Zakaria** said, "Hawai'i transformed itself from relying on fossil fuels to leading on renewables by instituting laws and rules to encourage the shift. **Now we need to scale the Hawai'i example for the entire world — and fast.**"

'Worry and hope': Producing students to save the world



UH sustainability director Matt Lynch

"How many wake-up calls do we need? The challenge is to save ourselves from ourselves." — UH system student

"Worry and hope. Turning awareness into action." Those were some of the student concerns UH sustainability director Matthew Lynch presented to the UH Regents from a systemwide focus group study and campuswide survey. The study showed that **96% of students across the UH system** were "concerned" or "very concerned" about climate change and were looking for ways to take action. As one freshman said, "Some days when the news is mostly bad, it makes you feel worse. But other days you see someone making a small change and you think, I can do something. Just having a little bit of hope can overpower the doubts."

Lynch and faculty and staff on the 10 UH campuses want to offer that hope across four sustainability areas: curriculum, operations, research and community/cultural engagement. "Providing a path to a degree, to a better job, is no longer enough," he maintained. Instead of a "green workforce," he said we need an "infusion of sustainability competency across all of our economic sectors." The campuses currently offer interdisciplinary sustainability certificates and degrees, and several have already reached "net-zero" in energy efficiency through on-site PV systems and other measures.

What does he see as the value of world summits like COP26? Besides the public commitments, he said, "One benefit is being able to connect with other island societies, to share what's happening on the front lines of climate change. Conferences like this also provide a way to share ideas and resources, to build international relationships and to provide opportunities for youth to shape their own futures." Lynch's own journey took him from a 10-year career in banking and finance to community-building and regenerative agriculture. Along the way, he discovered a deeper set of values. "The truth is that we, as people, are not separate from nature," he said. "I think island people get it. We have to find ways to heal our disconnections." For more details, visit <https://www.hawaii.edu/sustainability/>.

Many hands helping Ka‘u Dream become a reality

The phrase “Think global, act local” has taken on new meaning on Hawai‘i island with the launch of **Ka‘u Dream**, a community-driven resiliency project that is already attracting international attention. The hope is Ka‘u Dream will serve as an example of what can be accomplished in other communities across the state through education and economic development. The project held an official launch recently on Hawai‘i island, attended by the **First Lady as chair of the Ka‘u Dream Advisory Board** and several community partners. The partners include Hawai‘i Community College, Derek Kurisu of KTA Superstores, Duane Kurisu of aio Foundation and the Hawai‘i Executive Collaborative, and Ka‘u High School educator ‘Āina Akamu and principal Sharon Beck.



Some of the Ka‘u Dream team at the project launch.

“Many years ago, I joined the Youth Conservation Corps, where I spent my summer in the Ka‘u forest learning about environmental stewardship and civic responsibility,” said Mrs. Ige. “That summer, and Ka‘u, hold a special place in my heart.” The **Ka‘u Global Learning Lab** is one of the **Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER) grantees**. The program aims to nurture a culture of socially responsible entrepreneurs through its school farm program and global agriculture partnerships. Ka‘u Dream also will honor the region’s cultural heritage through music and food events. “When it’s a program driven by the community, it becomes much stronger and more sustainable,” she said. “I see that here in the hearts, the minds and the commitment from students, teachers and staff.”

Protecting Hawai‘i —from the mountains to the sea

If Hawai‘i is going to survive climate change, it will be up to us and future generations to lead the way. Much of the work falls to the state’s natural resource specialists who sometimes risk their own lives to protect “the rarest of the rare” native species. From hiking Maunakea’s frigid slopes and rappelling Waimea Canyon’s cliffs to monitoring miles of reefs and beaches, they work with community partners to preserve life as we know it in the islands and save even the smallest of our inhabitants from extinction.

Whatever the future holds, **Jessica Kirkpatrick, 32**, will still be on the mountain, protecting Maunakea’s natural, cultural and historical resources. As someone born and raised on Hawai‘i island, she brings a homegrown passion to her work as the leader of a three-person natural resource team in the newly renamed **UH Hilo Center for Maunakea Stewardship**. The Center is responsible for protecting the 11,288-acre state-owned lands leased by the University of Hawai‘i. The stewardship involves everything from public safety to Kirkpatrick’s work in monitoring areas and educating people about the mountain’s resources.



Jessica with Maunakea silverwords.

Kirkpatrick’s team protects some 250 historical and cultural sites and guards against invasive species that might threaten the mountain’s delicate ecosystem, including endangered species such as the Maunakea silversword and the palila bird and other endemic species, such as the wēkiu bug (the size of a grain of rice). “Our Maunakea Invasive Species Management Plan is consistent with the governor’s Interagency Biosecurity Plan,” she said. “One of my jobs is to keep ants off the mountain.” **The Center’s team has received awards for its commitment to environmental stewardship and protection of archaeological and cultural sites.**

A two-degree graduate of UH-Hilo, Kirkpatrick survived a bout of hypothermia when she was caught in a rainstorm at the 12,500-foot level, but remains a fierce guardian of the mountain’s inhabitants. She wants to work more closely with the state Department of Land and Natural Resources on areas where they can help each other. “Our Center has a greenhouse, and we’d like to help with the propagation of native plants. We’re all trying to protect the species up there for future generations to enjoy.”

In case you missed it, you can still view a DLNR-produced documentary called “**Cliff Dwellers of Kaua‘i and the people who hang with them!**” at <https://vimeo.com/596087910>. The video, which aired on KHON in October, shows **DLNR botanist Adam Williams and Scott Heintzman with the state’s Plant Extinction Prevention Program** rappelling down steep canyon walls to save some of the endangered species that live there.

More than 250 native plants in Hawai‘i are close to extinction in their wild habitats, and the documentary shows what conservationists do to get cuttings or seeds into seed banks for propagation and species survival. “The program depicts truly world-class conservation management, reporting and partnerships,” said DLNR Division of Forestry and Wildlife administrator David Smith.

How you can help protect wildlife - DLNR encourages the public to report anyone seen harassing wildlife in the islands, especially monk seals and turtles. **Jason Redulla, DLNR’s conservation and resources enforcement chief**, said photos and videos can serve as potential evidence, especially since DOCARE officers cover more than 700 miles of shoreline and nearly 1.6 million acres of state-owned land. To report illegal activity or wildlife harassment, call **(808)643-DLNR** or use the **free DLNRTips app**. Violations can also be reported to NOAA’s marine wildlife hotline at 888-256-9840.

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