

**PROTECT  
PUBLIC HEALTH**

**REVIVE  
THE ECONOMY**

**STRENGTHEN  
OUR COMMUNITY**

## **CAPITOL CONNECTION**

**MAY 2022**

# From the governor: The way forward for Hawai'i

***A**s the only island state in the nation, Hawai'i knows that climate change is real as it battles sea level rise and the effects of global warming. The good news is that our community and the Ige administration are turning urgency into action. More than ever – especially in the wake of the pandemic – we're realizing how interconnected we all are on planet Earth. This issue of Capitol Connection takes a look at how the governor and his team have led the way to protect our environment and natural resources as well as the lives of our people.*

**Q. What should we know about the current phase of COVID-19 and how are we preparing for the future?**

**A.** COVID case counts are creeping up, but so far, Hawai'i isn't seeing the kind of surges happening in other states because our people still take precautions. I saw in Long's that at least 80 percent of folks are still wearing masks. People have learned that masks can make a difference, and now they choose to wear one, even though it's not mandated. We need to stay vigilant. That's why we're implementing sewage surveillance because it provides an early warning system to indicate how prevalent the disease is and which variants are present. Sewage surveillance is like testing everyone. It means everyone participates in the sampling.

**Q. At this point, are you optimistic about the defueling of Red Hill?**

**A.** I've talked directly to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro, and they say they are fully committed to defueling and decommissioning the fuel storage site. The recent dismissal of the Navy's appeal of our emergency order and withdrawal of its lawsuit against the state is a very positive development for the people of Hawai'i. We'll continue to hold the Navy's feet to the fire to ensure the Red Hill tanks are safely defueled and closed and that the state will have access to clean, fresh water for the future.

**Q. Why have you prioritized watershed protection in your budget and why is that so important?**

**A.** Watershed protection is essential to our survival because the forests capture the fresh water that replenishes our aquifers. Many people don't appreciate the hard work and capital investment that it takes to protect our forests. With the Red Hill crisis, conserving and protecting our fresh water supply has never been more vital.



**Q. What do you want the community to know about what's been accomplished for sustainability in Hawai'i?**

**A.** I want the people of Hawai'i to feel proud of how our state is regarded as a world leader on sustainability. It's because of the high-impact actions we've taken as a community. It's about the **Sustainable Hawai'i Initiative** to protect watersheds and oceans and commit to 100% clean, renewable energy for electricity. Because of community support, we've gone to the head of the line in being willing to make choices and sacrifices to save the planet.

**Q. Some say no other Hawai'i governor has been tested with as many crises as you have, and now the state has emerged better than many expected from COVID. What would your advice be to future governors?**

**A.** I believe it's as simple as having good values, honesty and doing what's best for the community. In politics, there's always a lot of noise and people second-guessing you. When I took office, I didn't feel beholden to anyone, so I looked for the most qualified people I could find to lead the state's agencies. I wanted to make sure we shared the same good values and priorities. For every crisis, I focused on taking the best advice, then making the decisions that put the community first.



**Governor and Mrs. Ige at Diamond Head, planting rare red 'ilima.**

# Joining forces for the Earth, protecting Diamond Head

A group of volunteers – including Governor and Mrs. Ige – converged on Diamond Head State Monument April 21, along with Kanu Hawai'i members and others, to mark **Earth Day and Volunteer Week**. The group tended the 'ahi garden in the crater – home to 23 different native Hawaiian plant species. The garden was created by Kupu Hawai'i, a non-profit that aims to preserve the land while empowering youth. The Iges planted two red 'ilima, a rare endemic and endangered variety rediscovered on the 'Ewa plain.



Governor and Mrs. Ige and Kanu Hawai'i's Keone Kealoha at Diamond Head.

The governor also used the opportunity to proclaim **April 17-23 Volunteer Week Hawai'i** to celebrate the work of volunteers across the state. "It really is an honor to work side by side with so many organizations to care for this place we call home," he said. Kanu Hawai'i was the point of contact to help organize and track the week's activities. "Last year we had 231 volunteer events; this year we have over 400 statewide on six islands," said executive director Keone Kealoha. "I hope it's a trend that continues. Volunteering is part of our culture of aloha."

Also, **Diamond Head State Monument** is joining two other state parks – Ha'ena State Park on Kaua'i and Wai'anapanapa State Park on Maui – in **requiring advance reservations for out-of-state visitors, beginning May 12, 2022**. Hawai'i residents will continue to enjoy free access without reservations, but entry may depend on parking availability. The new reservation system is intended to help manage the thousands of visitors who flock to Diamond Head park each year. The system is expected to improve the experience for both residents and visitors and reduce impacts on local communities and resources.

## Setting Hawai'i on a path to energy transformation



2019 blessing on O'ahu for Hawai'i's largest series of solar farms.

**E**lectricity is something we all take for granted until the power goes out. But for Governor Ige and others, the vision has been much bigger — for us in Hawai'i, the nation and the world. "The governor is focused on solving real problems now with deeper structural changes," said Scott Glenn, director of the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO). "We're looking not only for the short-term fixes, but also long-term transformational benefits."



HSEO's Scott Glenn

The path to a clean energy future starts with making personal choices, whether it's solar panels, energy-efficient appliances or adopting cleaner forms of transportation like walking, taking the bus, using electric cars or more fuel-efficient vehicles. But it also depends on government making tough choices that could make or break our clean energy future. "In 2015, the governor came out strongly against LNG (liquefied natural gas) because he thought the short-term benefits came at the cost of our long-term future," Glenn explained. "He also said no to the out-of-state electric company NextEra because he wanted to ensure local decision-making committed to renewable energy."

Glenn said the march toward a greener future has been marked by many more milestones in Hawai'i. That includes the governor saying "yes" to the Paris climate accord, new renewable source standards for electric utilities, closing the last coal plant in the state this fall, committing to a net-negative carbon emissions goal, and being the first state in the nation to set a goal of 100% clean energy electrical generation by 2045. Since Governor Ige took office, Hawai'i has doubled its renewable energy for electricity from 20% in 2014 to 40% today. As a state, we're 8 years ahead of our 2030 goal, Glenn said.

According to national surveys, our islands have the most rooftop solar and the second-most electric cars per capita in the country. The state has also committed to more nature-based solutions, such as planting 100 million trees for the global **1 Trillion Tree initiative**, to capture more carbon than we emit. "We're also leading by example by converting our state fleets to electric cars by 2035 and laying out renewable energy projects needed to retire our oil-fired plants," said Glenn. The Ige administration has also implemented energy-saving measures at state airports, highways and harbors as well as in public schools and the UH system.



New laws promote state electric vehicle use.

"Putting clean energy options within reach of working families is the key to making progress," said the governor. President Biden's new infrastructure plan makes more funding available so Hawai'i can increase EV charging stations across communities to make it easier to drive an electric vehicle. "The infrastructure funds should help us get better rebates than we have today and buy more energy efficient appliances to lower our electricity bills," said Glenn. "We need to get to a place where we can get off oil, to make Hawai'i more energy self-sufficient and costs more predictable. That's what the governor has said all along," he continued. "That's what will create a more resilient economy for all of us, where we don't depend on other countries and the mainland U.S. to supply most of our energy needs."

# DLNR: Protecting Hawai'i, planet Earth and all of us

**E**very time you reach for a glass of water, every time you turn on the light, think what it took to make that happen. If we've learned anything during the pandemic, the Red Hill crisis and even the war in Ukraine, it's how fragile life is and how easy it is to take it for granted. For nearly eight years, Governor Ige has prioritized environmental protection and a commitment to clean energy because he saw them as central to Hawai'i's survival. "The threats from global warming keep increasing, so we have to invest in protecting what we have," he has said.

But talk, as the cynics say, is cheap. **The difference is that the Ige administration has made good on many of the goals in the Sustainable Hawai'i Initiative** announced in 2016 at the World Conservation Congress. "Early on, that gave us a clear roadmap to focus our actions over the next few years," said **Suzanne Case, director of the state Department of Land and Natural Resources**. The plan included: • Protecting 30 percent of our highest priority watersheds by 2030; • Effectively managing 30 percent of our nearshore ocean waters by 2030; • Implementing the first Hawai'i Inter-agency Biosecurity Plan by 2027; • Achieving 100 percent renewable electricity by 2045; • Doubling the state's local food production by 2020.

**And why 30 percent?** According to scientists, this number represents the "tipping point" or crucial marker beyond which it is tough to reverse negative effects. **During Governor Ige's two terms, the rate of watershed protection doubled with increased state funding.** "We're trying to maintain the fabric of our forests to maintain our water supply, provide a home for our native species and protect our coral reefs from erosion," said the governor. Among other accomplishments, director Case pointed to more effective instream flow standards for at least 47 streams – a process she said had been "stuck for decades." The goal is to protect natural, recreational and cultural resources as well as provide for agriculture, homesteading and renewable energy.



Gov. Ige and DLNR director Suzanne Case. Field technicians maintaining watersheds.



Coral bleaching: a sign of global warming.

**DLNR's kuleana spans 10 divisions and 1.3 million acres of state lands, beaches and coastal waters.** Director Case praises her dedicated staff who do the heavy lifting on every island. She has dealt with her own share of contentious issues — from water rights to the Thirty Meter Telescope. But despite it all, she said, "I love this job, even though it's hard every, single day. You're right at the ridgeline where there are people on one side or the other of an issue, and you have to figure it out. People are always mad at you because you're not doing things their way. **You're always just trying to navigate the best course in difficult situations — just like the governor.** But if you just govern by our constitution and stick with the guiding principles — the public trust — those are pretty good guideposts. Things go sideways when people try to protect some particular interest rather than the public good. **If you stick with the public good and fairness, you can usually find your way.**"

**Why did she decide to take on the job back in 2015?** "I had spent my whole career with The Nature Conservancy, but I thought this was the ultimate way to make good on my commitment to natural resources," she said. "I lucked out working for Governor Ige because his values are in the right place. I'm very proud that, with the governor's leadership and support, we've been able to make significant progress." **And how does she feel about the global environmental outlook?** "I'm encouraged by the number of people in governments and communities just doing whatever they can. There's a public sense that things need to change. The fact that Hawai'i is a leader in actions being taken to address climate change is a good microcosm for the world. **We have to do it ourselves. We can't wait for anybody else to fix this problem. If everyone does their part, we'll have a chance.**"

## Governor takes on social media challenge from Jason Momoa

**P**eople across the globe rallied during Earth Week last month – including Hollywood. Award-winning actor **Jason Momoa issued a challenge to social media users** to share what they're doing to protect the planet. For some, that's swapping single-use plastic bottles for reusable canteens or using a tote bag instead of a plastic bag.

**As the leader of an entire state, Governor Ige** has made large-scale efforts to protect the planet. One of those efforts includes pledging to grow, conserve, and restore one hundred million trees in the State of Hawai'i by the year 2030. It's part of a larger project, called **The Trillion-Tree Initiative**, that aims to save one trillion trees worldwide. Hawai'i is fulfilling that promise by protecting already established forests, planting trees in those forests, and planting in urban areas, among other activities. Check out the governor's response to Momoa's video [here](#) and see what other social media users are doing to protect the planet by looking up the hashtag #makewaves.



Jason Momoa and Governor Ige making waves.

# Celebrating the queen's legacy at Washington Place

If May is a season of hope and renewal, it also provides a reminder for Hawai'i's people to remember our past, take care of each other and protect the natural beauty of the islands we love. If you haven't yet visited Washington Place, there's no better time than this month.

**Washington Place 175<sup>th</sup> celebration – Save Sunday, May 29** as the date to watch a KHON2-TV special on this historic home and Queen Lili'uokalani's life there. A new exhibit, curated by DeSoto Brown of Bishop Museum, takes visitors back in time to view treasured photos and artifacts. "We wanted to describe her family background, her music and her legacy," said First



Bandmaster Clarke Bright with the Iges.

Lady Dawn Amano-Ige. "We included 'Aloha Oe' in particular because it was a popular piece that gained a lot of recognition around the world. The queen was also very concerned with taking care of her people and providing an education for girls."

**Last month, a three-day commemoration** of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary included a memorable concert by the Royal Hawaiian Band. "It's been a true honor to share the Queen's story and appreciation for the residence's remarkable history," said Mrs. Ige. For anyone who hasn't had a chance to see Washington Place, free tours are available every Thursday at 10 a.m., with group size limited and COVID-19 precautions in place. Go to <https://washingtonplace.hawaii.gov/tours-and-gardens/> to make a reservation. Virtual tours are also available at the Washington Place website.

## Education milestones for women in WCCC programs

It was a ceremony filled with chicken-skin moments as 31 women at the Women's Community Correctional Center were honored for completing several educational programs, including GED, GED tutor training, and Windward CC and Kapi'olani CC classes. Governor and Mrs. Ige, Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald, Rep. Linda Ichiyama and other officials attended.

The Hawai'i Friends for Restorative Justice was able to expand and continue important educational work at WCCC with the help of the **Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER)** grant awarded to them last August. "These women have taken an important step toward fulfilling their true potential," said the governor. "I'm proud of their progress and the role the GEER program played in supporting these women."



Proud WCCC graduates celebrate their success.

## Kaua'i marks progress in caring for people, resources



Mayor Kawakami and the Iges at Lihue Airport blessing.

**A** March 22 trip by Governor and Mrs. Ige to Kaua'i showed ways the island is leading by example on many fronts — from clean energy and destination management to airport modernization and homelessness services. The visit underscored the importance of county and state governments working together to help local residents. "I think Kaua'i is the model of destination management for the state," the governor told the Garden Island newspaper. "We've learned a lot together about managing visitor numbers in areas like Ha'ena State Park — changing the visitor industry and focusing on regenerative tourism. It's not just about getting more and more visitors; it's about educating them about our unique culture." Kaua'i Mayor Derek Kawakami helped host the visit to report on progress made.

The governor also talked with officials from **KIUC**, the island's electricity cooperative. KIUC is rapidly closing in on reaching a 70 percent renewable energy goal by 2030 — a full decade ahead of the Hawai'i statewide goal. Since purchasing Kaua'i Electric in 2002, KIUC has embarked on perhaps the most ambitious shift to renewable energy sources anywhere in the American electric utility industry, said company officials. Mrs. Ige also praised the mayor and the KIUC Foundation for their support of her **'Ohana Readers program** to improve literacy among keiki on the island.

During the visit, the governor also stressed investing in reliable infrastructure to support economic growth. This includes the \$8.5 million for the **newly expanded Lihue Airport ticket lobby** and other improvements and millions for **Kūhiō Highway and Wailuā River Bridge repair**. He also praised **Pua Loke**, which serves families at risk for homelessness with transitional housing and affordable rentals.

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