



# CAPITOL CONNECTION

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Courtesy Tyler Kruse

## From the governor: Urgency into action for Hawai‘i’s future

**A**s the **only island state in the nation**, Hawai‘i is already feeling the impact of climate change. It’s part of our everyday reality in the face of “king tides,” sea level rise and threatened watersheds and shorelines. The good news is the Ige administration is turning **urgency into action** as Hawai‘i grapples with balancing conservation and growth. This issue and future issues will talk about what Governor David Ige, his team and a network of community partners are doing to protect our resources and lead the way to a cleaner, “greener” future.

**Q. Do you think people are taking climate change seriously?**

**A.** I think people are realizing more and more that global warming is real. The Hawai‘i Climate Commission’s statewide report (see story on Page 2) gives us maps and a visual sense of what a 3.2-foot sea level rise would mean for different communities. That awareness is the first step. Their report, which I urge everyone to read online, provides a basis for some very, very tough decisions on every island involving our economy and our state’s long-term future.



**Q. Why have you prioritized watershed protection among your budget requests?**

**A.** Watershed protection is essential to our survival because the trees capture the fresh water that replenishes our aquifers. Many people don’t appreciate the hard work and capital investment it takes to protect our forests. We’re halfway to our goal of protecting 30 percent of our priority watersheds statewide, but we need more support at many levels. We also need to continue to work with private landowners through our watershed partnerships, and we’re seeking companies that want to invest in the environment.

**Q. Is the state on track to meet its clean energy goals?**

**A.** Yes, we’re actually ahead of schedule in delivering 100 percent clean energy for electricity by 2045. Renewable energy now accounts for about 27 percent of utility electricity sales in the state, so our interim goal of 30 percent by 2020 is definitely within reach. More renewable energy projects coming online means less fossil fuel and greenhouse gases that increase global warming. Setting these goals, as I did in our **Sustainable Hawai‘i initiative**, is **important** because it focuses the state’s long-term plans. It’s about **action, not just talk**.



**GOING GREEN:** (top) Governor and Mrs. Ige with Kupu CEO John Leong and students at the Green Jobs and Community Center. To mark Earth Day statewide, the governor joined families at a Blue Planet Foundation event in Mō‘ili‘ili to map the impact of sea level rise.

**Q. Why was it important for Hawai‘i to commit to the Paris Climate Agreement and join the U.S. Climate Alliance? Why is sustainability for the state personally important to you?**

**A.** It’s about exerting local leadership, especially when the Trump administration has taken alarming steps backward in environmental protection. Clearly, the rest of the world agrees that climate change is real, and it’s up to the nation’s governors to lead. Being the first state to align with the goals of the Paris Accord demonstrates that Hawai‘i can lead by example. I’m proud to be governor of a state that understands **we have to leave things better for the next generation**.



# Governor signs historic ‘Our Care, Our Choice’ legislation

Beginning Jan. 1, 2019, mentally capable, terminally ill people with six months or less to live will have the option to take prescription medication that enables them to die peacefully in their sleep. That is the result of Governor Ige signing into law the “**Our Care, Our Choice**” Act on April 5.

“It is time for terminally ill, mentally competent Hawai‘i residents who are suffering to make their own end-of-life choices with dignity, grace and peace,” said the governor. “We know that our loved ones will eventually die, but they don’t need to suffer.” He said the law ensures the patient is in full control.



COMPASSION AND CHOICE: Gov. Ige, legislators and advocate John Radcliffe gather for the signing of HB 2739.

The bill is modeled after Oregon’s Death with Dignity Act, which has been in effect for 20 years. It includes strict eligibility criteria and safeguards that ensure a safe, compassionate and patient-centered end-of-life practice. The measure also makes it a criminal offense to tamper with a patient’s request for a prescription or to coerce a patient to request a prescription.

Among those present for the bill signing was retired lobbyist John Radcliffe, who was diagnosed in 2014 with stage 4 colon cancer. “Finally, after nearly 20 years, we have a law that permits mercy in dying,” he said. Radcliffe thanked Governor Ige and state legislators, particularly Sen. Rosalyn Baker, for their support.

## Rising tides: Call to action in statewide climate report

More extreme high tides and record high levels of flooding. . . eroding shorelines, coral bleaching and threatened watersheds and native forests. The Ige administration is taking climate change seriously. In fact, the recent “**Hawai‘i Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report**” from the state’s **Climate Commission** should be required reading for everyone.

The report provides the **first-ever, statewide threat assessment for rising coastal waters and recommendations to increase our capacity to adapt** — all based on the best available science on climate change and sea level rise. It includes inundation maps for every island based on a projection of 3.2 feet of sea level rise by the end of this century. Where possible, it also quantifies the potential damage to homes, schools, roads, farms, hotels and utilities and represents a call to action for the whole state to address these issues sooner, not later.

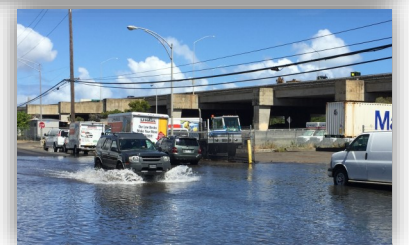


“**Governor Ige’s actions to protect our environment** have brought a huge focus to these issues — especially at a time when the federal government seems to be abandoning these commitments,” said DLNR director Suzanne Case, who co-chairs the Climate Commission with state Office of Planning director Leo Asuncion. “On Governor Ige’s initiative, Hawai‘i is a member of the U.S. Climate Alliance, supporting bipartisan and state-level commitments to uphold our nation’s commitments under the Paris Agreement. Hawai‘i and other states are stepping up to say we have to do this ourselves.”



“The governor’s **Sustainable Hawai‘i initiative** tackles the issues facing our forests and reefs, biosecurity, local food production and renewable energy and sets achievable goals,” Case continued. “The important thing is we’re coming to grips with this now and **turning this huge threat of climate change into action**. It will strengthen our state’s resolve to do our part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and set an example for larger states.”

That means persistent, targeted efforts by a whole network of citizens, businesses, community groups and state and county agencies — not just a single office — to make resiliency for the islands a priority, not merely a political buzzword. For details and videos on state efforts, go to the Hawai‘i Climate Commission’s portal at <http://climateadaptation.hawaii.gov/>.



STATEWIDE SEA LEVEL RISE: (from top) A map from the Climate Commission report. Tides wash across Honoapi'ilani Highway on Maui. Flooding in Mapunapuna and Sand Island already threatens businesses.

# Governor, state mobilize recovery efforts after storm



**HELP ON THE WAY:** Gov. Ige surveyed the damage on Kaua'i with Mayor Bernard Carvalho and with Mayor Kirk Caldwell in 'Āina Haina on O'ahu. The governor made available millions in state funds and is taking steps to secure federal disaster relief.

**F**rom Hā'ena, Wainiha and Kōloa on Kaua'i to Waimānalo and Niu Valley on O'ahu, the scenes are devastating: flooded homes, businesses and farmlands, knee-deep mud and floating debris everywhere. In the hardest hit areas on Kaua'i, residents and tourists boarded Hawai'i Air National Guard, Army and county helicopters to evacuate since many places were isolated by landslides and left without electricity and water after the storm.

**Governor Ige issued emergency proclamations** for Kaua'i and O'ahu so state monies can be appropriated for speedy, efficient relief of damages. The governor and Kaua'i Mayor Bernard Carvalho, along with military and county emergency crews, surveyed

damaged areas in the Hanalei area by helicopter immediately after the storm. On O'ahu, the American Red Cross reported three homes destroyed in Kuliouou and others that sustained major or minor damage in East O'ahu areas. The governor made \$500,000 available immediately for emergency response and another \$10 million in transportation funding for roadways.

**"We are mobilizing state assets to get people the help they need,"** said the governor. He said the state is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assess damages. "We have contacted the White House so they can be prepared when we're ready to request a federal disaster declaration."

## For Kaua'i and Maui, landmark decisions on water issues

**S**ometimes the best decisions come when people work together to find solutions. That was the case on Kaua'i and Maui when the subject was water and the key stakeholders resolved to find solutions to water allocations without years of contentious court battles.

"It totally took Governor Ige's and this administration's focus on resolving water issues proactively — **establishing meaningful in-stream flow standards and balancing uses in a positive way,**" said DLNR director Suzanne Case. "The decisions changed how we operate — from being tied up in litigation for 15 years and instead trying to resolve things through a much more inclusive process."

**In the Kaua'i case,** a mediated settlement approved by the Hawai'i State Water Commission last year, immediately restored continuous flows in West Kaua'i's Waimea River. It was needed because the old water diversion system was designed originally to provide water for sugarcane operations in West Kaua'i. The settlement resulted in water allocations for a wide range of needs, including agriculture, renewable energy, homes and businesses in the area. It also allocates water for homesteading use by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands.

**"I encouraged the water commission to find a settlement rather than litigate it in court,"** said Governor Ige. "What was groundbreaking for Kaua'i was that for the first time we had a solution that supported all the goals we have in managing our water resources. We set aside water for DHHL, hydroelectric facilities, agriculture and the taro farmers. This was the first settlement that balances all of the priority water uses involved in the stream." **A DLNR mini-documentary** at <https://vimeo.com/239156037> tells the story from the viewpoint of those involved.

**In the Maui case,** the water commission got the stakeholders together — including kuleana landowners, taro farmers and new tenants — and hammered out an agreement based on what people thought were the priority uses and the amounts of water needed from four West Maui streams. Since the 1930s, the streams had been diverted as part of sugar cane plantation irrigation systems. In a Maui News article, a Kauanula Valley resident said, "It's not kuleana versus the new tenants. The most important thing is the whole ecosystem of these valleys. . . **We have a chance to fix things that we never had before.**" The governor and Case both praised the work of the commission in working through the potentially controversial issues. "It was the Commission's staff talking to people, analyzing stream and rain data and proposing in-stream flow standards," said Case. "It's getting ahead of the curve instead of just having it remain status quo or responding to litigation. **We think it's a good model going forward.**"



**LIFE-GIVING:** Resolving long-standing water issues has been a priority.



# Community celebrates opening of Nānākuli Public Library

A crowd of well-wishers and book lovers, including Governor Ige and first lady Dawn Amano-Ige, key area legislators and community supporters, turned out April 14 for the grand opening of the long-awaited \$15.5 million **Nānākuli Public Library** last month. “I am confident this library will serve as the heart of our community, providing keiki through kūpuna, with a place to learn and thrive,” said the governor. “When our children were young, our family visited the Aiea-Peal City library regularly, and we know it is a beehive of activity,” said the governor. “While the way we get information is different today, libraries remain a vital part of the community.”

After the ceremony, everyone entered excitedly to explore the new space with its 35,000 books, 3,000 DVDs and CDs, free wireless internet access for library card holders and 32 computers for public and library use. The library, which is designed to be environmentally friendly, features self-checkout stations, a small business service center, meeting rooms and facilities to record oral histories by older residents and other community members.



Governor and Mrs. Ige joined Nānākuli Library staff, families and community leaders to celebrate the grand opening of the new facility.

## Waipahu High Early College ‘Olympians’ first to earn degrees

This month 12 exceptional Waipahu High students will be the first in the state to graduate with their associate in arts college degrees — *before* they even receive their high school diplomas. That feat by the **Early College “Olympians”** is a testament to their own determination and the success of a program that has expanded to 38 other high schools on six islands through an initiative supported by Governor Ige.

**Early College started in Waipahu in 2012** as a joint project with Leeward Community College and funding from the McInerney Foundation to cover costs so students could attend college classes tuition-free. A \$1 million

allocation to the program from the governor in 2017 is helping students statewide earn college credits tuition-free. “This program is life-changing,” said Governor Ige, who did a **Facebook Live session April 10** with the Olympians, principal Keith Hayashi and Waipahu’s Early College coordinator Mark Silliman. “We heard the Olympians’ inspirational stories of how the program helped them realize they could do college work,” the governor continued. “It gave them self-confidence to pursue their dreams while saving their families tuition money. **That’s why I’ve supported funding the program for every high school in the state.**” To see the Facebook Live session, go to [https://youtu.be/OIDjisO\\_6kU](https://youtu.be/OIDjisO_6kU). For a list of schools with Early College classes, go to <http://bit.ly/2EY3ED2>.



The Early College Olympians with coordinator Mark Silliman (far left) and principal Keith Hayashi.

## Restoring lives with Kupu

Governor Ige and first lady Dawn Amano-Ige joined leaders from non-profit Kupu and its community partners at a groundbreaking last month for a **Green Jobs and Community Center** at Kewalo Harbor. The \$6 million project will transform the former state-owned “net shed” into classroom space, meeting rooms and a commercial kitchen.

“We are not just restoring a building, we are restoring lives,” said Kupu CEO John Leong. He praised Kupu’s team that has served “nearly 4,000 youths across the state, put millions of plants in the ground and removed over 100,000 invasive species.” The organization, established in 2007, combines vocational training, conservation and environmental stewardship at 150 partner sites statewide and across the Pacific region.



Gov. Ige with Kupu CEO John Leong and community partners at groundbreaking.

Governor Ige said Kupu’s programs support many of his administration’s priorities in education, preserving the environment and spurring the economy. “Kupu’s program participants are contributing to the future of our state and strengthening Hawai’i’s much-needed green jobs workforce. They’re also teaching other young people about the importance of taking care of our environment and culture,” he added.



# Protecting the ‘fabric of our forests’ key to survival

Every time you reach for a glass of water, think about what it took to get it to you. That’s the plea from the staff at the state’s **Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and their watershed partners**. Fresh water is something most of us take for granted, yet without it our communities couldn’t survive. Whether we realize it or not, it takes an army of people to make sure water is there when we need it. That includes those who trek into the mountains to do the heavy lifting, day after day, while the rest of us stay warm and dry and just turn on the tap.

That’s also why **Governor Ige has prioritized funding for watershed protection, fencing and other initiatives statewide**. “We’re trying to maintain the fabric of our forests to keep us in water, provide a home for our native species and protect our coral reefs from erosion,” said the governor. “The threats from climate change keep increasing so we have to invest in protecting what we have.”

Across the state, a network of **10 Watershed Partnerships** on five islands work together to protect and prevent the loss of more native forests. These voluntary alliances of public and private landowners maintain protective fences, combat threats of hooved animals such as pigs, goats and deer, control invasive species and plant more native forests. They include 74 private landowners and public agencies that cover over 2.2 million acres.

DLNR director Suzanne Case said this protection involves “continuous nitty-gritty work” that most of us never see. “The people who do this are very passionate about Hawai’i and very dedicated,” she explained. “It’s cold, it’s wet and it’s dangerous work — building fences, removing invasive plants and animals. Sometimes the workers have to camp out on platforms for a week at a time because the forest floor is so spongy.”

**The Ige administration has committed to protecting 30 percent of our priority watersheds by 2030**. Currently, 16 percent of these watershed forests are fenced, actively managed and protected, but continued funding and support are needed. “We’re not even talking about all forests, but rather the best, most intact native forests with the richest diversity and complexity to capture water better,” said Case. “We think 30 percent is achievable if we can maintain our public investments.”

Case said we need protection as well as restoration for what has been destroyed. A recent partnership between **DLNR, Coca-Cola and the Ko’olau Mountains Watershed Partnership** is helping to protect 1,400 acres of native forest in the Waiawa watershed — a major recharge area for the Pearl Harbor Aquifer, which supplies most of O’ahu’s drinking water.

**A \$200,000 grant from Coca-Cola** will be used for construction of a 6.6 mile-long protective fence to prevent invasive plants and animals from degrading the surrounding forest. Other monies have come from the Honolulu Board of Water Supply and state watershed capital improvement project funds.

In addition, Coca-Cola employees based in Hawai’i are volunteering to plant native koa trees in the Ko’olau Mountains watershed to help restore the forest. The company said the project is its first public-private partnership in Hawai’i as part of a nationwide commitment to return 100 percent of the water used in its bottling operations across the country.

DLNR’s Division of Forestry and Wildlife is encouraging partnerships for both watershed protection and carbon sequestration. The **forest carbon sequestration projects** help reduce the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide that contributes to global climate change. The “carbon credits” can be made available to companies and organizations that want to offset their carbon footprint and help provide funding for environmental projects. For more details, go to <http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/forestry/frs/initiatives/freshwater-replenishment/> and <http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/forestry/frs/initiatives/forestcarbon/>.



**WATERSHED PROTECTORS:** (from top) Gov. Ige and DLNR director Suzanne Case. Field technicians doing watershed management work. Coca-Cola volunteers in the Ko’olau Mountains watershed.



# Finding the balance: OEQC and Environmental Council

Accountability. Fairness. Maintaining a balance between conservation and economic development while getting public feedback. That's the mission of **Hawai'i's Environmental Council and the Office of Environmental Quality Control (OEQC)** under the Ige administration.

The **Environmental Council is a citizen-led volunteer group** appointed by the governor to act as a link between the public and the governor, legislature and federal, state and county agencies on projects that affect communities. Their role is to ensure that a fair, balanced review process is followed for a project — whether it's a building, bridge, bikeway or beach. That's no small matter since some of the projects — either by a public agency or a private entity — could involve a wide range of environmental, social, economic, and cultural impacts. "The council's role is to help highlight citizen concerns," said **OEQC director Scott Glenn**. "It's a pathway to let the public know what's being planned to avoid bad impacts."

**Now, for the first time in more than 20 years**, the rules governing the process for environmental assessments (EA) and environmental impact statements (EIS) are undergoing comprehensive updating. Public hearings on the latest draft of these rules will be held this month (See schedule). For the first time in several years, the 15-member council includes at least one representative from every island — Lana'i, Moloka'i, Maui, Kaua'i, Hawai'i and O'ahu. The new chair, **Puananionaona "Onaona" Thoene**, is an attorney with the Carlsmith Ball law firm. Other members come from business, community development, non-profits, engineering, urban planning, and environmental education.

"We all have full-time jobs, but we want to use our experience to contribute to the community," said Thoene. "We all want to make this process better for everyone." **She praised the revitalization of the council to bring openness to the planning process.** "Scott and Governor Ige made a huge effort to fill all the council seats so now we can meet quorum and take action," she said. "Balancing conservation and development is a really important thing."

**Why update the rules now?** The revisions are part of a broader effort by the OEQC and the council to make the processes **more understandable and accessible**. "We wanted to modernize the rules to make it easier for the public to participate and incorporate emerging issues like climate change," said Glenn. His office also improved the format of the twice monthly bulletin, "**The Environmental Notice**" — one of the main public sources of project information on each island — and made it easier for citizens to look up EAs and EISes. Citizens can also go to the OEQC website to receive the bulletin in their email as well as updates on the rule revision process. "We've tried a friendlier approach to capture the balance between development and the environment," said Glenn. "The law that governs what the Environmental Council and OEQC do is about public engagement." **Thoene added, "It's not favoring one side over the other. We try to stay true to that."**



Scott Glenn and Onaona Thoene

## Environmental Council public hearings

Amendments are posted online at <http://health.hawaii.gov/oeqc/rules-update>

**O'ahu** - May 21, 9 - 11 am, State Capitol Auditorium; and May 21, 6 - 8 pm, Department of Health board room, 1250 Punchbowl St.

**Hawai'i island - Hilo** - May 22, 9 - 11 am, Hawai'i Environmental Health conference room, 1582 Kamehameha Ave.; **Kona** - May 22, 5 - 7 pm, West Hawai'i Civic Center, council chambers, Kailua-Kona.

**Moloka'i** - Thursday, May 24, 3 - 5 pm, Mitchell Pauole Community Center, Kaunakakai.

**Kaua'i** - Tuesday May 29, 6 - 8 pm, Wilcox Elementary School cafeteria, Lihue.

**Lana'i** - Wednesday, May 30, 3 - 5 pm, Lana'i High and Elementary School cafeteria, Lana'i City.

**Maui** - Thursday, May 31, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Wailuku State Office Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor conference room A,B,C; and May 31, 5 - 7 pm, Maui Waena Intermediate School cafeteria, Kahului.



## New solar farms in 2019

ENERGY PROGRESS: Gov. Ige and community partners at NRG ceremony.

**T**he state's goal of producing 100 percent clean, renewable energy for electricity generation by 2045 took a major step forward in January as **NRG Energy** broke ground for three solar farms on O'ahu. The partnership with Hawaiian Electric Co. and Kamehameha Schools and others is expected to produce enough new electricity to power 32,000 homes.

**"Building solar energy at this scale represents tremendous progress toward our renewable energy goals," said the governor.** The solar farms at Kawailoa, Mililani and Waipio are expected to be completed in 2019. Hawaiian Electric president Alan Oshima said close to 300,000 gallons of fossil fuel won't have to be imported to make electricity when the three projects are completed. The projects will prevent 90,000 tons of carbon from entering the atmosphere — the equivalent of planting 2 million trees.

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