



Cultural Issues Relating to Hawaii's Energy Future

Cultural Issues Working Group of the Hawaii Energy Policy Forum

The Cultural Issues Working Group (CIWG) is comprised mainly of representatives from the Hawaiian Services Institutions and Agencies (HSIA). The CIWG felt the issue of energy development in Hawai'i was so critical that Native Hawaiians should be considered as major stakeholders and empowered to play a significant role in influencing decisions relating to Hawaii's energy future. As such, CIWG decided to draft a Statement of Purpose and Call to Action to begin the process of empowering Native Hawaiians to become involved in the visioning and decision making process.

Statement of Purpose

In general, CIWG believes that any energy vision and policy for Hawai'i's future must be framed and founded on what is "pono" (right) for Hawaii and its people. It should also be pono for the world, because more than ever, the world has become interconnected and in essence, an island society. In the spirit of Aloha and ho'olauna (sharing) and as a ho'okupu (offering to honor) our akua and aumakua, we offer as a framework for discussion and decision-making what Native Hawaiians referred to as, "Piko Ekolu," the three Piko:

1. Piko Po'o – The cultural values learned from our ancestors, including konohiki (stewardship), malama (care for), and kuleana (responsibility). It also refers to the lessons learned relating to how our ancestors managed to sustain their resources and thrive as a people through the use of practices such as ahupua'a (mountain to sea) management and the kapu system (traditional regulatory system used by our ancestors to conserve and sustain resources).
2. Piko Opu – The lessons being learned by today's generation and how it helps us make the transition to the future.
3. Piko Ma'i – Future generations need to thrive as well.

Call to Action

With Piko Ekolu as a guide, CIWG supports the gathering of input from the broader Hawaiian community and the inclusion of a diversity of opinions. It recommends a call to action that includes the following goal, objectives, and specific activities:

1. Goal – Native Hawaiians empowered to become involved in the decision-making process of policies regarding energy development in Hawaii.
2. Objectives
 - a. Gather input from Hawaiian communities.
 - b. Develop educational/informational materials on different types of energy resources and development.
 - c. Educate/inform general public regarding cultural framework around which any energy policy is formulated.
 - d. Report recommendations (majority and minority reports) to Hawai'i Energy Policy Forum.

Twelve specific activities were identified to achieve these objectives, and work is continuing.

To see the full report go to the Hawaii Energy Policy Forum's website at:
< http://hawaiienergypolicy.hawaii.edu/ciwg_rpt.pdf >



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Opportunities for Addressing Low Income Energy Issues

Energy Rates Working Group of the Hawaii Energy Policy Forum

The Energy Rates Working Group (ERWG) is comprised of federal, state, and community agencies serving low and moderate income residents. Focus was on the concerns of low and moderate income households in meeting their energy needs today and in the future.

The ERWG found that energy rates in Hawaii are considerably higher than the national average. Energy cost is a heavy burden for low-income households and especially so for welfare recipients. Many are sacrificing other necessities in order to pay energy bills so that any increase in energy costs would be intolerable. Therefore, even though it would lower their energy bill in the long run, they are generally not in a position to invest in energy-saving devices. Particularly hard-hit are the Neighbor Islands, where both poverty rates and energy rates are higher than on O'ahu.

There are a number of government and utility programs to address low-income energy issues. The State of Hawai'i, along with most states, employs two approaches to help low-income families with their energy needs: (1) weatherization, focusing on improving buildings, and (2) bill payment assistance, which provides direct payments for utility bills. Most of the financial resources come from the federal government. The utilities also have programs, such as low-interest loans and rebates for solar water heaters, which can benefit lower-income households.

The ERWG found that the above programs are useful, but the demand for assistance far surpasses the funds available. Research revealed a large number of other government and utility programs being implemented elsewhere. Therefore the ERWG recommends that, apart from increasing existing programs, these other possibilities should be considered for assisting low-income energy consumers.

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