



ENERGY: POWER, PEOPLE, AND PLACE

Bringing together leaders, policymakers, cooperatives, and energy innovators, the 2026 Hawaii Energy Conference will discuss pathways to resilience and sustainability using firm (dispatchable source) power, while incorporating the lessons learned from successful indigenous projects.

From geothermal in Hawaii to energy projects on tribal lands and cooperative models across the U.S. and New Zealand, participants will share experiences and strategies for advancing energy solutions while maintaining harmony with local landscapes and traditions.

Join us May 20 and 21 to engage in meaningful dialogue on how policy, technology, and cultural wisdom can shape a resilient and more affordable energy future across all generations.

REGISTER NOW

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20

7:00 AM **REGISTRATION |** Founders Courtyard
CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

8:00 **CULTURAL OPENING |** Castle Theater
E KOMO MAI (WELCOME)

Leslie Wilkins, President and CEO, Maui Economic Development Board, Inc.

WELCOME

Richard Bissen, Jr., Mayor, County of Maui

8:30 **OPENING KEYNOTE**

New Zealand born with deep ties to Hawaii (his wife is Kanaka Maoli), Mana Newton will give insight into how geothermal energy projects are providing revenue to indigenous residents of Aotearoa, NZ, in a manner that is intended to be respectful to the culture. These projects are not hypothetical, they are real projects providing both needed electricity and needed funding.



Mana Newton
Group CEO
Tauhara North No. 2 Trust, New Zealand

9:00 RESILIENCE & MICROGRIDS

Lessons from Remote and Island Communities: selected areas share lessons on microgrids, storage, and resilient infrastructure. Format could be a rapid case-study panel + moderated discussion

Moderated by:

Robert “Rocky” Mould, Executive Director, Hawaii Solar Energy Association

10:00 COFFEE BREAK AND EXHIBIT SESSION

10:30 DEEP DIVE: WATER AND ENERGY

Despite being surrounded by water, many communities in Hawai‘i face ongoing water shortages—including those in areas impacted by the 2023 fires. This panel will explore current and emerging options for seawater desalination, the status of desalination plans on O‘ahu and Maui, and the energy challenges that influence the feasibility and cost of these technologies.

Transitioning from a background in design and construction and 15 years in local government—**Ben Sullivan** is collaborating to support innovative built environment solutions for energy, water, waste, and transportation that center community ownership and sustainability as keys to affordability and resilience in Hawaii.

10:30 FEATURED PRESENTATION | THE “MAUI METHOD”

Christopher Wegner, Hazard Mitigation Specialist, Maui Emergency Management Agency

10:45 HIGHER SOLAR COSTS & 100% RPS

If tariffs and decreasing tax credits make solar more expensive, should Hawaii re-think its commitment to clean energy? Changing state and federal policies could make electricity costs from utility-scale and distributed PV projects in Hawaii higher than “avoided cost” of burning fossil fuel for the first time in decades. Will this affect customers’ appetite for solar? How will the industry and regulators adjust? Should this change Hawaii’s quest for 100% renewable generation by 2045?

Moderated by:

Wren Wescoatt, VP of Development, Longroad Energy

Panelists:

Jeffrey Mikulina, Climate and Social Impact Strategist, Climate Hawaii

Nicola Park, Director, Clearway Energy

Josh Powell, CEO and Co-Founder, RevoluSun

11:45 NETWORKING LUNCH | Founders Courtyard

EXHIBIT SESSION WITH DESSERTS | Exhibit Hall

1:15 PM FEATURED PRESENTATION

1:30 CYBER RESILIENCE

2:30 AFTERNOON BREAK

3:00

BEST PRACTICES IN PERMITTING AND POLICIES

As communities work to deploy resilient and dispatchable energy resources, permitting and regulatory processes often become a major barrier. Projects frequently cross local, state, federal, and indigenous jurisdictions, creating complex approval pathways that can delay urgently needed energy investments. At the same time, permitting systems exist for important reasons: to protect environmental resources, respect cultural values, and ensure meaningful community engagement. This panel will explore how governments, utilities, and project developers can streamline permitting processes while maintaining these essential safeguards, and share lessons on cross-agency coordination, early stakeholder engagement, and policy approaches that help accelerate responsible energy development.

**4:00-
5:30 PM**

NETWORKING RECEPTION | Exhibit Hall

THURSDAY, MAY 21

7:00 AM REGISTRATION

CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST | Founders Courtyard

8:00

OVERVIEW OF DAY ONE AND DEEP DIVE

Jacqui Hoover, Chair, Conference Program Committee; Executive Director and COO Hawaii Island Economic Development Board (HIEDB); and President Hawaii Leeward Planning

8:30

POWER, PEOPLE, AND PLACE (90 min)

Starting plenary conversation with cultural leaders, energy executives, and policymakers on how Hawaii is redefining “generation”—power generation, cultural generation, and generational responsibility. Models from Hawaii, Tribal Nations, and the Pacific. How communities are designing and governing their own projects, what works, what fails, and what others can learn. Geothermal energy in Hawaii. What is the right model?

Moderated by:

Nā‘ālehu Anthony, Activist, changemaker and storyteller

Jacqui Hoover, Chair, Conference Program Committee; Executive Director and COO Hawaii Island Economic Development Board (HIEDB); and President Hawaii Leeward Planning

Panelists:

Andy Blair, Co-Founder & Director, Upflow

Mana Newton, Group CEO, Tauhara North No. 2 Trust, New Zealand

10:00

COFFEE BREAK AND EXHIBIT SESSION | Exhibit Hall

10:30

FEATURED PRESENTATION

10:45

LNG IN HAWAII

Liquefied natural gas (LNG) has periodically surfaced in Hawai‘i’s energy discussions, but many key assumptions about its costs, emissions, and infrastructure requirements remain uncertain. This panel will explore what it would actually take to introduce LNG into the state’s energy system. Panelists will examine potential supply pathways, landed cost considerations, infrastructure needs, and the economic and regulatory challenges associated with LNG development in Hawai‘i. The discussion will focus on identifying key barriers, risks, and opportunities as stakeholders evaluate whether and how LNG could fit within Hawai‘i’s evolving energy landscape.

Moderated by:

Jennifer Potter, Faculty Energy Specialist, Hawaii Natural Energy Institute (HNEI)

11:45

NETWORKING LUNCH | Founders Courtyard

EXHIBIT SESSION WITH DESSERT | Exhibit Hall

1:15 PM

FEATURED PRESENTATION

1:30

RENEWABLE FUEL SUPPLY FOR HAWAII

HECO is preparing its next round of firm renewable energy generation procurement. Hawaii Gas has submitted its Integrated Resource Plan, issued its Renewable Natural Gas and Hydrogen RFP, and submitted its Renewable Gas Tariff. Where is the biofuel going to come from? Who’s working on this? What kind of fuel, what is it made from, and where from? What’s the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions carbon intensity? What’s the status of projects? What is the assessed beneficial impact? What’s the plan to synchronize or deconflict fuel use and land use between Hawaii’s two regulated energy utility sectors? How about between local production of feedstock versus ground-mounted solar versus importation infrastructure?

2:30

AFTERNOON BREAK | Exhibit Hall

3:00

CULTIVATING A ROBUST CLEAN ENERGY WORKFORCE

A session exploring the needs for recruiting, training and retaining, to facilitate the development of the diverse workforce needed for Hawaii’s clean energy transition. Could include: union leaders, educators, utilities, young professionals panel

4:00

CLOSING

4:15 -

WOMEN IN RENEWABLE ENERGY (WIRE) PAU HANA | Founders Courtyard

5:45 PM

Enjoy live music and light appetizers as you network with WiRE members. Open to all attendees.

2026 Program Committee

- Beth Amaro** | Member Services and Communications Manager, Kauai Island Utility Cooperative
- Colton Ching** | Senior Vice President, Planning & Technology, Hawaiian Electric
- Michael Colón** | Director, Energy Sector, Ulupono Initiative
- Jacqui Hoover** | Chair, Conference Program Committee; Executive Director and COO Hawaii Island Economic Development Board (HIEDB); and President Hawaii Leeward Planning
- Damien Kim** | Business Manager/Financial Secretary, International Brotherhood Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 1186
- Jonathan Koehn** | Director, Climate Initiatives Department, City of Boulder
- Doug McLeod** | Member, DKK Energy Services, LLC
- Robert "Rocky" Mould** | Executive Director, Hawaii Solar Energy Association
- Jennifer Potter** | Faculty Energy Specialist, Hawaii Natural Energy Institute (HNEI)
- Joelle Simonpietri** | Owner, Simonpietri Enterprises LLC
- Wren Wescoatt** | VP of Development, Longroad Energy
- Jennifer Zelko-Schlueter** | Director, Government and Community Relations, Hawaiian Electric