

Project Description

Background

Hawai'i, like many other states, has an energy policy that calls for reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels by increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy resources. Despite innumerable plans and studies of energy options over the last three decades, Hawai'i's dependence on imported fossil fuels has actually increased. This is partly due to the closing of sugar plantations, which burned bagasse for energy. It is also partly due to the cost and pricing structure of alternative energy compared to imported fossil fuels, and the way energy production and sales are regulated in Hawai'i.

It is clear that to attain a preferred energy future for Hawai'i, a collaborative effort of government, business, and community is necessary. Thus, the University of Hawai'i convened Hawai'i's major energy stakeholders as the Hawai'i Energy Policy Forum in May 2002. The purpose of the Forum is to develop an energy vision for the year 2030 and to formulate a strategy to ensure its implementation. The Forum is a unique experiment in collaborative energy policy making. It includes representatives of the electric utilities; oil and natural gas suppliers; environmental groups; the renewable energy industry; the state legislature; federal, state and county agencies; the general business community; and major energy consumers.

The Forum is designed to facilitate discussion of a preferred energy future and the relevant issues and constraints. In addition to the usual energy economics and technology questions, the Forum considers the roles of energy planning agencies, the Public Utilities Commission, and the Legislature in energy decision-making. The intent is to incorporate as many different perspectives and the broadest possible experience into the design of a flexible, forward-looking energy strategy that provides environmentally friendly, renewable, safe, reliable, and affordable energy for the State.

Project Plan

The University received an initial grant from Hawaiian Electric Company to convene the Forum. Existing grant funds are being used for background studies, meetings, a consultant and support staff. The expertise and time of the UH Directors of the Hawai'i Natural Energy Institute, the Environmental Center, and the Social Science Research Institute, and faculty from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning—along with that of the Forum members—is being donated to this project.

The Forum formulated the following as a vision statement:

"We will have environmentally friendly, renewable, safe, reliable, and affordable energy resources. Our energy technology and systems will be efficient, with the best available emission controls; decentralized; meet consumers' needs; and maximize the use of Hawai'i's energy assets. Hawai'i will encourage investment in energy system development and continually assess energy development options based on a full accounting of costs and benefits."

The Forum also identified six critical studies to support development of the energy strategy:

- Hydrocarbons outlook
- Environmental requirements on energy producers
- Regulation, taxation and incentives
- Social, economic and cultural issues
- Renewable and unconventional energy
- Reducing Hawai'i's energy demand through increased efficiency

In lieu of a commissioned study on social, economic and cultural issues, the Forum established working groups to meet with members of the community to discuss the relevant issues.

Hawaii Energy Policy Forum

Once the energy studies were completed, the Energy Policy Forum assessed results and recommendations and took these to the Energy Policy Summit. The Summit provided an opportunity for a broader cross-section of the community to deliberate on the issues, recommendations, and action plans required to achieve the preferred energy vision for Hawaii. Based on the studies and recommendations from the Summit, the Forum developed recommendations for legal, regulatory and policy changes to move toward a new energy future for Hawaii. The Forum will also work to galvanize public support to ensure implementation of these recommendations.

Vision

Hawaii will have environmentally friendly, renewable, safe, reliable, and affordable energy resources. Our energy technology and systems will be efficient, with the best available emission controls; decentralized; meet consumers' needs; and maximize the use of Hawai'i's energy assets. Hawai'i will encourage investment in energy system development and continually assess energy development options based on a full accounting of costs and benefits.

Project Timeline

January - May 2002

- Phase I – Initial Project planning

May - August 2002

- Establish and convene the Energy Policy Forum
- Develop website for disseminating information and obtaining input
- Frame issues and identify alternative scenarios for Hawai'i's Energy Future

Sept. 2002 - March 2003

Hawaii Energy Policy Forum

- Commission background and policy papers and presentations to assist in evaluating energy future scenarios
- Conduct focus groups or other activities to obtain input as needed

March - Nov. 2003

- Phase II – Input for the Policy Summit
 - Evaluate commissioned papers and identify next steps re: policy issues, options and recommendations for additional studies.
 - Begin plans for the Hawai'i Energy Policy Summit to involve the broader community in deliberating on issues, options, and recommendations regarding policies, plans, and programs to achieve the envisioned Energy Future for 2030.

December 2003

- Convene Hawai'i Energy Policy Summit

December 2003

- Phase III – Implementation Plan

February 2004

- Develop Implementation Plan based on technical and policy papers and input from the Summit; work with appropriate policymakers to determine feasible policies and specific actions (e.g. legislation, administrative rule changes, etc.) required to implement the strategy. Undertake public participation plan.

February 2004

- Disseminate final report of Hawai'i's Energy Future detailing issues, preferred scenario(s), and feasible policy(ies) and action recommendations to create Hawai'i's preferred future.

Hawaii Energy Policy Forum

Working Groups

Working Groups were convened to address more specific social and cultural factors deemed important to Hawai'i. There were the following Working Groups to address:

- Cultural Factors
- Energy Rates
- Efficiency

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