

Notes from Waimea Community Update Session
Waimea Elementary School
Thursday, August 24, 2023
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Number of Community Members Attending: 8 in-person, 2 on Zoom

Speakers:

- Director Doug Adams, Director, Department of Research and Development (R&D)
- Malia Kantrowitz, Hawai‘i Energy
- Riley Saito, Economic Development Specialist, Energy and Infrastructure Program, R&D
- Glenn Sako, Economic Development Specialist, Agriculture Program R&D

Agenda and Notes

I. Opening Remarks, Director Adams

II. Hawai‘i Energy Updates

- [Hawai‘i Energy](#) is the efficiency and rebate program in the state that delivers energy savings and education. The Public Benefit Fund surcharge on energy bills funds Hawai‘i Energy.
- Residents can learn from and work with Hawai‘i Energy to both reduce energy consumption and increase affordability.
- Operating costs are highest for water heaters, fridges, and washing machines and dryers. When buying new appliances, you can apply for rebates from Hawai‘i Energy. There are rebates for things as small as LED light bulbs. Some appliances have direct rebates at the store. Rebates are listed on the [Clean Energy Allies](#) page.
- [Energy Smart 4 Homes](#) program offers free installation of energy-saving appliances to consumers in specific zip codes.
- Hawai‘i Energy also does bulk appliance purchases for communities by partnering with organizations (like Vibrant Hawai‘i). Homeowners can recycle old appliances for free (or with a rebate!).
- The [EmPOWER Grant](#) program runs through September 29, and small businesses can apply to reduce energy costs with up to \$6,000 in new appliances and tune-ups.

III. Broadband Updates, Riley Saito

- R&D is invested in digital equity (how to access and utilize the internet to participate in society), with an emphasis on supporting underserved communities. The Hawai‘i Island Digital Equity Coalition (HIDEC) provides a space for the County and partners to collaborate on digital equity.
- With [Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment](#) funding from the federal government, the state will build internet infrastructure in underserved communities. Simultaneously, internet service providers are building more internet infrastructure, but they are more focused on increasing high-speed access to high-consumption areas.

- R&D created an [ArcGIS Story Map](#) showing the social vulnerability index (populations considered underserved and susceptible to disasters) and areas lacking adequate internet access on-island. This map provides the foundation for the populations and community anchor institutions that R&D will focus on as they work to expand digital equity.
- R&D is working on expanding current internet access by establishing free Wi-Fi spots at Parks & Recreation sites throughout the island.
- Households can receive digital services and rebates (Wi-Fi expenses up to \$30/mo. or \$75/mo. for those on Hawaiian Home Lands, one-time computer purchases, etc.) through the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#).

IV. Agriculture Updates, Glenn Sako

- Big Island Feral Pig Control Project model initiated by Malama o Puna with R&D funding; first project-based plan that R&D received.
- Setting up a website to inform hunters of sightings; creating a hunter code of conduct, including a ban on snares; organizing workshops for education on hunting, butchering, and cooking to prevent disease transmission; promoting value-added products and creating a system to distribute pigs for household consumption.
- Agricultural theft is a top concern of producers, but there are limited statistics. Theft should be self-reported to save time, assist limited police resources, and collect statistics.
- R&D is generating a Self-Reporting Agricultural Theft/Trespass form, which will be on the website and distributed to police.
- Through community forums, R&D will try to publicize the identities of those who are known agriculture thieves.

V. Closing Discussion, Director Adams

- R&D has additional priority program areas, including early childhood education, workforce development, immigration, agriculture, and food systems. This is not an exhaustive list.

Comments

- Why is broadband a priority? Why not expand WiFi access?
 - Broadband can accommodate more users and usage, and the physical fiber cables transmit data far quicker than wireless internet.
- Why isn't Starlink a priority for expanding internet access?
 - The satellite seeds provided by Starlink aren't conducive to what individuals' internet needs are (for telehealth, education, and other uses, not just streaming). The cost for quality, high-speed internet with Starlink is not accessible to most.
- How much longer will funding last for the American Connectivity Program?
 - The program will last another 16 months, with recipient rates continuing comparable to now. There are roughly 7,800 Hawai'i Island residents eligible for ACP funding, but only half this figure have signed up so far.
- What is the Broadband Hui?

- This is a statewide coalition. R&D's Lead for Hawai'i Fellow focused on digital equity this past year, and coalesced the Hawai'i Island community leaders and residents who were part of the statewide hui.
- Who is the primary point of contact in Waimea and Waikoloa Village to join HIDEDEC? Can there be a local liaison for the program?
 - To get involved in the Broadband Hui and/or HIDEDEC, contact Riley Saito.
- Are facilities receiving internet via fiber spur, rather than the fiber optic cable, more susceptible to issues? One of these sites is Hisaoka Gym.
 - Unlike the double-ring fiber optic cable around the belt of the island, the spur does not have two connections (coming from either direction). Therefore, if something were to happen to the spur, connection would be severed.
 - Gil Kahele Park will be another spur site. This site is a priority, and eventually a double-ring will be forged to the Park to ensure broadband and power at this site.
- Is there a partnership with the DOD at Pōhakuloa?
 - They have broadband, but the County does not partner with them to access their internet.
- Can DHHL [challenge](#) the internet speeds reported there?
 - Yes, they can!
- Are there geographic bounds for what you can [challenge](#) to the FCC?
 - You can issue a challenge based on your geographic location.
- What are community anchor institutions?
 - These are forums, spaces, or groups that convene people. These spaces, where the community congregates, will be priority locations for receiving broadband. They don't have to be government-recognized institutions or organizations.
- How was Malama o Puna chosen to partner with the County for this demo program?
 - They submitted a thorough proposal to address this issue, which was revised multiple times afterwards to meet R&D's boundaries. Many entities have wanted to address this issue, but Malama o Puna was the only entity to create a plan.
- How do people know R&D funds projects like the feral pig pilot program?
 - R&D doesn't publicize every funding opportunity. Community partners are eager to ask the County for funding for their projects. R&D is willing to collaborate with entities with robust proposals that align with our programmatic goals.
- Why is a slaughterhouse not a large component of this proposal?
 - The local slaughterhouse did not value feral pig products as high commodities. Malama o Puna does expect local, residential consumer demand.
 - R&D hopes this project becomes self-sustaining without grant funding.
- Does the County have funding opportunities for projects that address other feral ungulates (goats)?
 - The County has not invested in other programs – yet. This is in part because the goats are an issue related to major roads, which fall under State jurisdiction.
- Would someone need to have a Social Security Number to report agricultural theft?
 - No, but this assists the Police Department and Prosecuting Attorney with the paperwork they process.
- How widespread an issue is agricultural theft? Does this occur throughout the island?

- It's an issue that's very important to the agriculture community throughout the island. Theft can be of fruit, equipment, or other items. This reporting form is one of multiple efforts being taken, by both the County and by farmers, to reduce agricultural theft.
- What's happening with respect to early childhood in Hawai'i County?
 - The County produced a [143-page document](#) profiling early childhood education in Hawai'i County.
 - R&D plans to spend American Rescue Plan Act funds it received during the COVID-19 pandemic on childcare and early learning efforts. These funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024, and completely spent by December 31, 2026.
 - The County is also providing scholarships to residents to receive advanced accreditation in early childhood education at Chaminade University.