



September 27, 2007

Hawaii 2050 Sustainability Plan

Meetings on the Draft 2050 Plan will be held on Mon, Oct. 8, 5:30 p.m.-8 p.m. at the Maui Economic Opportunity Office in Wailuku and Sat, Oct. 13, 8:30 a.m.-11 a.m. at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center Haynes Meeting Room in Kahului. You can see and comment on the plan online at www.hawaii2050.org.

In his book *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell describes a societal phenomenon he calls "social epidemics"—moments when cumulative events reach a point where rapid and dramatic change may occur. I believe change of this sort is in the wind, evidenced by a broad cross section of statewide communities embracing a bold blueprint for Hawai'i's sustainable future.

The 73-page Draft Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan aims to measure progress toward its goals with yearly report cards, re-evaluation and course corrections and the creation of a Sustainability Council, with nine of 15 members appointed from the community. This is a welcome shift to the guiding entity, considering that not one of 25 members of the current Sustainability Task Force represents an environmental, local Hawaiian or student group.

A concerted effort was made to involve high school students in the 2050 effort, including a Youth Task Force. Several speakers said this is an essential component of the plan; after all, the younger generation will be the ones still around in the year 2050.

But will they be living in Hawai'i? Nine student members of the Honolulu Advertiser Teen Editorial Board spoke on stage about their ideas for Hawai'i's future. When asked how many expected to live here at age 35, not one hand went up, sending a collective murmur through the audience. Another shock wave filled the room when someone mentioned that the current high school dropout rate is 36 percent.

The nine teens called for improving the education system, funding health care and prevention, striving for "food sovereignty," ensuring our environment's health, keeping Hawai'i "Hawai'i," considering youth in future decisions and giving people a reason to return home.

Back on Maui last Thursday, I had the opportunity to speak with 50 Lahainaluna High School students. They were very interested in the issues swirling around Hawai'i Superferry, and science teacher Carol Rosetta invited me to come help them answer questions. In addition to a lengthy discussion about Superferry, I asked them to complete a brief quiz: What are Maui's biggest environmental and planning challenges, and a possible solution to each?

Their overall concerns mirrored those of Neighbor Island communities statewide, with a majority expressing angst over Superferry's potential collisions with whales, too many

cars crowding insufficient roadways, pollution, population growth, development and decisions made without listening to the community. They also expressed West Maui regional issues, such as need for the bypass road, housing and a second hospital.

“We can’t keep growing at this rate and not fix the transportation problems, such as traffic on the pali,” one said. Another said, “Too much houses, no more country, just city! And that’s Oahu, not Maui. Keep it that way—don’t bring the Superferry!”

I appreciated the candor of one student, who wrote at the bottom of her quiz sheet, “I think the Superferry will be a great idea to run.”

Another student raised the question, “Is it too late? Seems like the people in government aren’t listening or don’t care.” Echoing a similar theme, another teen wrote, “We should be allowed to state our opinion and be heard. The community’s opinion should count!”

Hawai‘i’s youth and community-at-large calling to be heard is the most visible element of the local “tipping point.” The societal shift may also have roots in the arrogant national governmental and big business attitudes, which have relegated everyone else but the rich elite to second-class citizens. But indications are that the status quo is no longer tolerable, and like citizens in the 1976 movie *Network*, many seem ready to open their windows and shout, “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take this anymore!”

Of course, what you yell and where you yell it must be carefully chosen on Kauai, where Governor Linda Lingle has sought to create a federal security zone, to be enforced by the Coast Guard and police, which would allow the Superferry safe passage into Nawiliwili Harbor. Her visit last week to speak to angry Kauaians did little to dispel their discontent with her decision to have the ferry run, no matter what. For now, at least, ferry service is suspended while legal issues are being heard in courts on Maui and Kauai.

Sometimes it takes a great divide for people to see what it takes to come together. Senator Russell Kokubun of the Big Island, who has spear-headed the Hawai‘i 2050 efforts, reminded the large and diverse summit audience that “We all share one thing—a deep and abiding love for Hawai‘i.”

Kahu Curt Kekuna, whose pule (prayer) followed Sam Gon III’s oli (Hawaiian chant), declared that we must strive not just to sustain ourselves, but to flourish, and coined the word “flourishability.”

Mayors from each island offered brief remarks. Only Governor Lingle was not represented at the 2050 Summit. Senate President Colleen Hanabusa reminded the audience that “we had to override a [Lingle] veto to be here today” and vowed to feature sustainability “front and center” at the 2008 legislature.

Keynote speaker Terry Tamminen, who spoke on Maui last April as part of the Focus Green lecture series, helped write many of California’s energy and environmental policies while working with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. He is the author of the book *Lives Per Gallon—The True Costs of our Fossil Fuel Addiction*, and is on a broad speaking tour, striving to enlist all 50 states in addressing the carbon emissions that are fueling global warming.

Tamminen compared the Hopi people, whose civilization has sustained itself for thousands of years despite a harsh environment, to that of Easter Islanders, who squandered once-abundant resources and eventually resorted to cannibalism as a last ditch effort for survival.

Tamminen asked which path Hawai'i is likely to take, and invited all to commit to being part of the vision and to spread it to family and friends.

"The most patriotic thing we can do is what we're doing: defining and implementing sustainability," he said. He clearly emphasized the urgency of our actions, of reinventing our lives and investing in the future of the next generations. "Time is running out," he said.

Many of Hawai'i's current challenges may be viewed as disparities between the economy and our environment. Tamminen reminded the audience that, "Our economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of our environment."

In the past week the national media reported that the shrinking of the polar ice cap this summer is the largest in recorded history. A Honolulu Advertiser article revealed that studies indicate a one-meter rise in sea level over the next hundred years is likely. Low-lying Honolulu would be dramatically impacted, with water inundating the Honolulu Convention Center, Ala Wai golf course and much of Waikiki and downtown.

With tourism still the state's current leading economic force, the draft 2050 plan calls for developing a more diverse and resilient economy. It asks for water conservation, local renewable energy, natural habitat and ecosystem preservation, increased recycling, strengthened public education and honoring Hawaiian culture and values.

In other words, living sustainably is to be part of Hawai'i's daily practice. That means ongoing dialogues about our shared ethics, practices and sustainability goals are vital to our ability to flourish in years to come. MTW