



Ke Ala Hou

A New Path Forward

Ke Ke'ena O Ke Kia'aina | Office of the Governor • June 2025

GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE



Governor Josh Green, M.D.

As summer approaches, many will enjoy our beaches, parks and trails. This is why I am so pleased that we were able to work with the state legislature, Climate Action Team and other statewide partners to enact the "Green Fee." This historic legislation that I signed into law is a commitment to protecting Hawai'i's environment for future generations of residents and visitors alike to enjoy.

I would also like to recognize the efforts of various state agencies tackling more than just climate impacts, that are occurring throughout our state because of a rapidly changing and unpredictable federal landscape. Our Attorney General's office and outside counsel were able to secure a long-fought case resulting in a large settlement that will pave the way for potential improvements in healthcare services for the people of Hawai'i.

Our Department of Agriculture is partnering with other agencies and multiple organizations to battle invasive species like the

Coconut Rhinoceros Beetles, for the improvement of the health and safety of the spaces where we live, work and play.

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority is working to welcome events that promote tourism, and benefit our youth through opportunities to receive guidance and inspiration from professional athletes. All while other departments toil tirelessly to create a path forward for the continued healing of Maui. There are so many to thank for all they do for the people of Hawai'i.

Finally, I must end this month's message by also acknowledging the sacrifices made by brave men and women in service to our country. We took time on Memorial Day at the end of May to offer our deepest condolences at two services and thank those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Mahalo to all those who coordinated the recognition ceremonies and contributed as volunteers. We will remember, always.

Mahalo,

Historic Green Fee Launched to Combat Climate Change in Hawai'i

In a groundbreaking move for climate action, Governor Josh Green, M.D., has signed Senate Bill 1396 into law as Act 96, establishing the nation's first climate impact fee, known as the "Green Fee." The bill addresses the critical need to build resiliency against the impacts of climate change by providing a stable source of funding for environmental stewardship, hazard mitigation and sustainable tourism.

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Governor Green poses with local elected officials and advocates at the bill signing ceremony for SB 1396.

Ke Ala Hou intends to elevate, recognize, and celebrate the hard work done by our state departments. Our goal is to share top achievements from our state employees, emphasize aloha and kindness in action and demonstrate caring leadership at the state level. It is our hope that by sharing these stories, we build trust and understanding in what we do everyday in service to you.



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Historic Green Fee Launched to Combat Climate Change in Hawai'i

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Governor Green smiles with elected officials and cabinet members after signing a historic climate impact bill.

“Today Hawai'i ushers in the first Green Fee in the nation. Once again, Hawai'i is at the forefront of protecting our natural resources, recognizing their fundamental role in sustaining the ecological, cultural and economic health of Hawai'i. As an island chain, Hawai'i cannot wait for the next disaster to hit before taking action. We must build resiliency now, and the Green Fee will provide the necessary financing to ensure resources are available for our future,” said Governor Green.

The legislation comes after the realization of the impacts that hosting 10 million visitors a year were having on our islands, and follows the devastating August 2023 wildfires on Maui. It reflects a broader strategy to respond to the growing frequency of natural disasters.

Governor Green established the Climate Advisory Team (CAT) in 2024, led by Chris Benjamin, to develop policies aimed at climate change mitigation and disaster resilience. A key recommendation of the CAT was to establish a dedicated source of funding to achieve the state's goals. The CAT recommended the transient accommodations tax (TAT) as a potential revenue source.

Beginning in 2026, the Green Fee will increase the TAT rate by 0.75%. This move promotes equity in the tourism industry, ensuring that all visitors contribute to the sustainability of the islands.

“The Green Fee bill marks a historic investment in climate disaster resilience and environmental protection,” said Chris Benjamin. “Using the TAT to fund resiliency projects ensures that the financial burden of safeguarding our 'āina and people doesn't fall upon residents alone. We thank the Legislature, industry, and countless community groups and individuals who advocated tirelessly for this bill.”

Expected to generate around \$100 million annually, the Green Fee will fund diverse projects focusing on environmental stewardship, climate resilience and sustainable tourism.

LA Rams and HTA Team Up on a Strategic Partnership



The partnership was announced by Los Angeles Rams President Keven Demoff and Governor Green at a press conference at the LA Rams practice facility. Photo courtesy: Los Angeles Rams.

The Los Angeles Rams and the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) have teamed up to promote tourism to the Hawaiian Islands as well as Maucamp, a special event where the Rams will bring their Minicamp to Maui from June 16 to June 19 to kick off the 2025 season.

On Tuesday, June 17, LA Rams players and staff will host a girls' flag football and boys' football clinic for local student athletes at War Memorial Stadium in Wailuku. Rams players and staff will also join Habitat for Humanity to help rebuild homes in Lahaina.

The Rams will host on-field team activities at War Memorial Stadium with an open session on Wednesday, June 18, that is free to the public, with priority given to Maui County residents. Also on Wednesday, the Rams will host a PLAY 60 Field Day for local children ages 5-12 who participate in the County of Maui's Play and Learn Sessions summer program.

In addition, HTA will work with the Rams on a year-long Los Angeles market activation, including HTA serving as the presenting sponsor of a Rams 2025 home game at SoFi Stadium, as well as a marketing campaign in Japan.

“The partnership will bring the Rams to Maui and feature season-long activities that encourage the team's dedicated fans to visit our islands,” said HTA Board Chair Todd Apo. “For our local communities, the team's Maucamp will offer a unique opportunity to inspire our youth and provide residents with access to a memorable NFL experience that is rarely available in our state.”

This partnership with HTA builds on the Rams' pre-existing relationship with Hawai'i, dating back to the preseason game at Aloha Stadium in 2019, which also included community engagements ranging from local youth events to Rams Legends visiting military bases.

More recently, the Rams dedicated a preseason game to help people affected by the Maui wildfires and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars through “Mālama Maui” efforts.

For more information, visit therams.com/fans/maui-camp.



Hawai'i Secures \$700 Million Settlement in Pharmaceutical Lawsuit

In a significant win for the state, Governor Josh Green, M.D., and Attorney General Anne Lopez announced a landmark \$700 million settlement with pharmaceutical companies Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS) and three subsidiaries of Sanofi. The case, titled *State of Hawai'i ex. rel. Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General v. Bristol-Myers Squibb Company et al.*, marks the end of nearly 12 years of litigation.

The settlement agreement divides the total amount of \$700 million equally between BMS and Sanofi, with the funds expected to be transferred by June 9, 2025.

“This landmark settlement is a major victory for the state of Hawai'i. Once the money goes into our general fund, we can go to work on immediately identifying ways to enhance health care services for Hawai'i's residents, said Governor Green. “I am very proud of the work by our Attorney General and outside counsel that helped in achieving this result for the people of Hawai'i.”

Attorney General Lopez reiterated the importance of consumer protection, highlighting the resolve to hold all companies accountable, regardless of size. “It doesn't matter if a company is a one-person shop or a multibillion dollar oil company, we will relentlessly enforce Hawai'i's consumer protection laws.”

Special Attorney General Rick Fried, with the Honolulu-based law firm Cronin, Fried, Sekiya, Kekina and Fairbanks shared his



Governor Green and Attorney General Lopez shake hands at the press conference announcing the pharmaceutical settlement.

sentiments: “I started working on this case when I presented it to then-AG David Louie in 2012. It took 13 years to finalize, but I'm very pleased about what this settlement will do for the people of Hawai'i. I want to extend my thanks to our Governor, Josh Green, and Attorney General Anne Lopez for their support.”

This settlement not only brings closure to a long legal battle but also paves the way for potential improvements in healthcare services across the state.

HDOA Coordinates Palm Tree Treatment Against CRB on Hawai'i Island

Since January 2025, the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) has coordinated the treatment of more than 700 palm trees for coconut rhinoceros beetles (CRB) along the west coast of Hawai'i Island. A few recent detections of CRB have brought together a dedicated force including multiple state and county agencies as well as organizations in the battle against the invasive beetle, to prevent it from establishing populations on Hawai'i Island. The first detection on Hawai'i Island was in Waikoloa in October 2023.

In March and May 2025, HDOA's Plant Pest Control Branch joined forces with the County of Hawai'i Public Works Department (COH-PWD) and the state Department of Transportation (HDOT) to treat a total of more than 220 palm trees at the Ellison Onizuka Kona International Airport (KOA). COH-PWD offered the assistance of its boom trucks so HDOA Pesticides Branch staff could apply insecticides on the crowns to kill any CRB and to protect the trees.



HDOA staff applying crown treatment to the palm trees at Kona Airport. Photo courtesy: HDOA.

All palms that were treated were tagged and surrounded with yellow tape to indicate treatment. Coconuts from treated trees should not be consumed. HDOA staff also injected trees that were either inaccessible to the boom trucks or were in close proximity to water.

Besides KOA, HDOA has coordinated similar CRB treatment programs in

Waikoloa Village, the Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i, Keāhole Agricultural Park, Honokōhau Small Boat Harbor and Marina, West Hawai'i Veterans Cemetery, O'oma and Kohanaiki.

HDOA agriculture inspectors continue to enforce restrictions on the movement of organic material from O'ahu. On Maui, staff inspect bagged potting soil at retail stores on a weekly basis to survey CRB larvae or adult beetles. Treatment of palm trees around the Maui airport and harbor will commence soon to provide a shield against CRB that may make its way to those ports.

CRB treatment efforts are also ongoing on O'ahu and Kaua'i. Residents on all islands are asked to check their compost and mulch piles, which are a main breeding ground for CRB. Report possible CRB, especially in uninfested areas, to HDOA via the state's toll-free Pest Hotline at 808-973-PEST (7378).



A Community-Led Pathway Toward Maui's Economic Recovery and Future

The Hawai'i Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism and County of Maui Office of Economic Development announced the release of the Maui Economic Recovery Commission (ERC) report, "A Community-Led Pathway Toward Maui's Economic Recovery and Future," which outlines strategies to address the economic challenges that linger in the aftermath of the Maui wildfires.

The priority projects identified in the report are community-recognized and -led, in alignment with many of the County of Maui's long-term recovery initiatives and being implemented through partnerships with county, state and federal agencies. A couple of areas making headway include the Lahaina



Photo courtesy: Mark Middleton.

R-1 project envisioned to support an enhanced sustainable water system, as well as Imua Maui Community Healing, aimed to gather the West Maui community to foster ongoing wellness and healing.

The ERC's work involved leaders from various sectors, including cultural,

economic development, agricultural, healthcare, education, finance and nonprofits, alongside public sector representatives.

For more information on the Maui Economic Recovery Commission report and projects, please visit www.mauinuistrong.info/mauierc.

Waipahu High Students Make History in Early College Program

A cohort of 13 students from Waipahu High School's 'Ohana of Excellence Academy (OEA) made history as the first special education class in the Hawai'i State Department of Education to earn college credit through an Early College course. Their achievement was celebrated on campus after completing a mock job interview as their final project.

"It's very important that we offer this to our students in the 'Ohana of Excellence Academy so that they have the same opportunity as everyone else. And now we're proud to say that every single academy on our campus has early college opportunities for their students," said Principal Zachary Sheets.

The students are enrolled in a fully self-contained special education classroom that supports individuals with substantial disabilities and requiring assistance. In spite of the considerable challenges they encounter, the students finished IS 105C: Professional Employment Preparation in person at Windward Community College — a course aimed at developing practical employment skills and boosting confidence.



Making history! Waipahu High's 'Ohana of Excellence Academy students are the first special education cohort in Hawai'i State Department of Education to earn college credit. Photo courtesy: Hawai'i State Department of Education.

Director of the OEA, Eunice Fukunaga, was instrumental in bringing the college-level course to her students, for whom the goal is to obtain full-time employment. "That's why we thought this course through Windward Community College would be perfect, because it's professional employment preparation," explained Fukunaga.

Waipahu High is a nationally recognized wall-to-wall academy high school, distinguished by the highest level of

national recognition for its six career academies. The mission of the OEA is to empower students to take charge of their futures and become active members of their communities.

"When you saw the students' parents tearing up because their students are going to have this opportunity, I think you know how special it is," said Principal Sheets. "Breaking stereotypes and barriers are just the next steps to show them that it is possible."



Ke Ala Hou is a monthly publication of the Office of Governor Josh Green, M.D.

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