

THE POLITICS AND BUSINESS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

6. STATES:**Hawaii may feel stronger climate change impacts**

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Anticipating beach erosion, sea level rise, decreased rainfall and the depletion of fisheries, scientists say Hawaii will feel the impact of climate change earlier and more acutely than other states. In response, Hawaii's government pushed forward an act to prepare for the coming problems.

In 2007, the Hawaii Legislature adopted Act 234, which aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 in a cost-effective manner. But last summer, in the face of climate change's inevitable impact, the state enacted a law to promote adaptation to help "avoid, minimize or mitigate loss of life, land and property of future generations."

The loss of fresh water due to climate change is particularly worrisome. Rainfall has already decreased over the past century, and "the general thought in the climate modeling community is that wetter areas in the future will stay the same and possibly get wetter, and drier regions will get drier," said Victoria Keener, a hydrologist and lead editor of a recent report from the Pacific Islands Regional Climate Assessment.

PIRCA, a program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is trying to coordinate the effort, connecting scientists with local governments and community members.

PIRCA released a report, "Climate Change and Pacific Islands: Indicators and Impacts," giving examples of actual preventive measures taken. For example, the report highlighted a commercial landfill in the Nanakuli area that upgraded its storm drainage system and retention ponds, allowing the site to remain open after heavy rainfall, saving the company \$1 million and preventing hazardous runoff from polluting nearby beaches.

But cost is an issue: "It's about making tough decisions," William Aila, director of the state Department of Land and Natural Resources, said at a recent PIRCA forum. "We're not going to have enough money to do everything."

To help manage costs, the recent bill prioritizes certain policies and procedures, such as research, education, preservation and restoration ([Honolulu Weekly](#), Jan. 2). -- EH

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