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Kauaian Institute paints green picture

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - by [Jon Letman](#) PBN Contributor

Ken Stokes helps businesses figure out what green looks like.

Whether it's surveying the impact of vacation rental units on Kauai, Maui and Oahu or urging the Legislature to revisit laws governing environmental impact statements, he sees a need for an entirely new way of assessing how Hawaii residents affect their environment.

His slogan: "Greener, sooner, cheaper."

To that end, Stokes, an environmental economist, founded **The Kauaian Institute** in 2003 as, in his words, a "think-and-do tank."

Motivating him and his institute are the dramatic strategic shifts he says Hawaii will see in energy, transportation and food production as climate change and the urgent need to increase energy independence become more pronounced.

"We can't waste more time gnashing teeth and bickering," he said. "We know for certain it's going to get a lot hotter, a lot drier and the sea level is going to rise. Mass tourism is going to go away and the oil boats are going to stop coming. It's only a question of when, and do we have time to switch before it does."

Stokes founded The Kauaian Institute after spending years doing research and compiling a database while working with different communities and markets. His data ranges from population trends and building permits to average daily room rates, property tax revenue and the amount of taro being grown.

Both a virtual and practical repository for island information, statistics and strategies, The Kauaian Institute marks, forecasts and footprints economic and social indicators statewide. It is focusing more and more on green economic issues with an emphasis on orienting business leaders, stakeholders and executive-level decision makers in all areas of business, politics, education and technology to better understand the new metrics of sustainability.

The institute consults with companies wishing to examine procedures, assess needs and get advice on pursuing more sustainable practices. Clients include senior executives at Maui Land & Pineapple, Oahu B & B Association, Kamehameha Schools and the Princeville Corp.



It also holds monthly seminars on Kauai addressing issues such as renewable energy, alternative transportation, green building, waste management and climate change.

While The Kauaian Institute is a for-profit organization, it provides large amounts of data and information such as demographic reports and economic indicators at no cost on its Web site. It also maintains a blog called Sustainability in Hawaii (SusHI).

"We put a lot of stuff out for free and I think people like that," Stokes said. "As much as anything, it's a resource for learning."

Funding comes from client work, research and strategy engagements, Stokes said, adding that for him a "greenback" means not the dollar bill but a return to green practices in business and society.

Stokes sees both urgency and optimism in his work.

"Our vulnerabilities are second to none," he said. "Our potential also is second to none."

Among the findings ...

The Kauaian Institute examines key economic, environmental and demographic indicators statewide from a green perspective with the goal of more accurately measuring vital signs and raising awareness about creating a more sustainable Hawaii. Among its findings:

- Kauai's per capita greenhouse gas emissions have dropped far below other islands as the Kauai Island Utility Cooperative has switched to cleaner fuels and average electricity use has declined.
- Transient vacation rentals constitute fewer than 10 percent of homes in all but a handful of Hawaii towns. There are 2.5 times more second homes than vacation rentals.
- Kauai is the most balanced of the major Hawaiian Islands in terms of ethnicity. Hawaiians, Filipinos, Japanese and Caucasians each comprise close to 25 percent of the island's population.
- More than half of Hawaii's oil came from Alaska 20 years ago. Today, 51 percent comes from Asia (China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Brunei). The largest single foreign supplier of the state's oil is Saudi Arabia -- 20 percent in 2005.

More statistics and analysis can be found at [**kauaian.net**](http://kauaian.net).

Source: The Kauaian Institute

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