

Thinking Big

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Big Island

Last year, the Big Island spent about \$750 million on fossil fuels, despite the abundance of alternatives such as solar, wind and hydro energy right in its backyard, according to The Kohala Center, a not-for-profit academic organization on the Big Island. Tapping into these resources ultimately means creating more jobs and new business for the state. With that in mind, The Kohala Center plans to create an Institute for Pacific Design, which will aim to reduce Hawaii's dependence on fossil fuels while providing innovative solutions to the state's growing energy crisis.



The Office of Hawaiian Affairs has already stepped up to provide \$30,000 for the development of the institute's business plan. Mark Glick, OHA's Economic Development director, says OHA supports the institute's mission to create a sustainable environment in Hawaii that combines traditional Hawaiian values, sustainable practices and Island wisdom with the best scientific and technological innovations consistent with those traditional values and practices.

One of the institute's objectives will be to develop community programs that provide low-cost green design consultation to local governments, developers and associations. The institute will also support research programs that assess government initiatives and determine whether they inhibit or promote resource efficiency and affordability, given the world's current energy reality.

"Because the proposed institute would be situated on Hawaii Island, which natural scientists and social scientists consider a model of the planet, the institute's work to generate solutions for our Island communities also means that it will generate solutions that are valuable to the world as a whole," says Janis Wong, media relations for The Kohala Center.

Wong hopes that the institute, which is scheduled to be fully functioning by 2011, will also address the private sector's role in sustainability, job training and educational opportunities.