



Hawai'i Forestry: A New Economy with a New Workforce

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Introduction

Good morning! I am disappointed that I could not be there with you in person today. This symposium is a significant prelude to the upcoming Governor's Forestry Conference scheduled for January 1997, and I would like to extend greetings from Governor Cayetano for a successful and productive symposium. Additionally, I would like to thank the Media Lab at Leeward Community College for assisting me in greeting you today.

Although your program agenda today is directed toward koa and native forest stewardship, I would like to address the concept of sustainable forestry and the Department of Labor's perspective on the role that sustainable forestry can play in Hawai'i's economic development and how our educational and workforce development efforts will be integrated to assist in the growth of this new industry.

Mike Wilson will also be talking to you about forestry and trees as an economic initiative.

Sustainable forestry does not mean the old clear-cut, "rape and pillage" timber industry. It is instead based on ecologically sound principles of ecosystem management. It is also founded upon community-based rural economic development, which leverages public and private resources to maximize support for value-added forestry industry products and high-skilled, high-paying jobs. The goal of sustainable forestry, like sustainable agriculture, is to increase economic development, enhance environmental stewardship, and improve the quality of life in rural communities.

I was very fortunate to have recently been part of a team from Hawai'i to accompany a site review team

that visited the timber communities in Oregon, Washington, and California which have been part of President Clinton's Northwest Plan. For those of you that are unaware of it, the Northwest Plan was a community economic revitalization effort which was initiated to assist the transition of declining "old growth" timber communities to new economic opportunities and community development based on ecosystem management -based forestry and value-added forest industries.

Economic and Workforce Development

Hawai'i's economic future and investment in new economic initiatives are directly linked to an investment in our social and human capital. Our highest priority must be to provide Hawai'i's workforce with the skills to be employable and successful in a future that will be increasingly competitive in a global marketplace.

Without workforce development there can be no economic development. They are integrally linked to each other. The Department of Labor is working with other state agencies to reform both education and job training to produce improved higher skills for our workforce. This effort is integrated with the State's economic development efforts to develop the high-skill and high-wage jobs for new workforce entrants to fill. Workforce development improvements will not automatically lead to high-skill, high-wage jobs. We need to strengthen the demand side of the labor market as well as reform the workforce supply side. New growth industries will come to Hawai'i because of the quality of life and skilled human resources we can offer them. That is what the forestry initiative is all about.



Natural Resource Development

In Hawai'i, we have seen prime agricultural lands planted in sugarcane decline from 1 million to 300,000 acres in the past five years and a loss of 5300 high wage agricultural and manufacturing jobs in the sugar industry in that same period. These former sugar lands provide an economically and environmentally sound opportunity to create jobs, strengthen the *'aina*, and promote rural social and economic development in areas of our islands that desperately need attention, such as East Hawai'i and the island of Kaua'i. With 25 to 30 percent of available lands in public ownership, State government policies are being geared towards positive leverage for the conservation and restoration of natural forest ecosystems. Stimulating a value-added forest industry would be one of the highest and best uses of our scarce natural Hawaiian resources.

An aesthetically and environmentally sound forestry industry can be developed in Hawai'i by taking great care in planning and policy-setting. We are all very sensitive about preserving the special qualities that make Hawai'i such a unique physical and cultural environment to live in.

Hawai'i's businesses and workers increasingly are facing a new reality of global competitiveness. Not only do we see this in the current reality of our main economic base industries like tourism and retail sales, but we see its effects radiating into all business operations in Hawai'i.

Value-added forestry will be more than just commercial operations that focus only on resource extraction. Value-added forestry opportunities will create high-skilled and well-paid jobs locally. It also will create second-tier jobs through the processing of and marketing of secondary forest products. What are value-added forestry products? These include herbs, crafts, weavers, and ecotourism services as well as ecosystem management technicians and forestry technical expertise in scientific areas like agronomy, siculture, etc. If well planned and guided, new sustainable forests can add value to the recreational and aesthetic opportunities for our local communities and visitors alike.

Currently, many traditional work skill expectations are changing. For example, in the tourism/hospitality industry, hotel workers are no longer expected to do just one limited job. Quality management and high productivity expectations are changing the way work and business is done in the tourism industry and everywhere else

in Hawai'i's new economy.

Emerging growth industries will require new ways of doing business and new life skills for workplaces. Businesses will thrive if they can be world class and tap into the global network. In the workplace desired attributes will be teamwork, collaboration, and the flexibility to meet changing needs of the business. The new workplace in the 21st century will require many salaried or wage earning workers to acquire entrepreneurial and business skills.

What will the emerging forestry industry look like and what will it require to contribute in a positive way to Hawai'i's economic development? Sustainable value-added forestry industries with multiple levels of processing and varied outputs and products are preferable because they create the greater variety and number of high-skilled/high-paying jobs and can make a more significant contribution to long-term rural community development. This longer view is the more difficult road, however. It places a greater burden on financing, on building industry support and capacity, organizational energy (such as in the formation of viable rural community organizations and cooperatives), and especially in developing and training the local workforce. But this is the high road we must take.

We must develop a common vision based on public/private partnerships to move down this road. We must bring together the landowners, forest related businesses, workers, environmentalists, scientists, and public policy makers. Only through a disciplined and strategic approach to economic, workforce, and environmental development can we realize this vision so that Hawai'i will benefit overall.

The upcoming Governor's Forestry Conference will provide us with this opportunity. It will allow us to form and strengthen partnerships among all key stakeholders. We will collaborate on protecting native ecosystems while promoting sustainable forest industries on former sugar lands and degraded forest areas. We will develop action plans for the next steps to best pursue sustainable forestry based on input from working groups that represent all interest groups.

I encourage your participation in this effort and undertaking and look forward to seeing all of you in person at the Governor's Forestry Conference in January 1997.