

Hawaii

Launching conservation efforts with aerial help

Nearly nine million people visited Hawaii in 2016, drawn by the island state's tropical waters and splendid vistas. To help mitigate the environmental pressures of tourism and development, and to ensure that future visitors continue to enjoy the state's diverse flora and fauna, researchers are turning to drones.

Conservationists with the National Tropical Botanical Garden used a drone to find a critically endangered plant species in a 1,000-acre preserve. The Laukahi plant, an important medicinal herb in traditional Hawaiian culture, was grazed nearly to extinction by goats imported to the island. With the help of a drone, researchers found 10 additional Laukahi plants. "It's amazing how much of a game changer this is for field botanists. Discovering a population like this would usually take days of searching under life-threatening conditions, but this happened in 20 minutes," said Merlin Edmonds, an NTBG conservationist.

Researchers at the University of Hawaii's Applied Research Lab are in the midst of a study to expand the use of drones even further. Thanks in part to a grant from NASA, the university is working to improve drone reliability and discover new applications for the technology. Staff at the institution have already set their sights on drones for environmental and invasive species studies.

In other areas, alas, Hawaii earns poorer marks. The state received an 'F' in Attracts Investment this year, with a meager \$3.85 in venture capital funding per capita and \$130.20 per capita in R&D investment.

Sources: (Hawaii News Now) (The Verge) (KHON2) (NTBG)

WHAT DID WE DO RIGHT?

In 2017, the Governor signed an executive order welcoming self-driving vehicles on public roads.

WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER NEXT YEAR?

Hawaii needs to attract more venture capital, and regulators should also remove requirements that short-term rental services share data with the state.

WHERE HAVE WE MOST IMPROVED?

At 89 percent, Hawaii has the highest proportion of households with access to internet speeds of at least 10 mbps.

Best & Brightest	C
Fast Internet	A
Grants Advanced Degrees	B
Tech Workforce	D
Tax Friendly	B-
Attracts Investment	F
Entrepreneurial Activity	D-
Ridesharing	B
Short-Term Rentals	D
Sustainable Policies	B-
Self-Driving Vehicles	A
Drones	A



Grants Advanced Degrees

Nearly 11 percent of Hawaiians over the age of 24 have an advanced degree.



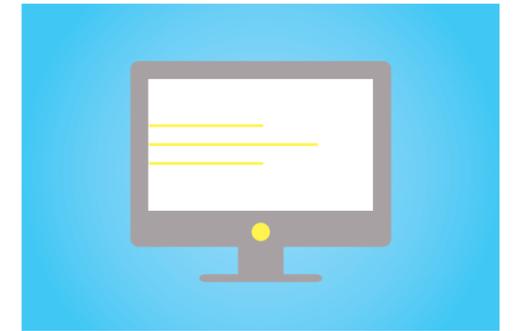
Sustainable Policies

Hawaii improved its electronics recycling law in 2015, but mandates for television manufacturers fail to factor in the decreasing weights of the devices.



Tax Friendly

Hawaii ranks in the middle of the pack in measures of tax friendliness.



Tech Workforce

Hawaii's tech workforce accounts for only 27 jobs per 1,000 people, fewer than most states.

New Solar Deal Will Power As Many As 1,000 Green Jobs

A trans-pacific deal between two solar power companies will bring a surge of new jobs to Hawaii.

Haleakala Solar, the third-largest solar services provider in the state, was acquired by California-based Petersen-Dean Roofing & Solar.

The move will bring an estimated 1,000 new jobs to the Aloha State in the next two years. Hawaii already boasts some of the highest rates of adoption for renewable energy and has a mandate for 100 percent renewable energy by 2045.

"Solar is a critical part of the state's energy portfolio. The islands are a virtual incubator for all new technology," said Gary Liardon, the PetersenDean executive leading the transition.

Before the March 2018 deal, Haleakala Solar employed 125 people and operated on three islands. The move will substantially boost its workforce, grow its business on the Mainland and begin work on a fourth island by the end of the year.

Sources: (Pacific Business News) (Maui News)

