From the Governor: Toward a sustainable Hawai‘i

Think global, act local. Never has that phrase meant more than now when the world’s spotlight is on the islands for the first U.S.-based IUCN World Conservation Congress Sept. 1-10 at the Hawai‘i Convention Center. This month’s Capitol Connection focuses not only on the Congress itself, but also on work by the state and its community partners to protect the Hawai‘i we love.

Q. What message do you hope local folks and visitors will take from the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawai‘i?

A. This event recognizes that our state has been at the forefront of conservation through partnerships statewide. The Congress can help to showcase the challenges of protecting endangered species and our natural resources as well as to focus on what Hawai‘i is doing to plan for the future. We were one of the first states to create an Interagency Climate Adaptation Committee to look at planning guidelines because environmental impacts affect island communities more than others.

Q. What are some challenges to making progress on Hawai‘i’s sustainable goals?

A. I think our community understands that we all have a part to play in making the islands more self-sufficient. We just have to make sure that actions follow words. Our Aloha+ Challenge model (see story on this page), which we have committed to statewide, could be a model for others worldwide. It’s what guides my Sustainable Hawai‘i Initiative, which sets goals for natural resource management, clean energy transformation and local food production. We’re the only state that is committed to 100 percent renewables, and as an island community we understand the impacts of climate change and sea level rise. Aloha+ also guides our efforts to make Hawai‘i more livable and diversify our economy.

Q. What do you want the public to know about work already being done by state departments to protect the environment?

A. It’s important to understand how crucial it is to invest in resources for conservation and sustainability. If we were to be sustainable tomorrow, that’s over $6 billion we spend now on importing fossil fuel and food from outside Hawai‘i that we could put to better use. Not only is sustainability good for the planet, but it has a direct impact on job growth and our state’s future. Mālama ‘āina, or caring for that which sustains us, lies at the core of Native Hawaiian values and connects to everything we do. We have a great opportunity to help everyone see that sustainability just makes sense for Hawai‘i and the world.

Aloha+ Challenge sets goals

The Aloha+ Challenge sets six targets to be reached by 2030 in sustainability, renewable energy and preservation of natural resources. Gov. Ige, the four county mayors, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the state Legislature all support these common goals.

“We’re working to align department goals and the governor’s sustainability initiatives under the umbrella of Aloha+ Challenge,” said DLNR director Suzanne Case. “We want the IUCN Congress to be a platform to highlight and, where possible, launch significant initiatives to move all of that forward.”

The areas include clean energy, local food production, natural resource management, waste reduction, sustainable communities, and green jobs and education. To monitor the state’s progress, go to the Aloha+Dashboard at hawaiigreengrowth.org.