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## Tundi's Take: Circling Back to Hawaiian EBM

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I recently had the great pleasure of addressing the Hawai'i Conservation Alliance on the occasion of its 20th anniversary conference. In preparing for that speech, I learned much about how EBM is approached in the Hawaiian Islands, comparing that to trends and emerging developments around the world.

The global trends that I highlighted were largely negative: large-scale environmental change; accelerating consumption and its consequences; ecosystem imbalances and regime shifts; ever-increasing specialization in the sciences that impedes generalist, holistic understanding; and a general trend toward entropy and apathy as the scale and complexity of challenges grow to make us feel helpless and render us incapacitated.

But in Hawai'i, communities, academic institutions, and government agencies are bucking the trends. While the archipelago is indeed affected by global scale environmental change, Hawai'i's fortunate geography makes it less at risk from global warming, and also creates opportunities for learning about environmental phenomena in the natural lab that the islands (and nearby ones like Palmyra Atoll) present. This enlightenment about global change and what can be done to increase resilience of marine systems to it are exported to places struggling to understand the environmental changes occurring in their own backyards.

Though tracking global trends in economic growth and increasing consumption, Hawaiian islands like Oahu are also trying to mitigate the effects that consumption has on coastal and marine environments. For example, the city of Honolulu is committed to smart growth, and people like former mayor Jeremy Harris have shown leadership in engaging cities and municipal governments in energy efficiency and adaptation to climate change.

Regarding ecosystem imbalances, agencies in Hawai'i are practicing true ecosystem-based management, ratcheting down on uses that cause systems to spiral toward critical thresholds - whether caused by tourist over-use, fishing, or coastal development. Once degraded areas are now being restored, such as in Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve on Oahu.

It is hard to buck the trend in increasing hyper-specialization in the sciences - and anyway, many people would consider that a positive, not negative, development. Specialized knowledge has sprung forth from these islands: indeed, Hawaiian academic institutions have been contributing to the body of knowledge about marine and coastal systems at levels disproportionate to their size and number of researchers. But Hawaiians have learned the value of supplementing specialized scientific knowledge with traditional knowledge, and this has allowed the development of much more holistic, generalist views of how interconnected habitats and ecosystem components (including human beings) interact. Maybe this mindset is more natural in island environments but it does require a certain openness among scientists to what they might consider alternative knowledge bases, and use of a common language between scientists and non-scientists.

### A conservation ethic

The scale of coastal and marine management challenges in Hawai'i is daunting, but widespread apathy and entropy are countered by a growing conservation ethic that rests on empathy: empathy for nature, and empathy for fellow human beings. Sure, not all is rosy in Hawai'i. Infighting among environmental groups, management agencies stretched to their limits (with the bulk of resources going to control of invasive species, which is a huge issue for the archipelago), and occasionally erupting social unrest all represent challenges. But as the huge attendance at the Hawai'i Conservation Congress attests (more than 1000 attendees, with a quarter of those being young professionals), there is a tendency toward information sharing, speaking to one another, and working together to meet common goals.

The examples of how this all translates into Hawaiian-style EBM are evident in small initiatives and large management regimes alike. On the small end of the spectrum, the traditional watershed management practice of Apuhua'a - whereby crops are sustainably grown upland, and water that drains from those agricultural areas then flows downstream to fishponds that then filter pollutants before they reach the sea - is a prime example of EBM in Hawai'i. At the other end of the spectrum, the management planning taking place at the 362,000-km<sup>2</sup> Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and World Heritage site is capitalizing on the Hawaiian attributes to show how true EBM can happen at large geographic scales. In between, the conservation community of Hawai'i illustrates to the world how, by circling back to traditions and tried-and-true ways of problem-solving, society can move forward successfully.

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