

JAN 21 2026

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO A BLUE ECONOMY.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that natural climate  
2 solutions--or actions to protect, sustainably manage, and  
3 restore natural and modified ecosystems in ways that address  
4 climate change--are crucial interventions that help governments  
5 and companies achieve their net-zero carbon emissions ambitions.

6 Marine-based ecosystem restoration projects have attracted  
7 particular attention as natural climate solutions due to their  
8 ability to sequester and store carbon at densities that may  
9 exceed other climate initiatives.

10 The legislature further finds that interest in funding  
11 projects that connect marine-based ecosystem restoration with  
12 decarbonization may come from the private sector, public sector,  
13 and philanthropic organizations. Coordinating these funding  
14 sources will involve identifying constraints that each sector  
15 must consider, including the costs of project implementation and  
16 project management, and the impact of local and federal  
17 governance decisions on project feasibility and sustainability.



1       The legislature additionally finds that lawmakers adopted  
2       S.C.R. No. 115, H.D. 1 (2025), which affirms the importance of  
3       marine ecosystem restoration in achieving the State's  
4       decarbonization goals. Notably, the resolution also reasserted  
5       a commitment to strengthening carbon accounting methodologies to  
6       assist in the quantification and reduction of direct and  
7       indirect greenhouse gas emissions, including emissions  
8       reductions achieved through ocean and marine ecosystem  
9       restoration.

10       The legislature also finds that Hatch Innovation Services,  
11       an innovation consultancy focused on sustainable and climate  
12       smart seafood systems, published a report entitled "Hawaii's  
13       Ocean Opportunity" with funding from the department of  
14       agriculture and biosecurity that recognizes restorative ocean  
15       food production as a sustainable economic venture for the State.  
16       According to the report, restorative aquaculture presents a  
17       nature-based opportunity to serve communities at a lower  
18       environmental footprint. The report also notes that investments  
19       in coastal and marine ecosystem restoration and protection,  
20       sustainable marine aquaculture, zero-emission marine transport,  
21       and ocean-based renewable energy could have a transformative



1 impact on the State's ability to successfully merge its climate  
2 mitigation, carbon sequestration, sustainable agriculture, and  
3 economic development goals.

4 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a blue  
5 economy working group to study how best to develop and support  
6 economic activities that further the State's climate and food  
7 production goals.

8 SECTION 2. (a) There is established a blue economy  
9 working group to study how best to develop and support marine-  
10 based economic activities that align with the State's  
11 decarbonization and restorative food production goals.

12 (b) The working group shall:

13 (1) Evaluate opportunities for expanding funding and other  
14 forms of support for projects related to a blue  
15 economy, including projects that connect coastal and  
16 marine ecosystem restoration with decarbonization and  
17 regenerative agricultural methods;

18 (2) Analyze existing blue economic models and research,  
19 including the "Hawaii's Ocean Opportunity" report  
20 prepared by Hatch Innovation Services in partnership  
21 with the department of agriculture and biosecurity;



1 (3) Identify favorable public policies and best practices  
2 for developing successful projects that follow blue  
3 economic principles and align with Hawaii's cultural  
4 foundations;

5 (4) Assess possibilities for cross-sector collaboration in  
6 the development and expansion of the State's blue  
7 economy, including in the areas of conservation,  
8 climate mitigation, agriculture, and aquaculture; and  
9 (5) Consider any other relevant factors that the working  
10 group deems appropriate.

11 (c) The working group shall consist of the following  
12 members:

13 (1) The director of the department of business, economic  
14 development, and tourism, or their designee, who shall  
15 serve as chairperson of the working group;

16 (2) The chairperson of the board of land and natural  
17 resources, or their designee;

18 (3) The chief energy officer of the Hawaii state energy  
19 office, or their designee;

20 (4) The chairperson of the board of agriculture and  
21 biosecurity, or their designee;



- (5) The coordinator of the Hawaii climate change mitigation and adaptation commission, or their designee;
- (6) The executive director of the university of Hawaii economic research organization, or their designee;
- (7) A representative from a private business that operates in an oceanic or other marine-based industry, to be invited by the chairperson;
- (8) A representative from a nonprofit public interest organization that specializes in marine-based ecosystem restoration or management, to be invited by the chairperson;
- (9) A representative from a nonprofit public interest organization that specializes in environmental preservation, to be invited by the chairperson;
- (10) A representative from an organization that specializes in innovation related to climate smart seafood systems, to be invited by the chairperson; and
- (11) Any additional members with appropriate specialized expertise, as recommended by the members of the working group, at the discretion of the chairperson.



1 (d) The members of the working group shall serve without  
2 compensation, but may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses  
3 incurred, including travel expenses.

4 (e) No member of the working group shall be subject to  
5 chapter 84, Hawaii Revised Statutes, solely because of the  
6 member's participation in the working group.

7 (f) The working group shall submit a report of its  
8 findings and recommendations, including any proposed  
9 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior  
10 to the convening of the regular session of 2027.

**11** (g) The working group shall be dissolved on June 30, 2027.

**12** SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

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INTRODUCED BY: *Mike Gabbard*



S.B. NO. 2374

**Report Title:**

Blue Economy; Decarbonization; Marine Ecosystems; Working Group; Report

**Description:**

Establishes the Blue Economy Working Group to study how to develop and support marine-based economic activities that align with the State's decarbonization and restorative food production goals. Requires a report to the Legislature.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

