

NATURAL ENERGY LABORATORY OF HAWAI'I AUTHORITY



NOELANI KALIPI
NELHA BOARD CHAIR

For Immediate Release: February 6, 2025

NATURAL ENERGY LABORATORY OF HAWAI'I AUTHORITY HIRES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

KAILUA-KONA – The Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i (NELHA) has named Riley Saito as its new executive director.

In his new role starting February 18, Saito will oversee the organization including supporting the research and development and commercial efforts at HOST Park, running a unique seawater utility and implementing programs and initiatives to support state goals in energy and food security.

Saito has a diverse background in the private and government sectors as well as significant experience in the energy sector. He is also a long-time resident of Kailua-Kona and is very familiar with NELHA's role in innovation through his work at the County of Hawai'i Department of Research and Development.

"Riley Saito has established relationships with the West Hawai'i community which will be extremely important as NELHA works on updating its master plan that will feed into an EIS update for HOST Park," said NELHA Board Chair Noelani Kalipi. "We're thrilled to welcome Riley to our team and look forward to his leadership in building on NELHA's past achievements while moving into new advancements that are grounded in local values."

Saito said, "It is an honor to be selected to lead NELHA and it's exciting to be part of the team that creates opportunities for the West Hawai'i community".

Founded in 1974, NELHA is a state agency attached to the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. It is tasked with economic diversification in the areas of renewable energy and ocean sciences. The self-supporting agency administers the 870-acre Hawai'i Ocean Science and Technology (HOST) Park in Kailua-Kona where it distributes deep sea water and surface seawater to more than 55 clients. The park had an economic impact of approximately \$147 million on Hawai'i's economy according to a UHERO analysis for calendar year 2022.

For more information on NELHA, visit nelha.hawaii.gov.

###

About NELHA (Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i Authority)

NELHA is a state agency attached to the state Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT). NELHA administers the world's premier energy and ocean technology park, the Hawai'i Ocean Science and Technology (HOST) Park. This unique master-permitted park is on 870 acres of prime coastal property in Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i, and offers research support facilities for the development of marine science, renewable energy and other demonstration projects that use the unique resources found at the park. It is the world's only facility that continually brings ashore high-quality, pristine supplies of both warm surface and cold deep seawater 24 hours a day, which helps to reap economic potentials from the dual temperature seawater delivery system and high solar insolation. Tenants located in HOST Park work at the pre-commercial, commercial, research and educational levels. It is the largest diversified economic development project in the state and is focused on sustainable economic development projects and blue technology.

Media Contact: Laurence Sombardier, Acting NELHA executive director, 808-327-9539 or laurence.sombardier@hawaii.gov