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Realities of fossil fuels, 100% renewable energy in our future

**By Clint Churchill
and Mark Polivka**

Two "Island Voices" articles recently appeared under the headline, "The Growing Costs of Burning Fossil Fuels" (Star-Advertiser, April 28). While there is general consensus that fossil fuel usage is a factor associated with climate change, the extent versus nature's own greenhouse gas, water vapor, is widely debated.

We need to take a reasoned approach to fossil fuel usage, which will be essential to our way of life for quite some time to come. Solar energy has emerged as the most likely alternative, by far, to electricity generated from fossil fuels —

particularly on Oahu. But given any reasonable projection of solar electricity from rooftops, a significant number of utility-scale solar farms will be required. We need to be practical about achieving dependable electricity from renewables, and practicality includes affordability. And for the needed power for overcast days, no other source of energy comes close to the affordability of electricity from fossil fuels.

We should all embrace renewables in our future, but perhaps rethink the "blindness on, at any cost" 100% renewable goal.

There is another major consequence to achieving 100% renewable electricity on Oahu. Here's a

ISLAND VOICES



Kailua resident Clint Churchill, left, and Honolulu resident Mark Polivka represent the Practical Policy Institute of Hawaii.

way to visualize such a future: The 127,000-panel, 28 megawatt Waianae Solar Project sits on 200 acres. Based in part on an assumption that 50% of vehicles will be converted to electric by 2045, Ha-

waiian Electric estimates that we will need to have about 8 million megawatt hours of electricity production for that year, excluding current and projected renewable sources. To achieve all such production from solar would require more than 100 additional projects like Waianae Solar.

If all such projects require acreage similar to Waianae Solar, more than 20,000 acres will have to be removed from potential residential development or sustainable agriculture.

Electricity generation cannot be totally replaced with renewables on Oahu without a huge impact on our land use, in the case of solar, and the landscape, in the case of

wind power. What is Hawaii gaining by covering the aina with solar panels and windmills, when Hawaii today contributes less than one-tenth of 1% of world CO2 emissions?

There are all sorts of reasons Hawaii should reduce its carbon footprint. Hawaii cannot have any meaningful effect on climate change, and no one should be panicked into thinking that apocalypse is coming soon.

Let's stop spreading fear, let's stop being against something (such as fossil fuel) and let's find a way to work together as a community for a future that is practical, affordable and largely decarbonized.

Note: The picture below was submitted to the Star-Advertiser with the text above, but not included with the article's publication, apparently due to page layout limitations.

