

Marine and Coastal Zone Advocacy Council (MACZAC) / Ke Kahu O Na Kumu Wai

MINUTES

Friday, May 22, 2026

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Hybrid Format: Zoom and In-Person at Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Visitor Center

726 South Kīhei Road

Kīhei, Maui, Hawai‘i 96753

Link to electronic video recording of the meeting:

[May 22, 2026 MACZAC Meeting Recording](#)

ATTENDANCE

- **Members present (10):** Scott Sullivan, Sylvia Yanagisako, Robert (Bob) Nishimoto, Rich Brunner, Will Sankey, Donna Brown, Kimbal Thompson, Jim Nicolow, Taryn Dizon, Keith Nitta
- **Member(s) absent (1):** Denver Coon
- **Office of Planning and Sustainable Development/Coastal Zone Management (OPSD/CZM) staff present (7):** Chris Liu, Lisa Webster, McKenzie Lim, Shichao Li, Rebecca Anderson, Kristi Kimura, Tanner Gonzalez
- **Others present (6):** Justine Nihipali (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Office for Coastal Management), Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Meredith Welch, MWall (Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency), Daniel Keir, Taylor-Kaili McKenzie (O‘ahu Resource Conservation and Development Council)

DISTRIBUTED MATERIAL

- MACZAC meeting agenda for May 22, 2026
- Draft minutes from February 6, 2026
- Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Report to MACZAC (May 22, 2026)

I. Call to Order

Chair Scott Sullivan called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM and facilitated round-table introductions of MACZAC members.

II. Approval of February 6, 2026 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved as circulated.

III. Welcome from CZM Program Manager

OPSD-CZM manager Chris Liu welcomed everyone.

IV. CZM Program Report including funding, focus areas, and project updates National Initiatives

IIJA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) – Capacity Building for Habitat Protection and Restoration

There were three projects being funded by the competitive BIL funding.

- **Resilient Reefs for Maui Nui.** This project was completed in March 2026.
- **Dune Restoration, Community Outreach, and Capacity-Building Project at Hanapēpē Salt Pond.** This was expected to be completed by April 2026, however the project was extended for another three years, with anticipated completion in 2029.
- **Puapua‘a Iki Habitat Restoration Project.** This is the most recent awarded project funded by the BIL competitive funding.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding

The Hawai‘i CZM Program received non-competitive funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to support capacity building around the State. Requests for Quotations were posted to solicit capacity building projects, and eleven projects around the State were selected for funding. Projects are currently ongoing. The first round of projects are expected to be completed in October 2026. CZM staff contact is Kristi Kimura.

Hawai‘i CZM Program

MACZAC Representative Vacancies

- There is currently still one (1) vacancy on MACZAC. There has been no update on filling the vacancy on MACZAC for Moloka‘i.

Keith Nitta has filled the Kaua‘i vacancy. Welcome Keith!

- Representatives from East Hawai‘i and one from O‘ahu have agreed to stay on MACZAC until new members are recruited for their seats.

CZM Staffing

The final vacancy has been filled for the Program Specialist IV position, with an anticipated start date of June 2026.

CZM is in the process of obtaining approval to contract with the Research Corporation of the University of Hawai‘i (“RCUH”) for administrative and staffing support in FY27. If approved, at least 1.0 FTE equivalent would be hired to assist with MACZAC coordination and CZM projects.

CZM Interns

- One “Hele Imua” Intern, a program offered through the State’s Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, will be joining the CZM Program for the summer. The intern will have the opportunity to select a preferred project from a list of projects upon their arrival.
- The CZM Program is also exploring bringing aboard a second intern for the summer via Hawai‘i Pacific University’s “Next Gen Internship” Program.
- Sebastian, who started as a Hele Imua Intern and then rejoined the CZM Program as a Next Gen Intern, graduated earlier this month. Sebastian helped with the development of the Watershed Coordination Map, in preparation for the release of the Beta Version. A Hui Hou Sebastian and mahalo nui for all your contributions to CZM!

Other CZM Initiatives

Hawai‘i Beach Inventory Database and Viewer Prototype

This project will design and establish an interactive and searchable online geospatial platform enabling users to access and view available beach data from different sources through a centralized database. The project will be presented to MACZAC representatives in August and December, respectively. CZM Staff contact is Shichao Li.

2020 Ocean Resources Management Plan Implementation

Regional Shoreline Management

The Pili Nā Moku Pilot Project has selected its Project Team and contracted a Statewide Facilitator and Regional Facilitators for Wai‘anae, O‘ahu and Mā‘alaea, Maui. The community participatory mapping workshops will be held on May 30th, 2026 in Wai‘anae and July 2026 in Mā‘alaea. CZM is continuing discussion with organizations on Moloka‘i to scope plans for Phase 2 of the project within the Kona moku. CZM staff contacts are Ciera McQuaid and Sarah Chang.

FY23 Project of Special Merit – Integrating CZM and DHHL

This project was completed March 31, 2026 and resulted in the identification of seven potential statewide strategies that DHHL could use to manage development in coastal areas. The final recommendations were presented to the Hawaiian Homes Commission in March 2026 and are looking to move forward with statutory amendments to HRS Chapter 205A.

Watershed Coordination Map

CZM is developing a GIS map of organizations and agencies across the islands that work on watershed-related/based restoration activities. The map intends to support coordination between agencies and local non-profit organizations and increase awareness about active projects and work being done in the watershed. Drafted content has been sent back to organizations for their review and final approval. A beta version of the map is anticipated to be publicly available at the end of May 2026, with ongoing data collection and updates continuing thereafter. Staff contact is Ciera McQuaid.

Link to full CZM report to MACZAC: [May 22, 2026 CZM Report to MACZAC](#)

V. Chair and Vice Chair Elections (action item)

This agenda item has been deferred to the next MACZAC Quarterly meeting.

VI. Vote on Letter of Support for the Pacific Islands Ocean Observing System (PacIOOS) (action item)

Mr. Sullivan introduced the drafted letter of support for PacIOOS. This is an important information system for ocean users, policymakers, and resource managers that had been previously supported by federal funds. The intent of the letter is to fully support the need of PacIOOS.

Ms. Brown, the MACZAC representative on the PacIOOS Governing Council, thanked Mr. Sullivan and the CZM staff for writing the letter of support. PacIOOS provides an essential service and provides information on weather, waves, tsunamis, etc. Mr. Sullivan thanked Ms. Brown for her continued service on the PacIOOS Governing Council.

Ms. Brown moved to approve and send the letter of support and Mr. Thompson seconded. The letter of support was approved.

VII. Presentation: Hawaiian Estuaries Viewer

Lisa Webster, Planner, State of Hawai'i Coastal Zone Management Program

Mr. Sullivan introduced CZM staff Lisa Webster who was the lead for the creation of the Hawaiian Estuaries Viewer. Ms. Webster acknowledged and thanked Bob Nishimoto for his work and effort to support muliwai and fish nurseries.

Ms. Webster began with the creation of the State's CZM Program in 1977 under HRS Chapter 205A with the purpose of providing effective management, beneficial use, protection, and development of the coastal zone. The Program is a network-based partnership housed in OPSD and tasked with managing the entire State's coastline.

As the lead agency of the network program, OPSD encourages coordination in management of coastal resources. The Ocean Resources Management Plan (ORMP) is a statewide plan that seeks to fill data and management gaps through planning initiatives. The three Focus Areas of the ORMP are coastal hazards and development, land-based pollution, and marine ecosystems. The direction of the plan is informed by public input and partner agency expertise. One of the ways the CZM Program gathers public input is through the MACZAC. In a MACZAC meeting in May 2022, Dr. Nishimoto suggested Dr. Kim Peyton at Division of Aquatic Resources, present her estuaries research to the MACZAC.

During her 2022 presentation, Dr. Peyton discussed the importance of estuaries which are coastal

bodies of water where fresh water from streams or groundwater mix with salt water from the ocean and how important these are as juvenile fish habitats. Dr. Peyton also expressed an interest in getting CZM support to develop her estuaries data into shareable geospatial data layers. In May 2024, CZM worked with DLNR-DAR to develop a Request for Proposal (RFQ) to contract out some of the work to create the geospatial layers. There ended up being more work than anticipated, with most of the work being done in-house. By November of 2025, a team from Esri was contracted to build out the viewer and it ended in December of 2025. The beta version of the viewer was released in March 2026.

The preliminary data that Dr. Peyton had was bay points and headland points that were identified by a student for the whole State. She also had spreadsheets which identified whether each bay was an estuary based on whether there was freshwater flowing into it. To develop the data, the team began by comparing imagery and creating rough polygons that captured the large inland water features, bay points, headlands, and UH SOEST's coastline layers. The team then did some smoothing to improve the appearance of the rough polygons that encompass all water features that were attached to the bays. The data was joined to Dr. Peyton's Bay's data to the polygons made to identify which were estuaries. As shown in the demonstration, the blue bays are estuaries, while the gray bays are not.

For the riverine estuaries, DAR stream data was compared with the contour line of O'ahu, clipping only low elevation streams like the example in Hanalei Bay. Originally Dr. Peyton wanted a 30 ft (10m) elevation line, but there was not enough data available to do that, so the 100 ft contour line was used. The demonstration then shows Dr. Peyton's data identified which of the low elevation streams were estuary and which were not. A buffer layer was created after riverine and nonriverine estuaries were identified around the clipped stream layer, to convert the polyline layer to a polygon layer.

Following her demonstration on riverine estuaries, Ms. Webster shared her data development on lagoonal estuaries by cross-referencing Dr. Peyton's data with the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) dataset. The green coloring as shown in the demonstration is what Dr. Peyton identified as a lagoonal estuary, and alongside Dr. Peyton's boundaries are the NWI dataset in a grey-green color. She discusses this information as filling a data gap, by providing information to the target audience which is CZM program partners. This includes County shoreline planners who issue permits for development and CWRM water regulators who provide water regulators with a better understanding of the impacts of water diversion to critical fish nurseries and bird habitats. Also, this is used as a tool for interested community members, who want to learn more about Hawaii's natural resources.

Ms. Webster then proceeds to conduct a viewer demo of the Hawaii Estuaries Viewer (Beta Version). She goes through how to use the viewer and the different settings to help create a more solidified search. She goes further to explain the in-depth detail of each type of estuary, the location, which species are found there, and how many watersheds contribute to the estuary

chosen. The 3D function was shown, specifically on Big Island which she explains helps to see the actual geomorphology of the area and how the water is truly flowing into the estuary. After her demonstration of the GIS estuary Map Viewer, Ms. Webster opened the meeting for questions.

The first question is about where to find this website, to which Ms. Webster answers the statewide GIS website. Another comment given by Taryn Dizon of Kauaʻi expresses her gratitude toward the presentation. Ms. Dizon also remarked how this is a great tool to be used and how she appreciates Dr. Bob Nishimoto's focus as well. Ms. Dizon brings up a potential new bill that has been passed regarding stream maintenance and expresses how Ms. Webster's demonstration of the Hawaii Estuaries Viewer can help not only Kauaʻi, but other islands as well with their riverine estuaries. She expressed that the State should reallocate their budget to ensure more stream maintenance is occurring. She continues her response by acknowledging identifying these streams was the first step, but then really pushes to ask what we are going to do with this data regarding decision making and next steps moving forward. Ms. Dizon's concern is the overgrowth of these streams, not allowing for a full flow downstream. Her final remarks were tied back to the bill she mentioned earlier, and how that new bill that was passed can be used as a playbook moving forward. Ms. Webster thanked Ms. Dizon for her input, to which Mr. Nishimoto raised his hand to share his input.

Dr. Nishimoto offered his gratitude toward Ms. Webster's presentation and said he thinks now it's time to "fill in the blanks." Ms. Webster thanked him as well, then Mr. Keith Nitta raised his hand to share his thoughts. He brings up Kauaʻi being the only island with streams being navigable waters, and how that is significant due to it bringing in the Army Corps. Ms. Webster responds with how there has been a change in definition to navigable waters, but it makes sense Kauaʻi has them due to it being the oldest island, and that she will look more into it. Mr. Nitta continues and brings up how navigable waters bring in federal involvement. Mr. Nishimoto also adds to the conversation by saying when debris needed to be removed in Waipio to improve flow, a boat was needed as well as a permit from the Army Corps to be able to remove any debris. Mr. Nishimoto closes his statement by saying how these permits are more of a hassle than support from the federal side. Mr. Sullivan then speaks to discuss the true definition of navigable waters for Army Corps purposes. Ms. Webster thanks Mr. Sullivan, then shares a comment that was brought by Mr. Nicolow, whose son is a graduate research assistant with the Coastal Research Collaborative, who shared data with Ms. Webster, and gave her thanks to him as well. Ms. Webster then concludes her presentation and thanks everyone.

VIII. Discussion and Formation of a Permitted Interaction Group (PIG) focused on Public Engagement (action item)

Mr. Sullivan introduced the topic of sea level rise and keeping the public informed about its impact on coastal zones. He shared recent work by the University of Hawaiʻi at Manoa that the sea level will rise by a foot by the year 2050. He expresses the impacts of rising sea levels for

coastal zones- including coastal erosion, increased inundation, and higher wave energy bringing the waves to shore. Mr. Sullivan has brought up the recent flooding this past spring, and how Hawai‘i’s drainage system couldn’t keep up with the rainfall. He also communicates the not so obvious effects of coastal flooding, such as impacting the freshwater table.

Mr. Sullivan then goes on to report that the University of Hawai‘i conducted a recent survey of Hawai‘i’s residents, to get their input on sea level rise. He quotes the report and it goes as follows, “The results show near consensus, sea level rise is happening, widespread concern about its impacts and strong support for immediate government action.” At the same time the report states’ residents feel poorly informed on the issue with a large majority feeling the State and county are prepared for these future events. Mr. Sullivan states there is something MACZAC can do in the future to help bring awareness and education for the public on these issues.

Mr. Sullivan then proceeds with discussing the formation of a permitted interaction group (PIG) that examines communication gaps between the government and the public and identifies respective communication strategies for informing adaptation and mitigation of climate-related sea level rise and coastal flooding. He reinstates the PIG is for the purpose of sea level rise and awareness with the public. He then opens the floor for discussion to which Mr. Nitta asked, “what is the reaction of the government and how have they been reacting to sea level rise?” He brings up how back in 2006 in his division they weren’t very receptive with this idea due to all the regulatory restraints that would have to be imposed. Also, due to the reaction of landowners, businesses, shoreline property owners, but then reiterates that was 20 years ago. Mr. Sullivan begins his response by stating how everyone is aware that sea level rise is real, and is happening now, and there is no longer any question about it. Mr. Sullivan proceeds to agree with Mr. Nitta’s remarks about how 20 years ago the government wasn’t very certain, but now the data has shown it is very real and it is happening. He also states how both State and county governments are actively working toward coming up with adaptation and mitigation strategies. He reiterates it is a big problem and both our elected officials and civil service workers for State and county governments have acknowledged and come to terms with what is happening.

Mr. Sullivan introduced MACZAC and PIG priorities during this discussion. He states it is very important that the public be made aware as strategies are being implemented and this is where MACZAC could actively participate to help the public become more aware of what the government is doing, and the options that are being considered. He also hopes for public input to be a part of the process. Mr. Sullivan states a proposal for MACZAC permitted interaction groups to come up with strategies, methods, and ideas for helping the public become educated and aware of sea level rise. Ms. Yanagisako responds to Mr. Nitta’s earlier question about how the government is working on strategies to get the information they know from the public with recent reports that have been released. Ms. Yanagisako goes on to say these reports and surveys are a great way to tell what the public knows and doesn’t know, so the PIG will have a better idea of what to concentrate on.

Mr. Sullivan moved forward with the discussion, stating two things were to be decided today, one being whether to form a new PIG, and the other being who would want to participate in this PIG. Deadlines and deliverables were undetermined, however would be discussed in the PIG meetings. Mr. Sullivan asked for a motion to create the new PIG regarding public awareness and education of sea level rise. Ms. Yanagisako made the first motion. Ms. Brown made the second motion and the PIG on public engagement was formed. Mr. Sullivan moved forward to find members. The five members include Rich Brunner, Keith Nitta, Scott Sullivan, Sylvia Yanagisako, and Kimbal Thompson. Mr. Nishimoto asked if there were any positives to sea level rise, examples being bigger estuaries and more anchialine ponds. Mr. Sullivan responds with sea level rise having a large coastal, marine, biological impact.

A call to vote for the new PIG was announced, all members of the meeting were in favor and there were no objections.

IX. Discussion on MACZAC Priorities

Mr. Sullivan moved into a discussion on MACZAC priorities. CZM staff put together what potential MAZAC properties could be. Ms. Lim also mentions an update about the Green Fee, eight out of the ten selected projects had been funded, which tie into the first MACZAC priority that is discussed. The link to the funded projects has been provided on Civil Beat, with money distribution amounts provided.

Mr. Sullivan leads into the first potential MACZAC priority which is to enhance legislative awareness and engagement. As Mr. Sullivan states that legislative engagement is very important, not being well versed in how the legislature moves is a weakness to work on, but not a barrier to not communicating with the legislature. Coming up with ways to communicate with the legislature is well within MACZACs capabilities. Ms. Lim also stated that for next meeting there will be an opportunity to form a legislative permitted interactive group. Questions about how this was brought up to the legislature were asked to which she responded with as testimony.

Mr. Sullivan moved on to the second item on the summary provided and noted that he would like to continue MACZAC's contribution to CZM projects. Mr. Nitta raises concern with issue number two: *Increase Engagement and Collaboration Among Members and Partners*, wanting to add stakeholders to the end as members and partners can be interchangeable. Mr. Sullivan agrees to this point, connecting stakeholders to the public in this case and moves to item number three; *Strengthen Public Engagement and Understanding of Sea Level Rise*. He agrees with this third item and thinks it will be a significant role for MACZAC and supporting the CZM team.

Ms. Yanagisako agreed with Mr. Nitta's former point on wanting to incorporate communication from the public to the MACZAC. Mr. Sullivan agreed, however is a bit unaware on how to fully achieve this goal now. More input from the meeting is that sea level rise isn't a forefront discussion always had in community board meetings, and the community does get a little

reserved when talking about waterways, shorelines, and estuaries. A connection made by Ms. Donna Brown that the sea rise level viewer is similar to the estuary viewer and might be beneficial for the new public engagement PIG.

X. Hotspots

a. Na Muliwai – East Hawai‘i

Mr. Bob Nishimoto moves on to discuss “Walking the Talk”, where he discusses Muliwai Management. This focuses on fishing management among adult fish, as well as the pelagic phase among these fish. The main point he brings up is to understand the dispersal pathways and population connectivity for devising effective fishery management. He focuses on Hilo Harbor Muliwai, asking if it is a nursery habitat for these juvenile fish, which DAR Hilo is also investigating as well. He concludes his presentation with stating to get the public to understand this fish lifestyle and how mauka to makai lifestyle comes into play.

Mr. Sullivan also states how we can use this hotspot section as a way for MACZAC to get public concerns passed to agencies to be heard. He also mentioned to use this hotspot section for current coastal concerns and turn it into an action item. At the next meeting a discussion on how to improve the hotspots agenda item will take place.

XI. Public input on all agenda items throughout the meeting

(Public input was provided throughout the meeting.)

XII. New Business

The next quarterly meeting will potentially be held the week of August 18th, with the possibility of August 28th on Kaua‘i.

The last meeting of the year is to be held in person on O‘ahu.

McKenzie will be returning to graduate school in August, leaving CZM in July. Big thanks to McKenzie Lim for her contributions to the CZM team, congratulations and good luck!

XIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:59 PM.