



FIRST IN HAWAII

Maui County proposes \$1 million solar loan program

A new program proposed by Mayor James "Kimo" Apana, could double the amount of funding available to help make solar water heating a more affordable option for thousands of Maui County residents. In his

recent "State of the County" address, Mayor

Apana unveiled plans for the County's "Maui Solar Roof Initiative." Under the partnership

with Maui Electric, the County would provide up to \$1 million to be used over several

years to help residents pay for solar water heating installations.



Each eligible applicant would receive interest-free funding of about \$2000 toward the purchase and installation of a MECO-approved solar water heating system. The systems would also be eligible for [MECO's \\$1000 rebate](#) and the State of Hawaii 35% energy tax credit. Bottom line: An average family of four could pay for their investment in just over three years, with savings on their electric bill continuing for years to come.

All full-time Maui County resident homeowners would be eligible to apply for funding, with first preference given to lower income residents. Funding for the program still requires County Council approval. If approval is received, the program is expected to begin accepting applications after July of this year.

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Why solar?

Using solar water heating not only helps reduce Maui County's use of imported oil, it is also one of the best ways to use renewable energy in your home. A family of four using solar water heating can save an estimated \$40 per month, year after year, on their electric bill.

The estimated 4,500 solar systems to be installed in ten years under the Maui Solar Roof Initiative will save about 310,000 barrels of oil over the systems' lives. These savings build on the savings from 3,300 solar systems already installed in Maui County with the help of \$3.3 million in rebates paid out since MECO began its residential solar water heating program in 1996.



It swallowed Tahiti and it's still hungry!

Sometimes good intentions go bad. That's the case with the tropical tree *miconia* which arrived in Hawaii in the 1960s. This plant, with its large attractive leaves—shiny or velvety dark green on the top side and purple underneath—is now the focus of an all out eradication campaign. Why? Just look at Tahiti. *Miconia* was brought to Tahiti in the 1930s; today it has smothered about 70% of the native forests.

Miconia crowds out other forest plants, leaving the soil underneath barren and exposed to erosion. It threatens watersheds, native plants and native animals that rely on the forest. It can also grow up to heights of 40 to 50 feet, potentially interfering with electrical power lines.

Since *miconia* is on the State Noxious Weeds list, it can no longer be purchased in nurseries. But it originally was brought in as an ornamental plant and has been spread primarily by birds which carry seeds from the plants to roadsides, farmlands and forests. Maui has been especially hard hit. See box for information on how you can help stop the spread of *miconia*.



How you can help

If you see *miconia*, call the **Miconia Hot Line at 579-2115 on Maui, 533-5236 on Molokai, and 565-7430 on Lanai.**

An expert will check to be sure it is *miconia* and will arrange to remove the plants.



POWER TIPS

Chill out with an efficient fridge

Your refrigerator is one of the most energy intensive appliances in your home, so take some steps to keep your 'fridge' running as efficiently as possible:

- Check the temperature inside the refrigerator and freezer with a thermometer. The recommended temperatures are 37° to 40°F for the fresh food compartment and 0° to 5°F for the freezer section.
- Defrost manual-defrost refrigerators regularly; frost build-up decreases energy efficiency.
- Replace your refrigerator door seals if they are not airtight.
- Cover liquids and wrap foods; uncovered foods release moisture and make the condenser work harder.

If you're thinking of buying a new refrigerator, be sure to check the EnergyGuide label which lists electricity use in kilowatt-hours—the lower the better. Also look for the Energy Star® label which designates high efficiency models.



Pay your bill at Foodland

Just a reminder that Foodland and Sack N Save stores on Maui accept MECO electric bill payments. While doing your grocery shopping, just stop by the Customer Service counter and pay your MECO bill. Foodland charges a \$1 handling fee. And don't forget to allow at least three working days for your bill payment to be credited to your electric account.



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

MINI LAULAU



- 2 lb luau (Hawaiian taro) leaves
- 4 large ti leaves
- 2 lb oven-ready cured pork*
- 30-inch length of heavy-duty foil

*To cure pork, dissolve 1/4 cup salt and 1/4 cup brown sugar in 3 cups water. Cut pork butt into 1-inch cubes. Add pork to brine and soak overnight in the refrigerator. Drain.

Wash luau and ti leaves; remove stems and fibrous parts of the veins. Cut pork into 1-inch cubes. Place 2 ti leaves side by side in center of foil. Place remaining 2 ti leaves crosswise over others. Place a piece of pork in the center of each luau leaf; wrap tightly. Place bundles close to each other on ti leaves. Fold ti leaves over bundles; seal foil tightly. Steam over boiling water for 3 to 4 hours, adding more water as needed. To bake, place foil package in a baking pan with 3 cups water; bake in electric oven at 350°F for 3 hours. Makes 45 to 50 mini laulau.

