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## Hawaii Energy Office well equipped to handle upcoming challenges, its top official says

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The Hawaii Energy Office is well equipped to handle all of the daunting challenges ahead as the state moves closer and closer to its renewable energy goal, the head of the office told PBN.

The office, which oversees the state's [energy industry during a critical time](#), is in the process of filling new vacancies, and hopes to have all of its 36 authorized positions filled by the end of the year, [Mark Glick](#), administrator for the state Energy Office, told PBN in a recent exclusive interview.

Its annual operating budget currently stands at \$5.88 million.

"Overall, we are doing well and building capacity," Glick said. "We have been able to have the resources thus far to develop these high impact solutions and analyses."

He noted that the Energy Office has been highly encouraged by the state Legislature's vote of confidence in returning much-needed funding to the office via the so-called barrel tax on every barrel of oil shipped into Hawaii.

"We have been able to slowly identify and build into our team the kind of team with finance and analytical backgrounds," Glick said.

One of these high impact projects that he's talking about is the [Green Energy Market Securitization, or GEMS program](#), which will use a market-based funding mechanism to channel \$150 million in private capital into clean energy investments.

The program provides a sustainable financing structure that will make solar panels and other clean energy improvements available to traditionally underserved markets in Hawaii such as low-and moderate income homeowners, renters and nonprofit organizations, the state has said.

The program is expected to begin issuing clean energy loans by the end of this year, Glick said.

"In Hawaii, we are undergoing the greatest energy transformation since the introduction of oil," he said. "This really involves adjusting our vision of our energy future. We are totally committed to going beyond our renewable energy goal of 40 percent."

The Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative set goals in 2008 for the state to receive 40 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030.

Duane Shimogawa covers energy, real estate and economic development for Pacific Business News.