HAWAIʻI CONSERVATION ALLIANCE
A Partnership Dedicated to Environmental Stewardship, Community Engagement, and Conservation Capacity

Tips for Writing a Strong Abstract for the 2023 Hawaiʻi Conservation Conference

This document provides a brief overview of the abstract evaluation criteria used to evaluate abstracts for the Hawaii Conservation Conference (Conference) and suggestions for writing a strong abstract that is likely to be accepted. Abstracts are first evaluated by anonymous online reviewers, with subject matter expertise, who assign a numerical score and provide written feedback based on the criteria. Final acceptance decisions are made by the Conference Abstract Review Committee comprised of staff and volunteers from Hawaii Conservation Alliance member organizations.

Each year, the Hawaii Conservation Alliance (Alliance) develops a unique theme and tracks for the Conference. Abstracts should address the theme and, ideally, one or more of the tracks. Please visit our website for more information https://www.hawaiiconservation.org/conference/.

Conference Abstract Evaluation Criteria

Please carefully review the Conference Abstract Evaluation Criteria and Format Descriptions before writing an abstract. You will need to select one of two sets of criteria (management or research) against which your abstract will be evaluated.

- **Abstract Evaluation Criteria** have been updated to more appropriately score abstracts for **Conservation Management** focused presentations and **Conservation Research** focused presentations. Please make sure you carefully read the **Abstract Evaluation Criteria** prior to writing your abstract to determine which category your abstract best fits. While we understand many projects integrate research and management, *your abstract will be evaluated with only one of the two sets of criteria* so please select the best fit. As in past years, the Alliance welcomes and encourages presentations sharing *inter-disciplinary* work and work *grounded in cultural values and practice* – these presentations may fall into either management or research categories.
    - **Conservation Management Presentations** should describe natural resource management work including purpose, design, *outcomes, and evaluation*. These presentations should not only describe a project or program, but should include some component of evaluation, innovation, and/or comparison.
    - **Conservation Research Presentations** can describe both applied and experimental research that addresses conservation needs and questions. Abstracts for research presentations should be clear that *results* (including preliminary) will be ready to present by time of Conference. Abstracts that appear to be for proposed research without any results may not be accepted.
- **Relevance**: For both management and research focused presentations, it is very important that you *explicitly state how your work is relevant to native biodiversity and/or biocultural conservation in Hawaii*. Do not assume that the reader knows how your work connects to conservation work in Hawaiʻi.
- The Alliance welcomes presentation that address the broad scope of conservation work, but they should have a clear and strong connection to native biodiversity stewardship and must go beyond program descriptions. For example, we welcome content addressing *environmental education* work, but it should include evaluation and/or introduce new/innovative tools or

approaches. Additionally, we welcome content grounded in *sustainability* work, but again, it should be clear how the work impacts and/or is relevant to native Hawaiian species/ecosystem conservation.

- **Abstract Format Descriptions** - It is very important that you carefully review the format descriptions and submit your abstract in the appropriate format. Please do not submit identical abstracts under multiple formats. Duplicate abstracts may be pulled from evaluation.

Best Practices for Abstract Writing

This section includes recommendations that are not necessarily specific to the Conference, but that are still applicable.

- ☐ **Review** Abstract Evaluation Criteria document
- ☐ **Explicitly** state the ways in which your presentation will address the Conference theme, tracks, and topical and geographical scope. For the HCC, this means clearly stating the relevance to conservation of native biodiversity and/or biocultural resources in Hawaii.
- ☐ While there are many methods to writing an abstract, make sure your abstract contains a sentence or two for each of the following ***key elements of an abstract*** using the Koopman Method[1]. Try to visualize your abstract as a burger that you are trying to build (see Writing Strategy Tip #1 below)
  - ☐ **Motivation:** Why should the reader care about your research/project? This is where the purpose, goals/targets, and significance of your work should be stated.
  - ☐ **Problem Statement:** What is your research/project trying to solve or address? Your abstract should focus on new information or milestones of your work or building on previous work. It ***should not*** be repeating previously presented work.
  - ☐ **Approach:** What methods or tools and approaches did you use to solve your above-mentioned problem? Make sure to clearly state these methods or tools and approaches. Were your methods/approaches innovative or novel?
  - ☐ **Results:** What was the answer - what did you discover? What were outputs of your research/project? What metrics or indicators were used to evaluate the work? These results should be new and original or building from previous work.
    - **IMPORTANT:** ***If you do not have the results of your research/project by the time you have to submit your abstract,*** **EXPLICITLY** state when you hope to have results (ideally this will be before the Conference date), what type of analysis is to be done, and what results you are expecting to see.
  - ☐ **Conclusions:** What are the implications - how do the results or outcomes of your research/project inform conservation practice? What were the lessons learned? What worked and didn't work? Is it a new method or technique that can be applied to other conservation projects, or only particular projects? Is it a warning/indicator that this method or technique is not the best path?
- ☐ Make sure that your abstract is ***NOT*** a program/organization description. However, if you find that submitting an abstract is not the best fit for what you would like to highlight, please consider

[1] Koopman, P. (2009). How to Write an Abstract.

having an Exhibit Booth during Conference instead. You can learn more at https://www.hawaiiconservation.org/conference/ or contacting conference@hawaiiconservation.org.

☐ We're all passionate about the conservation work we do in Hawaii, but make sure your abstract is focusing on facts, research, and field work, ***NOT*** the emotions behind the work.

Abstract Technical Checklist

☐ Review Abstract Evaluation Criteria document, especially **section #1: Writing Quality & Adherence to Guidelines**.

☐ Use Hawaiian diacritical marks and place names appropriately. Use wehewehe.org as a resource. For example: Big Island should be Hawaiʻi or Hawaiʻi Island

Writing Strategy Tips

1. Visualize your abstract as a burger that you need to construct using the abstract key elements mentioned above. Make sure you create a **complete** burger before you submit your finalized abstract (nobody wants a burger that's just a bun or doesn't have any protein - yuck!).
    - **Top Bun:** *Motivation* or *Problem Statement*
    - **Condiments & Lettuce:** *Problem Statement* or *Motivation*
    - **Cheese & Tomatoes:** *Approach*
    - **Burger Patty:** *Results*
    - **Bottom Bun:** *Conclusions*

2. Plan ahead and make sure you give yourself enough time to write your abstract! Remember, your finalized abstract will be part of a permanent (published) document, the Conference Abstract Book, that will live on the internet. Dedicate **at least 4 hours** (maybe a little less if you have lots of experience) towards writing your abstract. These don't have to be consecutive hours - you can break it up over a couple of days. When you think about it 4 hours isn't so bad! It's like:
    - watching 8 episodes of *The Office*
    - or 4 episodes of *Game of Thrones*
    - or scrolling through social media at the end of the day when insomnia kicks in.

3. Go through multiple iterations of your abstract, tracking your changes/versions. Your draft abstract is a living document - walk away for a couple of hours or a day and then come back to your abstract. Is there anything you would change about your abstract? Did you catch spelling or grammar errors? Writing in a shareable document (e.g., Google Docs) is a great platform to write your abstract on to keep track of the changes you've made and receive suggestions from people you share your abstract with.
4. Have a peer, colleague, or mentor proofread your abstract and give you feedback. It can also be useful to get feedback from someone without deep knowledge of your topic such as a friend of family member. Your abstract should make sense to a reader who does not have expertise in that field. They may even help catch spelling or grammar errors you may have missed.

5. Don't wait until the last minute to submit your abstract on the abstract submission platform! Make sure you log into the platform as soon as it opens and **start a draft submission**. When submitting your finalized abstract, do it a few days before the deadline, to avoid technical errors with the platform. Everyone in the conservation community will be submitting their abstract at the last minute - don't be a last-minute Lucy! ***If you miss the deadline Alliance staff will not be able to make exceptions.***

Examples of Strongly Written Abstracts for Conference

Conservation Research Example 1

An Assessment of Wēkiu Bug Populations on Cinder Cones of the Maunakea Volcano, Hawai'I Informs Habitat Restoration and Conservation Efforts
2018 Hawaii Conservation Conference

Jessica Kirkpatrick, Jesse Eiben, Fritz Klasner

The endemic Hawaiian wēkiu bug (Nysius wekiuicola) is a carnivorous scavenger that only inhabits volcanic cinder cones above ~3,500m elevation on Maunakea, Hawai'i. As a species of conservation concern threatened by invasive species, climate change, and habitat alteration, a greater understanding of wēkiu bug populations and habitat use through time is needed to inform habitat restoration efforts and conservation management decisions. In this study, locations on a high elevation and a lower elevation cinder cone were sampled using attractant traps in a buffered random design six times from June 2016-2017 to examine wēkiu bug distribution patterns within cinder cone habitats and across seasons. A generalized linear mixed model (GLMM) was used to explore the relative importance of cinder cone characteristics (topographic aspect, surficial minerals, and elevation) hypothesized to influence wēkiu bug distributions. Results indicate that wēkiu bugs had a highly aggregated distribution, with up to 40 times higher bug densities at the higher elevation cinder cone, and the density of bugs changed within and between cinder cones throughout the year. Our GLMM indicated that sample month, topographic aspect, and elevation on a cinder cone influences wēkiu bug distributions with abundance increasing with elevation within a cinder cone, and the highest captures are predicted to be on the northeast aspects of the higher elevation cinder cone year round. We recommend preserving contiguous cinder cone habitats for the persistence of the wēkiu bug and monitoring populations in a random sample design in known or restored habitats to effectively monitor wēkiu bug densities.

Conservation Management Example 1

Integrating Biophysical and Socioeconomic Data to Improve Ridge to Reef Management in the Manell-Geus Habitat Focus Area in Guam
2018 Hawaii Conservation Conference

Marybelle Quinata, Valerie Brown, Adrienne Loerzel

Resource managers typically focus on biophysical monitoring efforts to understand how humans may be impacting a particular ecosystem. However, many threats to an ecosystem have corresponding effects on the human communities that depend on them. Further, many management efforts depend on community engagement to be successful. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) included human well-being objectives and socioeconomic monitoring in its planning efforts for the Manell-Geus Habitat Focus Area (HFA) in Guam. As one of ten HFAs included in NOAA's Habitat Blueprint the project seeks to improve habitat conditions for fisheries, improve the resilience of coastal communities, and to provide other economic, cultural, and environmental benefits our society needs and enjoys. In 2016, researchers collected baseline socioeconomic data through household surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews. This information was integrated with biophysical information to understand human interactions with the environment and identify management opportunities. Data include human perceptions of the environment and their role in these spaces, the threats that affect ecosystems and humans, and their willingness to participate in actions to improve the ecosystem. Managers believe this data will help them avoid impacts to human well-being, and have used it to develop opportunities for residents to get involved in management and restoration activities through citizen science and climate change adaptation programs. The information also helped the project team identify appropriate ways to share data with the community. We'll highlight the challenges of integrated monitoring and how it has been applied in the Manell-Geus HFA.

Conservation Research Example 2

Evaluating Impacts of Rainfall Intensity and Surface Water Levels on Hawaiian Stilt Nesting Success
2018 Hawaii Conservation Conference

Kristen Harmon, Yinphan Tsang, Ayron Strauch, Catherine Chan, Melissa Price

The Hawaiian Stilt (Himantopus mexicanus knudseni), an endangered, native Hawaiian waterbird, inhabits wetlands across the Hawaiian Islands. Flooding and predation of nests have been identified as major threats to Hawaiian Stilt populations. Nesting success of the Hawaiian Stilt is thought to be correlated with surface water levels, as is the case for most wading bird species. Flooding of nests may result from increases in surface water levels, particularly during high intensity rainfall. Additionally, increasing surface water levels may decrease nest predation, as nests become less accessible to land predators. Recent sea level rise has increased groundwater levels, causing rises in surface water levels, particularly during high intensity rainfall. On the island of O'ahu rainfall intensity varies spatially and temporally, resulting in fluctuating hydrological conditions of wetlands. A better understanding of how changes in surface water levels impact nesting success of the Hawaiian Stilt is necessary for effective conservation of this endangered species. Observational surveys and nest cameras were used to examine nesting success in six wetlands on O'ahu. Rainfall data was gathered from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and surface water data was gathered from wetland staff gauges. Rainfall intensity was positively correlated with surface water levels. Nest failures due to flooding were highest when surface water levels increased during periods of high intensity rainfall. Predation of nests by land predators decreased as surface water levels increased. Our results may be

used to inform decisions for managing hydrological conditions of Hawaiian Stilt habitat given future climate predictions.

Conservation Management Example 2

A Real-Time Avian Malaria Warning System for Targeted Management Response
2018 Hawaii Conservation Conference

Lucas Fortini, Lauren Kaiser, Dennis LaPointe

Many studies have recently detailed how both ongoing and projected warming allows avian malaria and its mosquito vector to spread at higher elevation areas where most remaining native Hawaiian forest bird species persist. Various vector control options are increasingly being considered to safeguard forest birds in their natural habitats from the spread of disease. However, vector control options require localized deployment that is not logistically nor economically viable 'everywhere and all the time'. Based on known environmental tolerances of Plasmodium relictum and Culex quinquefasciatus, we developed a real-time avian malaria warning system that assists managers in identifying conditions when and where vector control is most needed. This tool is not only relevant for targeting conventional vector control methods such as source reduction or insecticides, but also useful to explore novel vector control techniques, like sterilization and mass rearing, in terms of deployment and monitoring prioritization. This tool will aid ongoing discussions on optimization of vector control strategies while yielding a clear example of applying modeling methods to meet operational conservation needs. The warning system considers three high value conservation sites: Alaka'i Wilderness Preserve on Kaua'i, Nakula Natural Area Reserve System (NARS) on Maui, and Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge on Hawai'i. With this information, local managers may focus vector control efforts to periods preceding when the life cycle of both vector and parasite are possible locally. This project shows how managers can incorporate climate into current decision making without having to consider the uncertainties of long-term climatic and ecological projections.