



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DLNR ANNOUNCES NEW ADMINISTRATOR FOR STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

HONOLULU – DLNR Chairperson William J. Aila, Jr. today announced the appointment of Alan S. Downer as administrator of the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD).

“I am pleased to announce the appointment of Alan Downer to the post of SHPD administrator,” Aila said, “With extensive experience as director for one of the nation’s largest historic preservation agencies, Downer brings tremendous experience in leadership to the Hawaii State Historic Preservation Division. I also believe his qualifications will provide SHPD with much needed direction on working with the National Park Service to meet requirements under its Corrective Action Plan.”

Downer served 27 years as director of the Navajo Nations Historic Preservation Department (NNHPD) in Window Rock, Ariz. Downer was hired in 1986 to establish the first tribal historic preservation agency in the United States. The Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department remains one of the largest public historic preservation agencies in the United States.

“Mr. Downer has the right experience to lead the Hawaii’s State Historic Preservation Division,” Gov. Abercrombie said. “The division plays a vital role in protecting and preserving Hawaii’s historic and cultural sites, while balancing complex issues that affect the state’s economy.”

“I’m thrilled to hear that Alan Downer has been selected for the position. His experience working with the Navajo Nation and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation gives him the sensitivity to indigenous issues and expertise in federal and state laws that will be needed to rebuild and revitalize our Historic Preservation Division, making it not only a well-functioning but socially responsible agency for future generations,” said Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, screening committee member and associate professor at UH Manoa Department of Ethnic Studies and Department of Anthropology.

“Mr. Downer is an excellent selection to serve as Hawaii’s State Historic Preservation officer. I believe Downer brings tremendous knowledge of historic preservation program management blended with experience working with tribal communities, including Native Hawaiians, to guide SHPD along a new path, strengthening the division as well as advancing the state’s economy,”

said Dr. Kamana'opono M. Crabbe, screening committee member and Ka Pouhana, chief executive officer of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Presently, Downer is the special advisor to the executive director for the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, which is a multi-agency resource management organization responsible for the management and stewardship of the natural and cultural resources of the Navajo Nation.

Prior to working for the Navajo Nation, Downer worked 3 years as senior archeologist for the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, overseeing the western United States. In this capacity, Downer had the responsibility to review many "Section 106 cases" for Hawaii, and he worked extensively with project sponsors, federal agencies, Native Hawaiian groups, and the State Historic Preservation Officer. The work required a working knowledge of the fundamentals of Hawaiian history and Native Hawaiian culture.

Downer also worked as a senior archeologist for the Illinois Department of Conservation's Historic Sites Division from 1978 to 1983.

Downer received his Bachelor of Science in Geology from Allegheny College in Meadville, Pa.; and his Masters in Anthropological Archeology and his Ph.D in Applied Anthropology from University of Missouri–Columbia.

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