



Our Children's Earth Foundation | 100 First Street, Suite 100-367, San Francisco, CA 94105

NEWS RELEASE

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ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS TO SUE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU FOR FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT VIOLATIONS

Honolulu, Hawai'i - Three environmental groups plan to sue the City and County of Honolulu ("the City") for continuing violations of the federal Clean Water Act caused by spills from the City's sewage systems, polluting O'ahu's streams and nearshore coastal waters and resulting in beach closures, human health risks, and substantial economic losses to ocean recreation and tourist-based businesses.

Our Children's Earth ("OCE"), the Sierra Club, Hawai'i Chapter, and Hawai'i's Thousand Friends ("HTF") gave the City 60-days notice of their intent to sue for hundreds of Clean Water Act violations at the Sand Island, Honouliuli, Kailua, Wai'anae, and Kahuku Wastewater Treatment Plants and associated collection systems. The notice alleges the City has repeatedly violated its permits by failing to timely maintain, fix, or upgrade facilities, causing discharges of partially or inadequately treated sewage into ocean outfalls that exceed limits set by law for harmful bacteria and cancer-causing pesticides.

The notice also alleges that the sewage collection systems are decrepit and dangerous. According to government records, the City committed 309 sewage spills in 1999, 305 spills in 2000, 237 spills in 2001, 194 spills in 2002 and 183 spills in 2003. These spills sent large volumes of raw sewage streaming into private residences and businesses, streets, storm drains, and numerous waterways, including nearshore coastal waters at Pōka'i Bay, Ke'ehi Lagoon, Honolulu Harbor, Kā'neohe Bay, and Kailua Bay. Kalihi, Nu'uaniu, Waimalu, Puhā and Kawa streams were also impacted. Raw sewage and sanitary waste contain human bacteriological, viral, and parasitic pathogens, as well as toxic chemicals from solvents, detergents, cleansers, inks, pesticides, paints, pharmaceuticals and other chemicals discarded by households and businesses – all of which cause human illnesses.

"We cannot continue to allow the City to violate the law," said Tiffany Schauer, OCE Executive Director. "These types of raw sewage spills affect everyone from water recreationalists to business owners who depend on local water-oriented recreation and tourism for their customer base."

"These sewage spills pose serious health risks to the public," said Laura Edmunds, the Sierra Club, Hawai'i Chapter's Blue Water Campaign Coordinator. "The City needs to clean up its act."

Donna Wong, Executive Director of HTF, commented: “Sewage is not a ‘sexy’ issue. But the City’s mismanagement of Oahu’s sewage system prevents us from enjoying our beautiful beaches, surfing, fishing, gathering limu, and wading in our streams. The City must comply with the law to protect the health of Hawaii’s citizens, visitors and the environment.”

Christopher Sproul, one of the lawyers for the environmental groups, noted: “The U.S.EPA and the Hawaii Department of Health have tried to get the City to comply with water pollution laws, but their enforcement divisions are underfunded and understaffed. They have failed to solve the sewage spill and other extensive problems that persist at the City’s wastewater treatment plants and collection systems. Citizen involvement is needed to protect Hawaii’s waters, and the people and businesses that use and rely on those waters.”

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