



**Honolulu Board of Water Supply**  
**Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting 50**  
Thursday, April 18, 2024, 4:00 – 6:00 pm  
Blaisdell Center – Hawaii Suite

**Meeting Notes**

**PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF MEETING NOTES**

The purpose of these notes is to provide an overview of the Board of Water Supply (BWS) Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting. They are not intended as a transcript or as minutes. Major points of the presentations are summarized herein, primarily for context. Copies of presentation materials were provided to all participants and are available on the BWS website. Participants made many comments and asked many questions during the meeting. These are paraphrased to be more concise.

**ATTENDEES**

This was an online meeting in which 13 stakeholders participated, in addition to BWS staff, consultants and members of the public. The stakeholders represent diverse interests and communities island wide.

The following Stakeholders Advisory Group members attended:

Mark Fox	Environmental
Shari Ishikawa	Hawaiian Electric Company
Calvin Mann	Kamehameha Schools
Helen Nakano	Resident of Council District 5
Dean Okimoto	Nalo Farms, Inc.
Richard Poirier	Resident of Council District 9
John Reppun	KEY Project
Cynthia Rezentes	Resident of Council District 1
Alison Richardson	Coca-Cola Co.
Wayne Tanaka	Sierra Club
Cruz Vina, Jr.	Resident of Council District 8
Guy Yamamoto	YHB Hawaii
Suzanne Young	Honolulu Board of Realtors

**WELCOME**

Facilitator Dave Ebersold welcomed everyone to the 50th meeting of the BWS Stakeholder Advisory Group. He also introduced Kaliko Lum Kee, the BWS’s Assistant Waterworks Controller, and Wayne Tanaka, President of the Sierra Club, who are participating in the first in-person meeting.

Meeting objectives were identified as:

- Update on the Kalaeloa Seawater Desalination Plant

- Accept notes from meeting #49
- BWS updates
- Celebrate 50<sup>th</sup> Meeting

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

## **KALAELOA SEAWATER DESALINATION PLANT UPDATE**

Dave invited Barry Usagawa, BWS Program Administrator for Water Resources, to share an update on the Kalaeloa Seawater Desalination Plant.

Barry began the presentation by first providing an update on the BWS's Water Master Plan, which is currently in procurement for its first ten-year update since its adoption in 2016. This plan, which originally centered around the Master Plan and the Long Range Infrastructure Plan, will now include considerations for wildfires and resource management. The inclusion of these elements underscores the Board's commitment to adapting to evolving environmental challenges.

Barry shared that the Kalaeloa Seawater Desalination Project has been a long-term initiative, with Barry and Ernie working on it since the 1990s. In July 2023, a significant milestone was achieved with the awarding of a design, build, operate, and maintain (DBOM) contract to Kalaeloa Desalco. This partnership involves Nordic PCL Construction Company as the main contractor, PACE as the Engineer of Record, and Bowers and Kubota as the local civil engineering consultant. Desalco, a collaboration between Consolidated Water and Perc Water, brings extensive experience from their operations in the Caribbean and the West Coast.

Barry discussed the project location, which is on a 20-acre site in Kalaeloa, Campbell Industrial Park, and that the location was conveyed to the BWS through the closure of the Barbers Point Naval Air Station in the late 1990s. Congressional funding authorization was obtained in 2005, and the first planning and engineering grant has already been awarded. The application for the design and construction grant is currently pending.

Barry explained that the need for the Kalaeloa Seawater Desalination Project stems from the growing water demands in the Ewa region, which was designated as a secondary urban center. Rapid population growth in this area necessitates additional water supplies to maintain sustainable development. The desalination plant aims to diversify water sources, supplementing the existing groundwater and recycled water systems to provide a drought-proof supply.

The plant will draw salt water from two deep wells, converting it to fresh water through a reverse osmosis process. The brine byproduct will be injected into the caprock layers. The site plan includes provisions for future expansion and potential renewable energy offsets to enhance sustainability. Plans for community engagement and sustainability include creating an educational landscape area, using recycled water for irrigation and sanitation, and conducting extensive community outreach. Surveys and open houses have been conducted to gather input and ensure compatibility with existing water infrastructure.

Barry shared that testing for the project is scheduled to start soon, with construction set to begin in July 2025 and final completion by November 2027. Funding sources include federal grants, American Rescue Plan funds, Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loans, and State Revolving Funds, with the operation and maintenance costs covered by water rates.

This concluded Barry's presentation on the Kalaeloa Desalination Plant. Dave opened the floor for questions and further discussion.

Q: Cynthia Rezentes inquired about the plant's capacity. Barry confirmed it will initially produce 1.7 million gallons per day (MGD), enough for Campbell Industrial Park, with the potential to expand to 5 MGD.

Q: Wayne Tanaka asked about monitoring and potential tracer tests for the injection wells. Barry mentioned ongoing permitting with the Department of Health and the potential for extensive monitoring as part of the permit conditions.

Q: Dean Okimoto asked about the plant's contribution to the total potable water supply. Barry stated it would account for about 1% of the island's total potable water, primarily serving the industrial area to free up existing supplies for residential growth in Ewa.

Q: Guy Yamamoto inquired about the water quality post-treatment. Barry explained that the demineralized water would be re-stabilized using calcite contactors to prevent corrosion and meet Safe Drinking Water Act standards.

COMMENT: Helen Nakano expressed concerns about the need for desalination due to population growth and inadequate planning. Barry acknowledged the challenges and emphasized the project's role in ensuring water security amid climate change and variable rainfall patterns.

Q: Helen also asked about the project's impact on agricultural water. Barry confirmed that desalinated water would not be used for agriculture due to cost, but groundwater and surface water diversions support farming efforts.

COMMENT: Alison Richardson highlighted the importance of maintaining consistent water quality for industrial users. Barry reassured her that extensive testing and community input would help achieve this. He also thanked Alison and her team at Coca-Cola for sharing on-site water quality information.

COMMENT: Dave shared insights from historical population projections, noting that the current desalination plant is much smaller than previously planned. In 1970, a plan projected Oahu's population would reach 2 million by 2020, necessitating nuclear-powered seawater desalination. However, the actual population today is around one million, and the first seawater desalination plant, with a capacity of less than two MGD, is only now under construction.

COMMENT: John Reppun mentioned past plans for a nuclear power plant in Heeia Kea Valley in Kaneohe Bay, and that Kaneohe was going to be the second City. Cynthia Rezentes responded by explaining the nuclear plant was actually planned for Kahe as a dual fuel source.

## **BWS UPDATES**

Dave invited Ernest Lau, BWS Manager and Chief Engineer, to share BWS updates.

Ernest began his presentation by addressing the issue of affordable housing and water resources on the island. He acknowledged the increasing demand for affordable housing and the essential need to provide basic human necessities such as housing, food, and water. Ernest emphasized that the BWS must be integral to the ongoing discussions about growth and resource management, highlighting the importance of updating the Water Master Plan. This update would involve a thorough review of

historical data and assumptions from past plans to understand the present realities better. This would also involve updating the Source Water Protection Plan by conducting an inventory of potentially contaminating activities over groundwater resources.

Regarding Red Hill, Ernest noted that the Navy had successfully drained a substantial amount of fuel from the underground tanks. However, the presence of PFAS chemicals, discovered through baseline testing, raised significant concerns. Ernest advocated for regular, transparent testing to monitor these contaminants and called for increased community involvement and accountability from the Navy.

Wayne Tanaka from the Sierra Club of Hawaii added his perspective on the Community Representation Initiative (CRI). He expressed admiration for the community members' dedication and their steep learning curve regarding water quality testing and related issues. Wayne voiced concerns about the Navy's push for mediation, which could limit transparency and reduce community trust.

Ernest then addressed the recurring detections of petroleum hydrocarbons in the water system serving Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. He acknowledged the increasing frequency of these detections and the health complaints from base residents. The Navy attributed these detections to chlorine interference, but the community sought clearer explanations and solutions.

Ernest highlighted the need for continued environmental investigation and cleanup around Red Hill. He called for the military to be transparent about historical leaks and storage issues to better target remediation efforts. This transparency is crucial for ensuring accountability and leaving a safer environment for future generations.

This concluded BWS Updates and Dave opened the floor for questions and further discussion.

Q: Cruz Vina Jr. asked for a status update on exploratory wells in Aiea. Ernest explained that the Navy was drilling monitor wells, and BWS was exploring new water sources. BWS is considering multiple locations, including the Aiea 497 reservoir, Newtown 550 reservoir, and possibly the 850 reservoir site. While construction has not yet begun, they are currently in the design and permitting phase. Ernest reminded the group that three major water sources—Halawa Shaft, Aiea wells, and Halawa wells—remain shut down and he has concerns about turning on the Halawa Shaft due to the potential spread of contamination from the Red Hill fuel facility.

Q: Marc Fox asked about the Navy's suggestion that chlorine in the water might create false positives for petroleum hydrocarbons. Ernest invited Erwin Kawata, BWS Deputy Manager, to address the concern. Erwin explained that the Navy believes the presence of chlorine could create artifacts leading to false positives, but they have not provided data to prove this theory.

Q: John Reppun inquired about the responsibility for installing monitoring wells. Ernest clarified that while the Navy should be responsible for this, the BWS is using state funds and ratepayer funds to install some wells to ensure they have control and access. He mentioned that the Water Commission might not have the necessary funding or staffing, so BWS is working to secure federal funds for additional wells.

Q: Alison Richardson asked about treatment options for PFAS, if detected. Erwin shared the EPA's final drinking water standards, which identify four treatment technologies: activated carbon, nanofiltration, reverse osmosis, and ion exchange. stressing the importance of studies to ensure these methods effectively remove PFAS without adversely affecting water quality.

COMMENT: Ernest and Wayne Tanaka provided information on HB2690, a bill that aims to facilitate receiving federal funds for issues related to Red Hill and reduce political influence in water decisions. Wayne explained the bill's significance, noting that up to 2 million gallons of fuel might still be in the environment from Red Hill. Federal funds, estimated at \$750 million, are needed for monitoring and remediation. However, a state vehicle, or special fund, is required to manage these funds. Wayne emphasized the urgency of reaching out to elected officials to ensure the bill's progress.

Q: Cynthia Rezendes asked what BWS is going to do about Waimanalo Gulch and future landfill sites. Ernest expressed disappointment over the Navy's rejection of the Mayor's request for a landfill in Waipio Peninsula. Ernest discussed the long-term risks of landfills, emphasizing that liners are not guaranteed to never leak, potentially leading to groundwater contamination. Rezendes agreed, noting that no expert would claim liners are infallible.

#### **ACCEPTING MEETING 49 NOTES**

Meeting 49 notes were approved.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

Dave shared a list of Stakeholder Advisory Group meetings in 2024: Thursday, July 18; and Thursday, October 17 from 4 to 6 p.m. He noted that the BWS Water Master Plan will be a future topic at these meetings.

#### **CELEBRATING 50<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SAG**

Dave and Ernest thanked the attendees for their attention and participation since May 2015 when the first SAG meeting occurred. A short video presentation of photos from past meetings was shown before concluding the meeting.