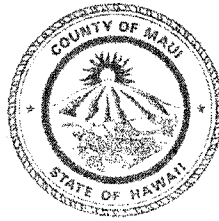


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December 28, 2021

Mr. M. Kaleo Manuel, Deputy Director
State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources
Commission on Water Resource Management
P.O. Box 621
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809

RECEIVED
COMMISSION ON WATER
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
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SUBJECT: Consultation on Chairperson's Recommendation to Designate the Lahaina Aquifer Sector, Maui as Surface Water and Ground Water Management Area

Aloha Deputy Director Manuel,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your recommendation to initiate the designation process of the entire Lahaina Aquifer Sector on Maui. We note that selected data was provided in your December 17, 2021 response to Maui County Council Chair Lee's request for information. We look forward to the technical analyses that triggered this initiative. Meanwhile, we provide preliminary comments below.

Threats to water resources by existing and proposed withdrawals:

Table 2 in your December 17, 2021 letter appears to double count tunnel discharge in Launiupoko and Honokowai as both against basal sustainable yield, as calculated in the 2019 Water Resources Protection Plan, and as dike source to basal recharge. Your calculations in Table 2 are not consistent with how high-level tunnel sources are accounted for against basal sustainable yield in the Iao Groundwater Management Area designation and confirmed in the Na Wai Eha contested case.

Reported pumpage of Honokowai aquifer, as provided by the Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM) to the Maui County Department of Water Supply (MDWS) represents about 67% of sustainable yield. We project that unreported and varying pumpage, future groundwater needs to offset non-potable uses of Honokowai Stream along with issued groundwater reservation

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for the Department of Hawaiian Homelands **may** exceed established sustainable yield. Factors that influence projections include assumptions about Interim Instream Flow Standards, yet to be established for Honokowai stream, water duty for agricultural irrigation needs, expansion of recycled water availability, conservation measures implemented by private water purveyors and implementation of the policies and strategies proposed in the Draft Maui Island Water Use and Development Plan (WUDP), as well as the West Maui Community Plan update.

CWRM has consulted with the MDWS and the Maui County Planning Department on interpreting demand projections and Authorized Planned Use (APU), as defined in the State Water Code. We find that current groundwater use and APU does not reach 90% of sustainable yield for any other aquifer system than Honokowai. Tentatively, MDWS supports investigations to consider designation of **Honokowai Aquifer System** only.

Serious disputes over current and planned water uses:

The Draft WUDP is the culmination of a 3 year long public process, followed by public hearings conducted by the Board of Water Supply, and deliberations over 2 ½ years in council committees. In 2021, council committee chair Sinenci conducted additional consultations with the `Aha Moku Councils to ensure culturally generational Kanaka Maoli perspectives were incorporated. The plan's strategies offer compromises to address community concerns and disputes, align with the General Plan and Community Plan for the Lahaina region to allocate water to planned land use. In their review of WUDP strategies, CWRM staff noted the benefit of strategies to meet future needs, including transfers from adjacent aquifers, to help guide CWRM in future decision-making on water management area designation.

The WUDP is the tool to allocate water to land use in consistency with the water resource protection policies set forth under the overall Hawaii Water Plan Framework. The Maui County Planning Department worked closely with MDWS in their update of the West Maui Community Plan and incorporated proposed WUDP strategies into the community plan. CWRM was consulted with regards to water policies and implementing actions. Both planning documents have included rigorous community scrutiny and CWRM had ample opportunity to provide guidance in the planning process and address any serious disputes over current and planned water uses. The current initiative to designate the entire aquifer sector seriously undermines the enormous effort to engage the community, private purveyors and sister county agencies and the progress in land use and water planning integration the county agencies have achieved to date.

Harm to groundwater quantity and quality by saltwater intrusion and climate uncertainty:

MDWS has funded multiple cooperative studies with the U.S Geological Survey (USGS) to guide

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resource management for Central Maui and Lahaina regions that specifically address threats to water quantity and quality and climate change impacts. These tools underpin the proposed WUDP strategies to allocate water to land use, guide sustainable groundwater pumpage, address declining rainfall and climate uncertainty. Specifically, distribute pumpage throughout Launiupoko aquifer where increased pumpage in MDWS wells result in high chloride levels. Current well exploration in Launiupoko aquifer is guided by the 2012 USGS study on groundwater availability in the Lahaina district. MDWS is actively preparing to shift to groundwater to reduce reliance on surface water long term and to provide for planned growth of the Lahaina community. Sustainable well development should consider optimal withdrawals of a groundwater unit and the interaction with surface water.

We believe that proactive guidance by CWRM to interpret and utilize available groundwater models and monitoring data to ensure adequate pump distributions are arguably better tools to enhanced and integrated management, than designation.

There are clearly aquifer systems included in this initiative with no basis for designation as set forth in the State Water Code. MDWS does **not** support designation of the entire aquifer sector. We believe a better approach is proactive collaboration between CWRM, public and private purveyors and community representatives to ensure implementation of WUDP strategies as well as resource management policies established in the WRPP. We expect the WUDP to be before CWRM in the first quarter of 2022. At a minimum, CWRM staff and commissioners should have the opportunity to review the WUDP in lieu of the designation process.

Designation of a Surface Water Management Area (SWMA) is premature and also inconsistent with the WUDP. We believe CWRM's ability to enforce IIFS is at the heart of the problem, a concern that is echoed by the community. At the same time, IIFS decisions must be flexible enough to adapt to the obstacles and time it takes water supply purveyors to transition to practicable alternatives. MDWS respectfully requests CWRM to **defer** SWMA proceedings until IIFS can be adopted for other priority streams, including all diverted streams in East Maui and until CWRM can secure adequate staffing to monitor and enforce decisions.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey T. Pearson, P.E.
Director of Water Supply

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