STATE OF HAWAI'I | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES | KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA
**COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT | KE KAHUWAI PONO**
P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

STAFF SUBMITTAL

COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

May 19, 2026
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Request for Delegation of Authority to the Deputy Director to Contract with the University of Hawai'i, Social Science Research Institute, for Services of a Senior Stream Technician to Provide Support for a Statewide Stream Habitat and Biological Monitoring Project from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027; and

Declare that the Project is Exempt from the Preparation of an Environmental Assessment under Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 343, and Hawai'i Administrative Rules Chapter 11-200.1

## I. SUMMARY OF REQUEST

Staff requests that the Commission:

1. Delegate authority to the Deputy Director to enter into a contract (Contract) with the University of Hawai'i's Social Science Research Institute, through the Office of Research Services, for the services of a senior stream technician to help support the Commission on Water Resource Management's (Commission's) statewide stream habitat and biological monitoring efforts.

2. Delegate authority to the Deputy Director to modify the Contract, provided that there is no increase in cost to the Commission.

3. Find that this Contract is exempt from the preparation of an environmental assessment under Hawai'i Revised Statutes chapter 343 based on a specific agency exemption available under the Comprehensive Exemption List for the Commission on Water Resource Management concurred by the Environmental Council on January 5, 2021.

## II. BACKGROUND

In 2019, the Commission began working closely with the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) to expand stream habitat and biological monitoring statewide. At the time, an Aquatic Biologist from DAR was assigned to accompany the Commission's Instream Use Protection Section staff, under the Stream Protection and Management Branch, on trips to various streams to conduct stream surveys utilizing the point-quadrat visual snorkel survey method as described by Higashi and Nishimoto.[1] For the 2026 fiscal year, the Commission provided funding to DAR to maintain a regular, full-time non-civil service position (Senior Freshwater Biologist) under the University of Hawaii's Social Science Research Institute, through the Research Corporation of the University of Hawai‘i (RCUH).

For this upcoming 2027 fiscal year, DAR will not be renewing the RCUH contract that covered the Senior Freshwater Biologist position previously. To ensure the continuation of services, the Commission must enter into its own Contract through the University's Office of Research Services.

The Commission's Instream Use Protection Section undertakes highly technical and often physically demanding work to collect hydrologic and biological information from stream locations statewide. While the Commission continues working towards establishing permanent civil service positions on O‘ahu and Maui, the proposed Contract provides the Commission the opportunity to retain a key position that critically supports the Commission's objectives of assessing streamflows and collecting data in support of establishing technically defensible instream flow standards.

## III. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

The proposed Contract is attached as Exhibit 1.

The goal of this project is to provide stream and hydrological monitoring support for the Commission's Stream Protection and Management Branch.

Project staff have the expertise to conduct the following objectives:

1) Conduct surveys in each study reach to collect habitat and biological data;
2) Assist with hydrological data collection; and
3) Organize and analyze stream data.

Monitoring will be conducted through biological and habitat surveys and quarterly discharge measurements.

[1] Higashi, G.R., Nishimoto, R.T. 2007. The point quadrat method: A rapid assessment of Hawaiian streams. In N.L. Evenhuis and J.M. Fitzsimons (Eds.), Biology of Hawaiian streams and estuaries. pp. 305-312. Honolulu.

## IV. TIME OF PERFORMANCE

The Contract period will be for a period of one (1) year, beginning on July 1, 2026 and end on June 30, 2027.

## V. COST OF SERVICES

The total cost for these services is expected to be $77,620. Funds will be provided through the Commission's general or special fund. At this time, it is anticipated that the Commission's general fund appropriations for FY27 will be sufficient to fund this position.

## VI. LEGAL AUTHORITY

The authority for this Contract is established in the State Water Code 174C-5(4), HRS, which provides that the Commission "[m]ay contract and cooperate with the various agencies of the federal government and with state and local administrative and governmental agencies or private persons."

## VII. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR) section 200.1-16 allows each agency, through time and experience, to develop its own exemption list available for specific actions, including those the agency considers to be de minimis (classified as "Part 1"). The proposed action is exempt from the preparation of an Environmental Assessment based on the Comprehensive Exemption List for the Commission on Water Resource Management concurred by the Environmental Council on January 5, 2021, and falls under Exemption Class 8 (*Continuing administrative activities*), Part 1, No. 1, which provides for "Purchase of supplies, equipment, materials, motor vehicles, boats, and services." Under Part 1, no preparation of an exemption notice is required.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission:

1. Delegate authority to the Deputy Director to enter into a contract with the University of Hawaii's Social Science Research Institute, through the Office of Research Services, to provide for statewide stream habitat and biological monitoring support from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027.

2. Delegate authority to the Deputy Director to modify the Contract, provided that there is no increase in cost to the Commission.

3. Find that this Contract is exempt from the preparation of an environmental assessment under Hawai‘i Revised Statutes chapter 343 based on Hawai‘i Administrative Rules §11-200.1-16 and the specific agency exemption described above from the Comprehensive Exemption List for the Commission on Water

Resource Management concurred by the Environmental Council on January 5, 2021.

The terms of this Agreement are subject to the approval of the Department of the Attorney General. This type of agreement with another state agency is exempted from the state procurement code under HRS §103D-102(b)(3).[2]

Ola i ka wai,

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
Deputy Director

Exhibits:

1. Contract for 2026 Statewide Stream Habitat and Biological Monitoring Support

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL:

DAWN N.S. CHANG
Chairperson

[2] HRS §103D-102(b)(3): Notwithstanding subsection (a), this chapter shall not apply to contracts by governmental bodies: To procure goods, services, or construction from a governmental body other than the university of Hawaii bookstores, from the federal government, or from another state or its political subdivision.

**A PROPOSAL**
**SUBMITTED BY**
**UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII**

TO: Department of Land and Natural Resources
Commission on Water Resource Management
1151 Punchbowl Street #227, Honolulu, HI 96813
PH: 808-587-0214, Email: ciara.wk.kahahane@hawaii.gov

REVIEWED AND ACCEPTED: _____ DATE: _____
Ciara Kahahane, CWRM Deputy

PROJECT TITLE: ***2026 Statewide Stream Habitat and Biological Monitoring Support***

DEPARTMENT: Social Science Research Institute

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Christina Higa

PROJECT PERIOD: July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED: $77,622.00

AUTHORIZING UNIVERSITY OFFICIAL: Xunyi Wu DATE: 05/06/2026
Xunyi Wu
Contracts & Grants Specialist, Office of Research Services
Phone: (808) 956-7122
Email: aor@hawaii.edu

ADDRESS: University of Hawaii
Office of Research Services
2440 Campus Road, Box 368
Honolulu, HI 96822

**The University of Hawaii reserves the right to negotiate terms and conditions prior to acceptance of any award. Please ensure that all correspondence regarding this application and project are addressed to the Office of Research Services(aor@hawaii.edu).**

**EXHIBIT 1**

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The goal of this project is to provide stream and hydrological monitoring support for the Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM), Stream Protection and Management branch. Project staff have the expertise to conduct the objectives outlined below. Monitoring is conducted through biological and habitat surveys and quarterly discharge measurements.

## APPROACH

This project aims to continue the monitoring of CWRM's established stream monitoring network statewide. Habitat and biological surveys will be conducted in each study reach using methods adapted from the Hawaii Stream Visual Assessment Protocol.[1] Substrate composition of each study reach will be delineated based on habitat type (pool, riffle, run, waterfall, etc.) Water level will be monitored, canopy cover assessed, and riparian vegetation typed. Fishes, crustaceans, and mollusks will be identified through visual above-/in-water survey to the lowest taxonomic level possible and counted. Fishes and crustaceans will be assigned to pre-determined size classes.

Stream habitat and biota will be assessed by comparing the following response variables: relative species abundance, size class and maturity (adult/juvenile), and diversity (native and non-native species).

Project staff will provide critical support to CWRM staff to coordinate and carry out stream surveys, enter and analyze data, and track and communicate project progress.

## OBJECTIVES AND TASKS

*Objective 1: Conduct surveys in each study reach to collect habitat, and biological data*

- Task 2: Assist with planning and coordination of survey logistics
- Task 3: Conduct surveys at each stream location

*Objective 2: Assist with hydrological data collection*

- Task 1: Develop skills and knowledge associated with streamflow measurements
- Task 2: Conduct fieldwork associated with measuring streamflow

*Objective 3: Organize and analyze stream data*

- Task 1: maintain survey database
- Task 2: Analyze survey data and assess response variables
- Task 3: Assist with report development as needed.

Deliverables for the project will include the following:

1. Habitat, and biological survey database
2. One-page project summary
3. Final report

[1] Kido, M.H. 2002. The Hawaii stream bioassessment protocol. Version 3.01. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii, The Hawaii Stream Research Center for Conservation Research and Training. http://windward.hawaii.edu/PACES/summerfiles/publications/Bioassessment_Protocol%20301.pdf.

**BUDGET**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Salary** | | |
| Stream Senior Technician | | $48,900 |
| Program and Management Support | | $2,850 |
| | *Subtotal Salary* | **$51,750** |
| **Fringe** | | |
| Stream Senior Technician | | $17,604 |
| Program and Management Support | | $1,112 |
| | *Subtotal Fringe* | **$18,716** |
| **Materials and Supplies** | | **$100** |
| | **Direct** | **$70,566** |
| | **Indirect** | **$7,057** |
| | **Total** | **$77,622** |

**BUDGET NARRATIVE**

**Salary**: The **Senior Stream Technician** will be responsible for all objectives. **Program and Management support** will assist with staff hiring, timesheets, purchases, travel and mapping. ** Staff and their FTE are flexible and may vary based on project needs.

**Fringe:** Fringe benefits go toward FICA, medical dental insurance, retirement and disability. Fringe rate can range from 11% to 39%. Published rates: https://www.rcuh.com/3-000/3-500/3-510/

**Supplies:** Funds for materials and supplies are requested for field gear and supplies to support stream surveys.

**Indirect:** All activities are administered through the Social Science Research Institute (SSRI). The indirect cost rate is 10%, which is the negotiated Sponsor Specific Rate between the State of Hawaii and the University of Hawaii for the period 10/04/12 – until further notice.
http://www.ors.hawaii.edu/index.php/rates/83-quick-links/100-sponsor-specific-rates

**Compensation and Payment Schedule**
The funding source of this project is from state funds that will not exceed $77,622.00 The University of Hawaii will invoice CWRM on a bi-monthly basis and the final invoice will be due 45-days from the project end date, no later than August 15, 2027.