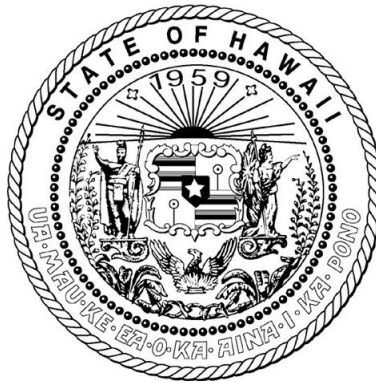


Report to the Thirty-Third Legislature  
Regular Session of 2026

**Report on the Red Hill Water Alliance Initiative  
Activities and Expenditures  
Fiscal Year 2025**



Prepared by the State of Hawai‘i  
Department of Land and Natural Resources  
Red Hill Water Alliance Initiative

Pursuant to Act 197,  
Session Laws of Hawai‘i 2025

Honolulu, Hawai‘i  
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**Red Hill Water Alliance Initiative**  
Report on Activities and Expenditures  
Fiscal Year 2025

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## **I. Introduction and Background**

The State of Hawai‘i (“State”) has a constitutional duty to conserve and protect its natural resources and to promote their use in furtherance of self-sufficiency for the benefit of present and future generations.<sup>1</sup> These duties include the protection of water resources, a responsibility underscored by the role of the aquifer that serves as a principal source of drinking water on O‘ahu for approximately 400,000 residents, or about one-quarter of the island’s supply.

The U.S. Navy’s Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, located in the ahupua‘a of Hālawā and Moanalua, began construction in 1940, less than one hundred feet above the aquifer. It is one of the largest underground fuel storage systems of its kind and has a history of documented fuel releases.<sup>2</sup> Fuel releases from the facility, including the November 2021 release that entered the Navy’s drinking water system, affected groundwater resources and local communities, creating immediate and long-term health and environmental concerns.

In recognition of a shared responsibility to protect water resources and ensure clean water for current and future generations, representatives from the State and City and County of Honolulu (“County”), including the Governor, Mayor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President of the Senate, Chair of the Honolulu City Council, Chair of the Board of Land and Natural Resources and Commission on Water Resource Management, Manager and Chief Engineer of the Honolulu Board of Water Supply, and the President of the University of Hawai‘i, signed a Unified Statement on Red Hill (“Unified Statement”) and formed the Red Hill Water Alliance Initiative (“WAI”).<sup>3</sup> The Unified Statement called for the development of a policy document to guide aquifer remediation that describes the goals, implementation process, roles, guidelines, and regulatory framework between the State and the federal government. Consistent with this commitment and the State’s public trust duties, the WAI issued a public report in November 2023 (“WAI Report”) presenting findings and recommendations identified as the WAI initiatives.

The State Department of Land and Natural Resources (“DLNR”) is responsible for managing, administering, and exercising control over public lands, water resources, ocean waters, navigable streams, coastal areas, minerals, and all interests therein. DLNR oversees nearly 1.3 million acres of State lands, beaches, and coastal waters, as well as 750 miles of coastline. Its mission to “enhance, protect, conserve and manage Hawai‘i’s unique and limited natural, cultural, and historic resources held in public trust for current and future generations” reflects the State’s

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<sup>1</sup> See HAW. CONST. art. XI, § 1 (requiring the State to “conserve and protect Hawai‘i’s natural beauty and all natural resources...and [to] promote the development and utilization of these resources in a manner consistent with their conservation and in furtherance of the self-sufficiency of the State.”); art. XI, § 7 (providing that the State “has an obligation to protect, control and regulate the use of Hawai‘i’s water resources for the benefit of its people”); and art. XII, § 7 (affirming the State’s duty to protect Native Hawaiian traditional and customary rights).

<sup>2</sup> The November 2021 release and prior fuel releases, along with the facility’s historical context, are described in the WAI Report, included as “Attachment C.”

<sup>3</sup> The Unified Statement is provided in the WAI Report, included as “Attachment C.”

constitutional duty to conserve and protect Hawai‘i’s water and natural resources. These responsibilities, together with DLNR’s subject matter expertise across resource management programs from mauka to makai, align with the work required to facilitate the WAI initiatives and advance an approach based on total stewardship responsibility.

In 2025, the State Legislature established DLNR as the State’s policy lead for the WAI initiatives through the position of the WAI Policy Coordinator (“Policy Coordinator”). Act 197, Session Laws of Hawai‘i (“SLH”) 2025 (“Act 197”), directs DLNR to work with State and County agencies and other groups to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the WAI initiatives, interface with federal entities, assess ecosystem health and the state of science and opportunities for remediation, maintain a public-facing dashboard, and coordinate a public information and education program on post-defueling remediation.<sup>4</sup>

Act 197 requires that a report of activities and expenditures be submitted to the State Legislature, the Governor, and the Mayor and City Council of the County no later than December 1 of each year, beginning in 2025. As the first report under this mandate, this document summarizes activities through October 2025, with expenditures limited to Fiscal Year 2025 (“FY25”).

## **A. Purpose and Kuleana**

Guided by the shared purpose and commitment articulated in the Unified Statement, the WAI, composed of representatives from the Governor’s Office; the Speaker of the House of Representatives; the President of the Senate; the House Special Committee on Red Hill; the Board of Land and Natural Resources and Commission on Water Resource Management; the University of Hawai‘i; and the Mayor’s Office, City Council, and Board of Water Supply of the County, met regularly to pose questions, conduct research, listen to subject matter experts, and formulate recommended policies. The group focused on remediation needs concerning the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility following defueling and removal of residual fuel, including fuel remaining in the ground and the effects of the November 2021 release on the aquifer.

The WAI Report documents the findings and recommendations from the WAI’s inquiry and organizes them into six areas:

- Monitoring and Testing
- Remediation
- Future Use of the Facility
- Public Health
- Policy Coordination and Public Education
- Indemnification and Liability

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<sup>4</sup> Act 197, SLH 2025, is pending codification into the Hawai‘i Revised Statutes.

DLNR serves as the State’s policy lead on the WAI initiatives through the position of the Policy Coordinator, collaborating with State and county agencies and other groups to:

- Facilitate implementation and monitoring and interface with federal entities on the WAI initiatives;
- Periodically and regularly review the health status of the ecosystem and the state of science and opportunities for remediation and rehabilitation;
- Develop and maintain a public-facing test results dashboard describing the significance of results from the State and County as part of a broader public education program;
- Coordinate the implementation of a 36-month public information and education program to describe, inform, and educate the general public and institutions on the post-defueling remediation phases for Red Hill to restore public trust, secure public support, and address health and environmental concerns; and
- Administer the Red Hill Remediation Special Fund.

## **B. The WAI Team**

DLNR staff dedicated to facilitating the implementation and monitoring of the WAI initiatives are collectively referred to as the Red Hill Water Alliance Initiative Team (“WAI Team”). Established within the Office of the Chairperson at DLNR, the WAI Team consists of three staff members serving in the following roles:

- Kealapono Richardson, Policy Coordinator
- Rebecca E. Crall, Outreach Coordinator
- Ross Miyasato Jr., Administrative Services Specialist

## **C. Guiding Documents**

The activities of the WAI Team are guided by the Unified Statement, the WAI Report, and Act 197. The WAI Report provides technical recommendations across monitoring and testing, remediation, policy coordination, and public education, while Act 197 establishes both the Policy Coordinator role in DLNR to coordinate WAI initiatives and the Red Hill Remediation Special Fund to be used to address contamination of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, including monitoring, applied research, public outreach and education, and evaluation.

Together, these documents provide the framework for the WAI Team’s work, linking long-term stewardship to statutory responsibilities and ensuring that WAI initiatives are coordinated, research-driven, and aligned with a proactive approach to protecting the long-term health of the aquifer and ecosystems from mauka to makai.

## **II. Activities**

### **A. Policy Coordination and Public Education**

#### **1. Public Information and Education Program**

The WAI Team is responsible for implementing a 36-month public information and education program to describe, inform, and educate the public and institutions on the post-defueling remediation phases for Red Hill to restore public trust, secure public support, and inform health and environmental concerns.

To begin this work, DLNR contracted with Group 70 International, Inc. (“G70”) to conduct community outreach to understand existing public awareness about Red Hill, what questions and information gaps remain, and how different audiences prefer to receive information. This effort includes focus groups, a community survey, and Native Hawaiian engagement to establish a baseline that will inform the development of outreach and education.

Three principles will guide this community outreach work:

- Pilina and Reciprocity: Engagement will be relational, not transactional. Honor the existing knowledge, trauma, and concern within O‘ahu communities through reciprocal information exchange.
- Cultural Attunement: Recognize Red Hill not just as an infrastructure site, but as a place of layered environmental, social, and cultural impact.
- Transparency and Healing: Prioritize restoring public trust through visible accountability and culturally safe engagement.

Further details on the scope of G70’s work are provided in “Attachment A.”

<b>Guiding Document</b>	<b>Relevant Sections</b>
The WAI Report	I. Policy Coordination and Public Education, Section 2(a)-(b)
Act 197	§ -2(b)(1): Implementation and Monitoring of the WAI Initiatives § -2(b)(3)-(4): Public Dashboard; Public Information and Education Program

#### **2. Public Dashboard**

To begin work on a public-facing dashboard, DLNR contracted with Oceanit Laboratories, Inc. (“Oceanit”). This initial phase focuses on reviewing and evaluating existing environmental and water quality data, developing user personas of key stakeholders, and providing recommendations for effective data storytelling and public presentation.

As part of this work, Oceanit is reviewing existing data sources, including U.S. Navy monitoring reports, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) audits, U.S. Geological Survey (“USGS”) investigations, the University of Hawai‘i Interactive Red Hill Data Dashboard, and analyses prepared by independent consultants.

In parallel with the community outreach effort by G70, Oceanit is conducting a stakeholder analysis to identify the primary users of the dashboard (i.e., residents, community advocates, scientists, and policymakers), and to begin developing personas that describe their information needs and expectations.

This work also includes recommendations for presenting data in ways that are both credible and understandable. It involves assessing current challenges in public trust and considering how plain-language summaries, visual communication, and interactive features can support the WAI’s public education program. Accessibility and design considerations are central, with attention to multiple-language availability, mobile functionality, and community-centered presentation.

Further details on the scope of Oceanit’s work are included in “Attachment B.”

<b>Guiding Document</b>	<b>Relevant Sections</b>
The WAI Report	I. Policy Coordination and Public Education, Section 2(a)-(b)
Act 197	§ -2(b)(1): Implementation and Monitoring of the WAI Initiatives § -2(b)(3)-(4): Public Dashboard; Public Information and Education Program

### **3. Program Identity**

As part of the WAI initiatives and long-term purpose, the WAI Team is developing a program identity to ensure clarity, credibility, and consistency across outreach and education efforts. DLNR contracted with Welcome Stranger, LLC to design an official logo that reflects the WAI’s purpose and values.

<b>Guiding Document</b>	<b>Relevant Sections</b>
The WAI Report	E. Monitoring and Testing, Section 4 I. Policy Coordination and Public Education
Act 197	§ -2(b)(1): Implementation and Monitoring of the WAI Initiatives § -2(b)(3)-(4): Public Dashboard; Public Information and Education Program

## **B. Monitoring and Testing**

### **1. Health of the Ecosystem**

The WAI Team is in the early stages of establishing periodic and regular assessments of the health of the ecosystem. This work involves collaborating with government entities, subject matter experts, and ecological scientists (collectively, “Ecosystem Partners”) to gather existing

data, identify ongoing monitoring efforts, and explore opportunities for additional testing and research. These assessments are designed to cover the surrounding ecosystem from mauka to makai, including forest reserves and recharge areas, streams and springs, estuaries, and nearshore marine environments. This approach ensures that monitoring addresses the interconnected systems that support both the aquifer and broader ecological health. The goal is to develop a comprehensive understanding of how Red Hill recovery may impact these interconnected systems and to inform mitigation strategies.

Ecosystem Partners engaged to date include:

- University of Hawai‘i Tsang Stream Lab, Dept. of Natural Resource and Environmental Management (NREM), that investigates surface flow processes and their implications for fluvial ecosystems and is conducting the Hālawā Stream Biodiversity Study to assess the Red Hill granular activated carbon (“GAC”) discharge effect on the stream.
- University of Hawai‘i Nelson Lab, Dept. of Oceanography, that examines microbes in the ecology of aquatic ecosystems, with particular focus on organic matter geochemistry and metagenomics.
- University of Hawai‘i Water Resources Research Center (“WRRC”) that conducts research to identify, characterize, and develop solutions for environmental problems and provide science-based information to support decision-making.
- DLNR Division of Forestry and Wildlife (“DOFAW”).
- DLNR Division of Aquatic Resources (“DAR”).
- DLNR Commission on Water Resource Management (“CWRM”).
- DLNR State Historic Preservation Division (“SHPD”).

Early discussions highlight two key takeaways:

- Ecosystem health monitoring in this region will require cross-jurisdictional and interdisciplinary coordination between Ecosystem Partners; and
- Current and historical monitoring and research remain limited, underscoring the need for more resources and funding to support this collaborative approach.

These efforts are laying the groundwork for a collaborative, long-term monitoring framework to guide future environmental assessments and mitigation strategies that protect the integrity and resilience of the aquifer and ecosystems.

<b>Guiding Document</b>	<b>Relevant Sections</b>
The WAI Report	E. Monitoring and Testing, Section 4 F. Remediation, Sections 1-2 I. Policy Coordination and Public Education, Sections 1-2
Act 197	§ -2(b)(1): Coordination and Implementation of the WAI Initiatives § -2(b)(2)(A)-(B): Periodic Reviews of Ecosystem Health and Remediation Science

## 2. State of Science

The WAI Team began meeting with scientists focused on Red Hill recovery to ensure the WAI remains informed on research relevant to remediation and groundwater protection. A central area of focus is the work being carried out by research teams from the University of Hawai‘i, including the Hawai‘i Institute of Geophysics and Planetology (“HIGP”) within the School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology, WRRC, and the Department of Civil, Environmental and Construction Engineering (“CECE”). HIGP is conducting a comprehensive hydrological investigation of the Pearl Harbor Basin to characterize subsurface structures and groundwater flow pathways to inform independent models and long-term remediation strategies. The WAI Team recognizes that these findings remain preliminary, and that additional data, methods, and peer-reviewed analysis will be needed before results can be fully applied to long-term decision-making. The team also notes that funding for this research has ended, additional support has not yet been secured, and continued investment will be essential to informing remediation efforts.

Another research effort at the University of Hawai‘i is being conducted by a team from the WRRC and CECE that is examining fuel biodegradation processes and byproducts, as well as the microbiome present within the surface soil. Funding for this research has also concluded, and continued support has not yet been secured. The WAI Team, together with research partners, will continue to pursue support for funding to sustain these and other critical research efforts.

Additionally, the WAI Team plans to attend subject matter discussions, including the Red Hill Remediation Roundtable, convened by the EPA and the Hawai‘i Department of Health (“DOH”) that brings together water resource agencies, including the Honolulu Board of Water Supply, CWRM, and the USGS, alongside the U.S. Navy.

The Policy Coordinator also serves as the Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources’ designee to the Fuel Tank Advisory Committee (“FTAC”), established in 2016 under section 342L-61, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes (“HRS”). The FTAC is convened by DOH to study issues related to leaks of field-constructed underground fuel storage tanks at Red Hill and other military facilities across the State. Its work includes evaluating the short- and long-term impacts of fuel leaks on public health, drinking water, and the environment; reviewing groundwater test results; assessing mitigation and response strategies; and improving communication among military, state, county, and public entities.

<b>Guiding Document</b>	<b>Relevant Sections</b>
The WAI Report	F. Remediation, Sections 1-2 I. Policy Coordination and Public Education, Section 1
Act 197	§ -2(b)(1): Coordination and Implementation of the WAI Initiatives § -2(b)(2)(A)-(B): Periodic Reviews of Ecosystem Health and Remediation Science

### **III. Expenditures**

In FY25, DLNR expended \$131,595.41 and encumbered \$301,130.20 to support program start-up activities and the initial implementation of the WAI initiatives. These amounts represent the funds committed to establishing operational capacity and fulfilling the requirements of Act 197, including contracted services for community outreach to inform development of public information and education, initial work to establish a public-facing dashboard, payroll, and acquisition of office and program resources.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Actual Expenditures	\$131,595.41
Encumbrances	\$301,130.20
<b>FY25 Total</b>	<b>\$432,725.61</b>

## **Attachment A**

### **Scope of Work Summary for Community Outreach Phase I**

**Group 70 International, Inc.**

Start Date: September 2025

#### **Background**

To effectively implement a public information and educational program on the Red Hill post-defueling, the first step is to better understand the public knowledge and perceptions.

#### **Phase I: Community Outreach**

Focus groups and interviews will be used to gain initial qualitative understanding and inform the development of a public survey and capture Native Hawaiian views on this issue. A quantitative survey tool will be administered to both random sampling of O‘ahu residents (including those immediately around Red Hill) via email and mailouts - and sent out via various organizations and elected officials to be taken by interested parties. The survey will be available in multiple languages. These include Ilocano, Tagalog, Chuukese and Marshallese for residents that tend to have lower English proficiency than the general public. The findings will be used to inform future messaging and web site development.

#### **Deliverable**

The findings will be synthesized into a report that documents community and organizational input in a transparent and accessible format. This report will provide the foundation for future phases, guide the development of the education program, and inform key messaging points and communication channel recommendations.

## **Attachment B**

### **Scope of Work Summary for Dashboard Consultation Phase I**

**Oceanit Laboratories, Inc.**

Start Date: July 2025

#### **Background**

Oceanit is proud to partner with the Department of Land and Natural Resources (“DLNR”) and the Red Hill Water Alliance Initiative (“WAI”) in their efforts to safeguard Hawai‘i’s drinking water and increase transparency with the community. As part of this work, Oceanit will support the WAI through the development of a comprehensive, public-facing dashboard to communicate water testing results, environmental data, and remediation progress in a clear and accessible way.

#### **Phase I: Data Review & Consultation**

Phase I focuses on building the foundation for this tool by reviewing and evaluating existing environmental and water quality data with reference to information sources, developing preliminary user personas to understand the needs of stakeholders ranging from technical experts to community members, and providing strategic recommendations to the WAI team on how to best present data in ways that support trust, transparency, and community understanding.

#### **Deliverable**

The deliverable for this phase will be a comprehensive report that integrates the evaluation of historical data, draft user personas, and strategic recommendations to guide the next stage of the initiative and ensure the dashboard is both scientifically accurate, community-focused, and emphasizes trust and transparency.

**Attachment C:**

**Red Hill Water Alliance (WAI) Report**

**Attachment D**

**Act 197, Session Laws of Hawai‘i 2025**