Hāna Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap Community Meeting Notes

July 15, 2025 Hāna Courthouse 1-3pm

Meeting Purpose

Provide technical assistance to the Hāna community to identify wastewater infrastructure needs and funding options for cesspool conversions.

Key Takeaways

- Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations (WAI) is subcontracted to provide public education, outreach and community engagement for the EPA's Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap (CAWAG) initiative in Hāna
- Purpose is to provide technical assistance to the community for planning sustainable wastewater infrastructure improvements and options for converting cesspools
- Goal is to develop a wastewater solutions plan, identify funding sources, and support applications for cesspool conversions and infrastructure improvements
- Multiple decentralized and centralized wastewater treatment options will be evaluated, including nature-based systems
- Funding and affordability are major concerns that need to be addressed

Topics

Project Overview and Objectives

- Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap (CAWAG) Initiative is to support communities like Hāna to identify water challenges, develop plans, build capacity, and develop application materials to access water infrastructure funding
- WAI's role is public education, outreach and community engagement
- CAWAG team will observe existing infrastructure and listen to community input and preferences on technology, solution and plans
- Carollo Engineers will provide a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) in the **4th quarter 2025** to support funding applications for cesspool conversions and wastewater infrastructure improvements

Hawai‘i Cesspool Issues and Regulations

- Untreated wastewater contaminates drinking water, streams, groundwater and the environment by releasing pathogens and nitrates risking public health.

- Over 83,000 cesspools in Hawai‘i must be converted by 2050 under Act 125, with 539 in East Maui and higher priority areas in Hāna, including 126 cesspools in the subdivision

Cesspool Conversion Options

- Centralized sewer systems, decentralized community cluster systems, and individual on-site systems like septic tanks or advanced treatment units
- Individual wastewater treatment systems like septic tanks can achieve advanced treatment levels with an additional final treatment and disposal option like sand filters or nature-based options like constructed wetlands and bioreactor gardens

Community Concerns and Considerations

- High costs and affordability of conversions for homeowners
- Limited land/space for leach fields in subdivision lots
- Need for options suitable for Hāna's rural, low-density areas
- Interest in nature-based and low-impact solutions
- Importance of considering cultural practices and values

Planning for Next Meeting in August TBD

- Presentations, Q&A, and small group discussions to gather community input
- Need to widely publicize meeting through multiple channels
- Consider providing information on CAWAG, cesspool resources and optional feedback form in advance for people to review (option to mail to subdivision via post office)

Question & Answer Session / Collaborative Discussion Notes

- Can we share resources on cesspool conversions with the community and specifically make materials accessible to the subdivision?
    - WAI will host all meeting minutes, presentations, and recordings on their website
    - WAI will provide and share physical educational materials
- Need to bring all 5 concurrent projects prioritizing wastewater infrastructure across Hāna to the table
    - DHHL Wākiu Ahupua‘a, Hāna District, Maui Island master plan
    - Hāna Airport CIP funds for SD7 to finance the construction of cesspool closeouts and replacement with Individual Water Systems (IWS)
    - Habitat for Humanity development
    - Helene Hall ATU conversions
    - Hāna Hub resiliency center
- Alohalani, founder and current director of Wākiu Community Development Corporation (Wākiu CDC) educated the group on DHHL act in hopes that we can find something within these sections that will complement the work ahead of us.

    - Section 207 - is about Wākiu CDC land, it's issuing homestead lands, it's issuing public purpose land for nonprofit purposes, and mercantile land, which we have some in the master plan, the industrial area.
    - Section 213- is Wākiu CDC capital, so administer beneficiary trust funds that could help.
    - Section 214- is Wākiu CDC capital, again, that is for issuing loans for homes, ranches, farms, and mercantile.
    - Section 219- is the technical part of Wākiu CDC trust, it's providing no-cost technical assistance to beneficiaries
    - Section 221- provides access to water and enforce superior water rights

Next Steps

- Create webpage **https://www.waicleanwater.org/cawag** with project info and resources
- Schedule additional small planning meetings before next August meeting
- Develop outreach materials and publicize town hall meeting
- Identify and invite key stakeholders and community leaders
- Prepare presentation materials and discussion activities
- Follow up on logistics for meeting location and food options
- Plan site visits and in person meetings for August