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What is Mā‘alaea Village?

Mā‘alaea Village is a community in South Maui near Kīhei and consists of:

- The Mā‘alaea Boat Harbor with both commercial and private boats
- The commercial triangle with nine commercial properties including the Harbor Shops, the Maui Ocean Center and other businesses
- 10 condominiums
- 1 remaining house and a vacant one-acre lot zoned apartment
- Several private homes on the cliff side along Honoapi‘ilani Hwy.

What is the current wastewater situation and health of Mā‘alaea Bay?

- Mā‘alaea Bay’s coral reefs are near total collapse.
- As shown in Coral Reef Assessment & Monitoring Programs, the Bay went from 75% living coral coverage in 1995 to less than 8% in 2005, https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dar/files/2014/04/MauiReefDeclines.pdf
- Today, the Bay has less than 5% living coral coverage.
- There are a total of 24 injection wells that discharge more than 100,000 gallons of wastewater every day into Mā‘alaea Bay.
- No reef means no fish, no sand production & no shoreline protection.
- Mā‘alaea Bay is listed by the EPA on the 303.D list of impaired waters.

What has caused the environmental destruction in Mā‘alaea?

- Excessive sedimentation: Rainwater brings dirt and mud from the highway and from the hills above Mā‘alaea. Mauka stream flows have been diverted from reaching the natural filtration of the Mā‘alaea mudflats. This problem causes brown water events. This issue is fixable with land restoration efforts which have already started.
- Excessive wastewater pollution: Contaminants including excess nutrients, PFAs (forever chemicals), pharmaceuticals and pathogens are carried in our wastewater and quickly percolate into the groundwater and out into the ocean. The proposed Mā‘alaea wastewater treatment system, will not only address wastewater pollution by eliminating discharge, but will also tackle sedimentation by establishing a vigorous windbreak and fire break with native, canoe crop and functional plant species.

Why build a regional wastewater treatment system for Mā‘alaea Village?

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- There is one simple overriding reason:
  To clean up Māʻalaea Bay and restore the nearshore marine ecosystem (the coral reefs, the limu, the ʻōpae (shrimp), the baby fish and the seashells). These restoration efforts will support new sand creation and in turn increase protection against coastal erosion.
- Nature is very resilient. If we can clean up the bay, nature can regenerate. We truly can restore the coastal ecosystem– healthy reefs, increase fish populations and improve many other ecological services all while preserving associated economic benefits for locals and visitors alike.

Who is the Māʻalaea Village Association?

The Māʻalaea Village Association (MVA) represents the entire Māʻalaea Village community. This includes Maui long term residents, condo resident owners, second homeowners that do not rent out, STR owners, the Commercial Triangle businesses and visitors.

- The purpose of the MVA is to protect the unique community of Māʻaalaea Village; to improve communication between stakeholders; and to educate the Māʻalaea/Maui communities and elected officials on the need to preserve and share Māʻalaea Village's rural, ocean-oriented sense of place, for the benefit of all.
- The MVA is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. The board and its representatives has taken the initiative over the last 7 years to research and pursue alternatives to the known negatives of injection wells. Thousands of volunteer hours have been invested in this project. County, state and federal funds have also been invested, along with private donors.
- The MVA has gained national attention with this project. We have been told that this proactive effort by the Māʻalaea community to clean up Māʻalaea Bay has been unique within the wastewater world. We hope that we can be successful. Please consider supporting this effort. Donate and be a part of building the Māʻalaea Regional Wastewater System

How will the nearshore marine ecosystem restoration in Māʻalaea Bay take place?

- The Maui Ocean Center and other conservation organizations have the seedstocks necessary to reestablish the native coral and limu species in Māʻalaea Bay. However, these corals would not be able to survive and propagate until the water quality within Māʻalaea Bay is healthy enough to be able to sustain them.

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What is the Māʻalaea Regional Wastewater Reclamation System (MRWRS)?

- The Māʻalaea Regional Wastewater Reclamation System (MRWRS) is a community-driven approach to clean up Māʻalaea Bay. This effort will need the support from everyone who benefits including residents, tourists and the authorities.
- A wastewater reclamation system that will provide R-1 water, which is an asset that can be used for landscaping and crop irrigation.
- The project plan includes creating a large greenbelt of native plants that will serve as a windbreak and a firebreak for the community which is vulnerable to wildfires.
- The regional wastewater reclamation system will save over six million gallons of fresh water a year that is currently being used for landscaping.

Who and what makes up the current community in Māʻalaea?

- Māʻalaea consists of 10 condos with a total of 567 living units. This is the equivalent of between 1,100 and 2,200 people depending on occupancy.
- Of the 352 units, 62% are short-term rentals (STR) and 215 units, 38% are long term residences (LTR).
- The Māʻalaea Triangle Association (MTA) comprises nine commercial properties that includes Harbor Shops, Maui Ocean Center, Starbucks, a Gas Station, Carl's Jr, and a Golf and Sports Park. These businesses have a wide-reaching positive impact in the community by employing community members and supporting many community services.
- There are also several houses along Honoapiilani Highway on the cliffs above the Bay that could be part of the treatment system.
- The State of Hawaiʻi Māʻalaea Boat Harbor is also part of the community, and they are currently operating their own small wastewater treatment system that is leaking and needs to be replaced. They are also on their own injection well that is polluting the Bay.

Who is leading the MRWRS and what is the leadership framework?

- Overview: The main function of the Wastewater Working Group (WWG) is to set grand strategic goals and develop an overarching vision for the Maʻalaea Regional Wastewater Reclamation System

(MRWRS). The WWG is a committee of the Ma‘alaea Village Association (MVA). The group comes together through regular meetings (Mondays at 3pm) to set objectives for the organization, programs, fundraising and project managers with measurable and specific objectives. The WWG bears the responsibility for moving the project (MRWRS) in a productive direction to reach its goals.

- Representation: The WWG shall be made up of a diverse group of representatives that include MVA Members and technical consultants such as MVA board members, engineers, and consultants; different project involvement; and diverse demographics (i.e. ethnicity, sex, age). This ensures that strategic decision-making is intended to help ensure positive and constructive relationships with all those involved in the development of the MRWRS.

What are Injection wells?

- An injection well is a pipe that extends from the ground surface down into the groundwater. Solids are removed and wastewater is discharged into these pipes. This sewage water is released into the porous rock underground where it is diluted in the groundwater. Natural flows take this groundwater into the ocean. The wastewater for each of the injection wells serving the Mā‘alaea community is required to be treated but there is no limit on nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, and there is no disinfection required.

Are injection wells legal?

- As of today, in Hawai‘i, injection wells are legal, but the U.S. Supreme Court has already ruled that they contribute to water quality pollution and need to be replaced.
- The Department of Health Administrative Rules (Title 11, Chapter 23) provide conditions governing the location, construction, and operation of injection wells so that injected fluids do not migrate and pollute underground sources of drinking water.
- The Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) oversees the Underground Injection Control (UIC) program.
- The Mā‘alaea injection wells (two for every system, 24 in total) are currently permitted and in compliance with regulations. Although they do not pollute drinking water, they are a known source of polluted water into the Bay.

- No new injection well permits are being allowed by the Dept of Health, and existing ones will eventually need to be converted.

What other factors are impacting the health of Mā‘alaea Bay?

- Erosion and stormwater runoff also impact the bay. During storm events, water carries sediment, excess nutrients and pollutants from urban and agricultural areas.
- This issue is being addressed in the Mā‘alaea Mauka upland coastal areas where restoration projects are working to improve the landscape with native plantings and reforestation. Ultimately, ecological restoration will improve the soils, while enhancing water infiltration and reducing runoff.
- R1 reuse water from the Mā‘alaea Regional Wastewater Reclamation System (MRWRS) can be used to support these efforts by providing irrigation water and establishing plants in these areas.

Why fund a regional community wastewater treatment facility for the Mā‘alaea community?

- Mā‘alaea Bay, from Makena to the Mā‘alaea Boat Harbor, is a major economic engine for Maui’s people and visitors. Reversing the decay of Mā‘alaea Bay is important for everyone who lives on Maui. Visitors come to Maui for its environment and beauty. A healthy and vibrant marine ecosystem supports employment opportunities and economic security. A collapse of Mā‘alaea Bay would not just affect the local economy, it would affect everyone living on Maui.

How will the project be organized?

- The Mā‘aalaea Village Association (MVA) is a nonprofit 501c3. The MVA will develop and operate MRWRS through a nonprofit 501c12 called the Mā‘alaea Wastewater Association.
- This unique corporation is organized as a "mutual" or “cooperative” utility that is similar in character to the electric company on Kauai. The MVA will also train and organize a work force with the proper talent to run the utility.

How is the County of Maui's Department of Environmental Management's (DEM) involved?

- The County of Maui has explained that they do not have the staffing levels, the technical knowledge, or the capacity to build, staff and manage this project.

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- This is not a DEM project. DEM is not required to play any role besides an advisory role in the development of this non-profit utility.
- Maui County maintains the right and option to take over this utility at any time.

Is this Māʻalaea Regional Wastewater Reclamation System a bailout for the Māʻalaea community?

- No, it is not.
- Māʻalaea Village has working injection well systems with all the permits and permissions needed to operate. MVA is not required to fix the ecological problems of Māʻalaea Bay, but they want to reverse the decline of Māʻalaea Bay before it is too late. They are not mandated in any way to address the issue and do what is best for the Bay.
- All injection well permits renewed from the State Department of Health now require every injection well operator to shut down and connect to the regional wastewater system when it becomes available. All owners, including short term rental owners, will help pay the millions that it will cost to decommission their wastewater plants, decommission their injection wells, and connect to a sewer.
- The State of Hawaiʻi Department of Health has been a supporter of this project.

Have CFDs been Considered?

- Yes, a Community Facilities District (CFD) is still on the table for funding construction. A CDF is time-consuming and could easily take ten years.

What is the financial status of this project?

- In this phase, the project has raised $1.25 million dollars from private donations and a Federal grant.
- Matching County funds to prepare ground and provide a shovel-ready project with permits
- MVA is actively looking for funding for the installation.
    - Donate to the Maʻalaea Regional Wastewater Reclamation System.
    - All donations are tax deductible.
    - Checks can me made to:
      Māʻalaea Village Association (MVA)
      P.O. Box 2122
      Wailuku, HI 96793

Has the State of Hawaii Māʻalaea Harbor been a part of this project?

- Sadly no. The State of Hawaii harbor manages two injection wells in the Māʻalaea community.
- Māʻalaea Harbor currently has its own wastewater treatment plant that primarily serves the commercial boating operations within the harbor. Working with the MRWRS team on wastewater would be an advantage.
- It would be a missed opportunity to develop a regional wastewater plant in Māʻalaea and not include the State of Hawaii owned Māʻalaea Boat Harbor in the system.

How does the Māʻalaea community pay for this project?

- The Māʻalaea community pays millions of dollars in General Excise Tax (GET) and Transient Accommodations Tax (TAT) to Maui County. They don't have a fire station, a police station or schools, so their taxes can help pay for this project.
- The plans for the Māʻalaea Regional Wastewater Reclamation System ensure that all stakeholders share in the costs of the system and contribute to it.
- Once the MRWRS is built, each user (the 10 condos and the commercial triangle and possibly the harbor) will be responsible for paying for their own connection to the new system.
- In addition, those using the MRWRS will be responsible for the ongoing operations and maintenance costs of the system, at no cost to Maui County.

How could the MRWRS support cesspool conversions statewide?

- This project can support others by showing that a community can proactively solve its wastewater problems– setting an example for other communities with clusters of cesspools and developing a highly skilled and knowledgeable local workforce, and by sharing research and experience.
- It is possible that other communities with clusters of cesspools, like Hailiʻimaile or Makawao to create regional wastewater plants without injection wells to serve their communities, all at a cost that is far less than installing individual septic system while creating R-1 water to help reduce stress on fresh potable water resources.

What is the timeline for implementing the Māʻalaea Regional Wastewater Reclamation System project?

- The estimate timeline for this project is one year of design and permitting followed by one year of construction;
- We are currently in the design and permitting phase, with an anticipated completion by the June of 2027. This is subject to a number of factors that include:

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    - Land acquisition – Mahi Pono has offered to convey the land required for the MRWRS to MVA at no cost. MVA will need to subdivide the land.
    - Maui County Letter of Support – Mahi Pono has also offered to convey portions of the existing 423 acre parcel to Maui County to support the restoration of Kanaio Stream, the conservation of Kealia wetlands and the preservation of area reserved for future managed retreat in response to sea level rise. In return, Maui County will administratively expedite the subdivision process.
- There are numerous permits that are required from both Maui County and the State of Hawaii;
- Once the permits are secured and the land has been successfully subdivided and ownership conveyed to MVA, construction can begin;
- Construction is expected to last approximately 1 year. The system is anticipated to be online and ready to receive wastewater in the summer of 2028;
- Stay tuned for updates!