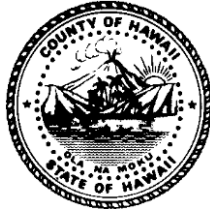


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**Department of Public Works Holds Blessing Ceremony to Mark Start
of Highway 137 Construction**

Kapoho, Hawai'i – The Department of Public Works (DPW) and Department of Water Supply (DWS) held a ceremonial blessing today to officially kick off the construction work on Highway 137. This project includes restoring the roadway from 4 corners to Pohoiki Road and installing a waterline. The event was attended by over 120 community members and several key county partners, and the haumana of Kua O Ka Lā Charter School underscored the strong community support for the project.

DPW is blessed to have Kahu Piilani Kaawaloa start the blessing of the 'āina and machines on Saturday morning then Leila Kealoha completing the blessing with the ho'okupu blessing at the event on September 24. . The blessing signifies the commencement of the much-anticipated reconstruction efforts following the 2018 eruption of Kīlauea, along with Pohoiki Road, which will provide access to HWY 137. DPW Director Steve Pause of DPW expressed his gratitude to the attendees and acknowledged the importance of the occasion.

"We appreciate everyone's patience during the past six years," said Director Pause during the event. "This blessing will ensure that we begin the restoration of infrastructure for the people affected by the 2018 event in an appropriate manner".

The Highway 137 project aims to improve road safety and infrastructure resilience in the area, making travel easier for residents and visitors alike, and pending water services to the area. The project, which Isemoto Contracting Company, Ltd., is undertaking, will include the grading of existing lava rock, the installation of a new asphalt concrete pavement structure, the installation of a 6-inch waterline, and adding roadway signs, striping and pavement markers. It is projected to be completed by March 2026.

"Road restoration is more than just an infrastructure project," said Council Member Ashley Kierkiewicz. "It symbolizes renewed access, connection, and a sense of spiritual and emotional healing for our community. While today marks a significant milestone, and our office is grateful for the tremendous collaboration to get us to this point, much work remains to fully restore Puna and continue its recovery from the 2018 Kīlauea eruption."

DPW and DWS appreciate the support and understanding as we restore roads and rebuild water lines.

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