



A Community Dedicated to Saving Puakō Reef

Return the reef to its historic 70% coral coverage from its existing 7%.

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Story map of Puakō: [Wahi Pana -A Sacred Place](#)

May 26, 2025

TESTIMONY TO HAWAII COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

RE: V. Director's Report. 1. Reports/Correspondence. E. Wastewater Division Updates iii. Update on the South Kohala and Puakō Cesspool Conversion Plan.

Hello Commissioners,

We are looking forward to giving you a presentation with more details, and an opportunity for Q&A, next month. Today, we would like to offer these comments for your consideration.

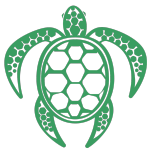
First, we are extremely happy to see the link to the Puakō Story map included in your agenda. This is an extremely informative, interactive tool, showing past and present conditions on the South Kohala area reef. The correct link is above, on our letterhead, or here.

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/69512f9bca69405fa7d35a5f8ee43c13>

For the biggest news:

In 2025 we have:

- Met with the Mayor, Managing Director Brilhante, Director Segawa, Deputy Director Kawaguchi, and Deputy Managing Director Merrick Nishimoto. We were given the green light from the Mayor to work with the departments as needed.
- Met with Finance and determined the Community Facilities District (CFD) is the best vehicle for the project, rather than an improvement district. It is laid out in HCC Chapter 32. We are meeting again with Finance next week.
- Hired consultants for Financing rate structures, an attorney who worked on the only other completed CFD on Hawaii County, and the EA. We are in the process of hiring a community outreach team.
- Determined that USDA low-interest loans are available and applicable to this project.
- We have received donations this year of over \$150,000, from our neighbors to fund our immediate needs.



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- Council Member James Hustace has submitted a request for \$1M for the current County CIP budget. This is for a revolving fund which can be used for other communities in creating CFDs. We are clearly a model for other communities who need to upgrade their wastewater systems. It passed first reading last week, May 22. Second and final reading is June 5.
- AND we have made substantial progress on the comprehensive CFD application. This document lays out the project area, scope, basic design parameters, best route options, public purposes. Basically, it provides enough details that the County Council can make an informed vote to formally initiate the CFD. A 60% draft has been given to Finance for their review.

There are still some key questions which need formal answers before continuing with our efforts.

1. Will the County allow the CFD to fund planning, early engineering, and essential equipment that sits on private properties, as well as capital costs?
2. Will a low-pressure collection system be accepted for dedication by the County? A CFD requires that the County owns some or all of the infrastructure.
3. What can the County provide, as a guarantee, to the community? With written commitments, the community can plan future actions, by trusting the County to be a full partner with the community, through its guarantee.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to bring this update to your attention. Attached is our most recent newsletter, to give you more background. Also, our website puako4reefs.org is becoming populated with research information and relevant articles.

Sincerely,

Barbara Bell for Puakō for Reefs Board members and its many volunteers

Karen Anderson, Board Chair, 206-724-1551 Karen.anderson@puako4reefs.org

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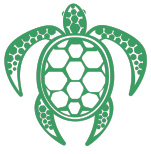
George Fry, Board member. 808-756-3877, gfryiii@gmail.com

Puako for Reefs, a volunteer run organization

A 501c3 Non-profit organization

69-1536 Puako Beach Drive Kamuela, HI 96743

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