

To the Environmental Management Commission and the public.

My name is Alan Fukamizu, I'm a state licensed wastewater operator, drinking water treatment and distribution operator and the United Public Workers Unit 168 chief steward. I represent Hilo's Wastewater treatment plant personal and a member of the public. I have regularly attended these meetings for over a year. I have seen the hard work the commission puts in to help with transparency, protect the environment and public health. I here to give testimony per section V. C, Wastewater Integrated Management Plan update.

I have seen that through the two previous administrations that the approach to anything for wastewater has been reactive instead of proactive. I understand that there is numerous steps to take to accomplish implementing fixes or improvements including the funding. The Hilo, Kulaimano, Papaikou wastewater treatment plants and the additional 8 pumps stations did not just become unsafe and deteriorated in a short period of time. This was what I can say was largely attributed due to understaffing of not only operators, mechanics, electricians, but also qualified engineers for years after these systems were put in place. The last administration focused on the Administrative Order of Consent for the Kau Large Capacity Cesspool closures and the Hilo treatment plant but did little to nothing to address the concerns of employees or gather input for the plants that the operators would be running daily.

What I do find concerning with this new administration for Department of Environmental Management is their intentional lack of communication with personal. There have been several invitations for them to come down and speak with personal to discuss concerns of short staffing, safety and public health. The issues at hand that directly affect the public health and safety. We have no Standard Operating Procedures for anything including Lock Out Tag Out. The previous 607,000 gallon wastewater spill on June 21<sup>st</sup> 2024 was due to operator error and being short staffed. The chlorination valves were incorrectly positioned when bulk chlorine totes were switched over which caused no chlorination to the effluent. After this incident I sent communication numerous times to Deputy Director Brenda Moses and acting Division Chief Chris Sparber regarding implementing SOP's with a valving diagram. Nothing was done. On April 6<sup>th</sup> 2025 there was a similar issue with the chlorination system and short staffing. Fortunately, there was a .01 Mg/L residual so there was no violation, and it didn't endanger the public. With a residual any lower as .01 is the bare minimum, then it would have been a spill larger then then previous spill in April 2024. Since then, I have sent emails with no response and eventually internal complaints regarding issues like these and safety concerns to the division and no one wants to address them as internal complaints are for issues covered under specific Hawaii Revised Statues.

To give perspective on how bad morale is, many personal wanted to walk out due to the ongoing lack of staffing, safety and the comments the previous Director made to Civil Beat on April 7th

2024. Ultimately a follow up article on April 29<sup>th</sup> 2024 seemed to shortly improve morale as people felt they were being heard. Nothing did improve after that, nor the large concerns from personal addressed in the article by any level of management. In closing, the personal of east and west Hawaii's wastewater treatment plants and pump stations are the last line of defense for the public's health and safety and there needs to be open communication with personal to help mitigate another event. Specifically installing automatic Chlorine monitoring systems and ultra-low Chlorine monitoring systems tied into the auto dialers that have been asked for over many years by operators.

Thank you, Alan Fukamizu