



Saving a Reef. Building a Blueprint for *Hawai'i*.

Barbara Bell, Karen Anderson info@puako4reefs.org

Presentation to the Environmental Management Commission - June 2025

What's at Stake?

Our mission: Save Puakō Reef by reversing its 90% collapse in coral coverage and save one of Hawaii Island's most important economic, environmental and cultural treasures.

Today's mission: Save Puakō Reef AND Build a Blueprint for meeting the 2050 state cesspool abandonment mandate by installing community-based sewer systems where appropriate.

Decades of Work

- Time Invested: 12 years of community-led effort
- Science: 25 years of research
- Funding Raised: \$3.5M resident donations • \$1.5M in public funds
- People Power: Hundreds of donors • 5,000+ volunteer hours/year
- Partnerships: 3 County Administrations • 15+ public/private partners

Partners: USDA, American Waters, Mauna Lani, Coral Reef Alliance, TNC, Orenco, E-One, PBR Hawai'i, AQUA Engineering, Carollo Engineering, Pederson Engineering, Goodwin & Assoc, The Kalaimoku Group, and others.

Where We Are Now

Key Components of our progress in Puakō

- ✓ **Science:** Reef degradation proven by major studies
- ✓ **County Wastewater Plan:** recommend low pressure system connecting to the American Waters Plant.
- ✓ **Design/Engineering:** 4 studies with a current Preliminary Engineering Report (PER).
- ✓ **Public-Private Partnerships:** Treatment via American Waters at Mauna Lani, Collection via low pressure system (most likely Orenco or E-one) owned and operated by the county.
- ✓ **Financing Tools:** \$1M CIP county revolving fund (SKCDPAC) + USDA loan
- ✓ **Community Support:** 80% support—if affordable
- **Financial models** for capital repayment and monthly O&M costs: In progress
- **Environmental & Cultural Studies:** In progress
- **Legal Path:** Community Facilities District (Chapter 32 HCC)

What's Left to Do – Community Facilities District – 1 year + ~ \$1M

- Pay \$75K to County to initiate their work on the Community Facilities District.
- Launch Community Facilities District process with Council.
- Review final details with partners and community.
- Secure 60% formal homeowner approval.
- CFD approval, capital project begins.

How You Can Help

Director Segawa: 1. Invite us to present to your teams. 2. Partner to finalize design. 3. Prepare team to own and operate low pressure systems.

Commissioners: 1. Support our effort: help Puakō become Hawai'i Island's first community-initiated sewer project, so we can help your communities. 2. Connect us with your communities—we're ready to share what we've learned.

The window to save Puakō Reef is closing. But the opportunity to lead Hawai'i forward is wide open. Let's finish what this community started—and build a cleaner, smarter future for ALL of Hawai'i.