



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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In reply, please refer to:
File:

Report to the Legislature – Relating to Cesspools and Prioritization for Replacement

What are cesspools?

- Cesspools are little more than holes in the ground that discharges raw, untreated human waste. Cesspools can contaminate ground water, drinking water sources, streams and oceans with disease-causing pathogens.

How many cesspools do we have in Hawai`i?

- There are approximately 88,000 cesspools in the State, with nearly 50,000 located on the Big Island, almost 14,000 on Kauai, over 12,000 on Maui, over 11,000 on Oahu and over 1,400 on Molokai.

What is Act 125?

- During the most recent regular Legislative session, Act 125 was passed that required the replacement of all cesspools by 2050 and directing the Department of Health (DOH) to evaluate cesspools in the state, develop a Report to the Legislature that includes a prioritization method for cesspool upgrades, and work with the Department of Taxation on possible funding options to reduce burden on homeowners.

How many cesspools pose a risk to our water resources in Hawaii?

- The Report to the Legislature – Relating to Cesspools and Prioritization for Replacement identifies 14 areas in the state where an evaluation of data on hand indicates greatest need for action. These areas include approximately 43,000 cesspools.
- The Report identifies 4 priority categories. **Priority 1** are areas where cesspools present a Significant Risk of Human Impacts, Drinking Water Impacts, or Draining to Sensitive Waters. **Priority 2** are areas where cesspools present a Potential to Impact Drinking Water. **Priority 3** are areas where cesspools have the Potential to Impact Sensitive Waters in our state. **Priority 4** is a placeholder for all cesspools whose impacts DOH have yet to fully analyze.
- The highest priority for action is located in Kahalu`u. The 740 cesspools in the area contribute to high bacteria counts and coral-harming nutrients in the surface water.

- DOH collected a total of 470 samples from 19 sites. The water quality standard for indicator bacteria was exceeded at all but one sampling site.
- Many of these cesspools are located near perennial streams and subject to overflow due to the wet climate and shallow depth of the groundwater.
- Caution signs have been posted advising the public to stay out of the Kahalu'u Lagoon, the channel leading to Kaneohe Bay and streams/drainages emptying into Kahalu'u Lagoon.

How can I get a copy of the report and materials from tonight's meeting?

- The Report is available for download from the following website:
<https://health.hawaii.gov/opppd/files/2017/12/Act-125-HB1244-HD1-SD3-CD1-29th-Legislature-Cesspool-Report.pdf>
- Meeting materials (powerpoint and handouts) can be downloaded from:
<http://health.hawaii.gov/wastewater/cesspools/>

Who do I contact if I have questions about the report or cesspools in general?

- Contact our Wastewater Branch at 586-4294 or email: wwb@doh.hawaii.gov