



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Department of Health warns public about contaminated water in  
Alaialoa and Kaohaoha Gulches near Ookala Town on Hawai'i Island**

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) is warning the public to stay out of Alaialoa and Kaohaoha Gulch below Mamalahoa Highway in Ookala, Hawai'i. Storm water within both gulches may be contaminated with animal waste due to wastewater spills from the Big Island Dairy facility.

Big Island Dairy has reported untreated wastewater from the dairy's wastewater treatment system spilled from a damaged sewage pipe in the evening on May 6. Although the wastewater spill was reportedly stopped within approximately 30 minutes, wastewater discharged into Alaialoa Gulch. The total volume of discharge is unknown and believed to be greater than 1,000 gallons. In addition, the dairy owner notified DOH that wastewater from the dairy's lagoons may overflow into Kaohaoha Gulch due to heavy rains currently being experienced at the facility.

The DOH is advising the public to avoid contact with water within the Alaialoa Gulch and Kaohaoha Gulch in areas between the Big Island Dairy and shoreline east of Ookala Town. Warning signs have been posted in the area. At this time, it is believed the contaminated water has reached coastal waters and further discharges are possible.

The DOH Clean Water Branch has notified the owners of the dairy that they must submit a written report documenting the cause of the spill. The discharge of animal waste to State waters is strictly prohibited and the Clean Water Branch will continue to investigate the cause of the wastewater spill and potential overflow.

The DOH Clean Water Branch responds to sewage spills which reach state waters. The Clean Water Branch protects public health and the environment by prohibiting discharges which impair water quality, keeping Hawaii's waters fishable and swimmable for everyone. Owners and operators of wastewater systems must comply with environmental regulations that are in place to protect the public. Failure to do results in legal action by the state, federal partners and/or private citizens.

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