



## **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

**DAVID Y. IGE**  
GOVERNOR

**ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.**  
DIRECTOR

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
February 26, 2021

21-030

### **Department of Health warns ocean users at Kailua Bay to avoid waters near the Kailua Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant's ocean outfall**

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) is advising the public to avoid waters near the City and County of Honolulu Kailua Wastewater Treatment Plant's ocean outfall (pictured below). The City began discharging wastewater that exceeds the bacteria limits in their state permit on Feb. 18, 2021.

The permit violation was first reported by the City on Saturday, Feb. 20. The City's ongoing exceedance of the state's permitted enterococcus bacteria limits are related to operational issues identified at the Kailua Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant. Enterococcus is a bacterium used as an indicator of waterborne pathogens.

Department of Health has directed the City to post warning signs and to test samples of the coastal waters in the area. Shoreline samples taken on Feb. 24 did not show increased enterococcus levels; however, due to the location of the outfall and the high recreational use of Kailua Bay, the City will begin posting warning signs today.

"The offshore waters in Kailua Bay are used by canoe paddlers, kite and windsurfers, boaters and others," said Keith Kawaoka, deputy director of Environmental Health, "to ensure their safety, we are asking that these users avoid waters near the City's ocean outfall until the City has restored full treatment of the wastewater as required by their discharge permit."

The City is authorized to discharge up to 15.25 million gallons a day of wastewater from the Kailua Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant to Kailua Bay, subject to discharge limitations set forth in the state issued, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit, Permit No. HI0021296. Discharge limitations are set by the DOH to protect human and environmental health and minimize risk to the public. The City is legally obligated to comply with the terms, requirements, and provisions of the issued NPDES permit.

DOH will oversee the City's response to the ongoing discharge violations. Warning signs will remain up until the department is confident that coastal waters have returned to normal and the City returns to compliance with discharge limitations. The public is advised to remain out of the

affected waters until warning signs have been removed.

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.

### Location of Kailua Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant

