



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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University of Hawai'i will upgrade Waikiki Aquarium's water system to protect nearshore waters as part of an agreement with Hawai'i Department of Health

HONOLULU – The University of Hawai'i will upgrade the Waikiki Aquarium's water system within the next five years to protect nearshore waters as part of an agreement with the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH). The Waikiki Aquarium was established in 1904 and has been an institution of the University of Hawai'i since 1919.

Based on the health department's assessment, the Waikiki Aquarium had numerous discharges from its tanks and exhibits from 2014 to 2018 that exceeded the limits for regulated parameters allowed under its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit. The health department issued the permit and monitors for compliance.

The agreement, called an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC), allows the Waikiki Aquarium to continue to conduct research and educate residents and visitors about Hawaii's precious ecosystem as it takes steps to be in compliance. The agreement also allows the Waikiki Aquarium to propose and implement a health department-approved environmentally beneficial project valued at \$90,000 or more, in lieu of a monetary penalty.

"We appreciate the cooperation from both the University of Hawai'i and Waikiki Aquarium to resolve these environmental issues and commend the University of Hawai'i for its commitment to correct the violations identified by the health department," said Keith Kawaoka, deputy director of environmental health. "The terms of the AOC ensure the Waikiki Aquarium remains in compliance with the terms of the permit and help prevent potential water pollution that jeopardizes nearshore waters in the future."

The health department conducted an investigation of the Waikiki Aquarium and determined its aged water system, which supplies saltwater for exhibits and research areas, was the cause of the exceedances. Upon being notified of the violations, the University of Hawai'i and Waikiki Aquarium management and technical experts began implementing solutions to stop the violations. The Department of Health's Clean Water Branch will monitor the University of Hawai'i and Waikiki Aquarium to ensure compliance with the AOC until all of the terms are met.

Environmental stewardship is fundamental to the Waikiki Aquarium's mission and we recognize that we must lead by example," said Andrew Rossiter, Waikiki Aquarium director. "These incidents alerted us to the deteriorated condition of our aged water system. Aquarium and UH staff responded promptly and are working closely with the Department of Health to invest in new systems and improve our saltwater treatment processes to protect the surrounding ocean and marine life.

The DOH is responsible for protecting the quality of water in streams and coastal areas in Hawai'i, keeping the state's waters fishable and swimmable for everyone. The DOH Clean Water Branch protects public health and the environment by prohibiting discharges that impair water quality and regulating discharges that can cause pollution and degradation to State waters. Owners and operators of wastewater systems must comply with environmental regulations that protect the public. Failure to do so may result in legal action by the State, Federal partners and/or private citizens.

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