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## **Lahaina Coastal Water Quality Reports Show Area Safe for Ocean Recreation**

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) reviewed test results from multiple monitoring activities conducted by state agencies and community partners to confirm that the coastal waters around Lahaina are safe for ocean recreation.

DOH has reviewed the University of Hawai'i (UH) efforts that spanned five sampling events since October 2023, the Surfrider Foundation's (Surfrider) brown water sampling on January 10, 2024, together with screening sampling completed by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) in November 2023, and has determined that Lahaina coastal waters pose no significant risk to human health. These multiple lines of evidence for coastal environmental quality are positive signs for recovery of the environment from the Maui wildfires.

The data analyzed will be part of DOH's Comprehensive Environmental Monitoring and Sampling Program, which brings together federal, state, and community partners to monitor and collaborate on environmental data related to wildfire recovery. The DOH and its partners will continue to monitor coastal environmental quality in Lahaina.

"These results provide the community with reassurance that the coastal waters around Lahaina are safe for ocean recreation with no significant human health impacts as a result of the wildfires," said Deputy Director for Environmental Health Kathleen Ho. "We continue to advise residents to heed brown water advisories, as bacteriological quality remains a concern at all times in brown water conditions. DOH appreciates the collaboration and partnership of our community partners and DLNR in monitoring environmental quality in Lahaina."

The UH study's monitoring efforts included nutrients, metals, carbonate chemistry, microbial communities, and coral stress metabolites.

"Our work has provided important data for understanding marine environment impacts," said UH principal investigator Dr. Andrea Kealoha. "The metal concentrations we have measured in seawater do not indicate human health concerns. We will continue to study any potential impact on coral reefs and share data with our community and partners."

In preparation for future planned dredging work in the Lahaina Small Boat Harbor, DLNR Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation collected screening samples of harbor sediments and analyzed them for metals, PAHs, dioxins, total petroleum hydrocarbons, and an extended list of other organic contaminants. The results of these tests also demonstrated no significant risk to human health.

"While collected for our dredging study, DOH's ability to use these data to contribute to human health assessment demonstrates the importance of multi-agency collaboration in response to the wildfires," said DLNR Deputy Director Ryan Kanaka'ole.

The Surfrider project focused on potential contaminants of concern, such as metals and polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). Metals were of particular interest for DOH as these were seen as the highest potential health risk given their elevated concentrations in the ash and likelihood of reaching the marine environment. Surfrider also provided bacteriological data.

"Surfrider is pleased that our post-fire coastal water quality monitoring efforts from the January 10 wet weather day were able to contribute to confirming the safety of these waters for ocean recreation," said Surfrider Foundation's Maui Fire Response Coordinator, Hanna Lilley. "We remain committed to providing water-quality data to the community and protecting the ocean for future generations.

It is important to note that access is still restricted to certain coastal zones within the impacted area of Lahaina and these are not an option for ocean recreation at this time.

[Click here to view the post from Surfrider about its results.](#)

[Click here for the UH presentation by Dr. Andrea Kealoha.](#)

[Click here to view DOH water quality advisories.](#)

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