

CESSPOOL CONVERSION WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Date: September 13, 2018
Time: 2:30PM – 4:00PM
Location: Kinau Hale, 1250 Punchbowl Street, Room 205, Honolulu, HI
Attendees: Bruce Anderson (BA), Chair, Department of Health
Ted Bohlen (TB), Deputy Attorney General
Stuart Coleman (SC), Surfrider Organization
Lani Fernandez (LF), Bank of Hawaii
Lori Kahikina (LK), City and County of Honolulu
William “Bill” Kucharski (BK), County of Hawaii
Dr. Darren Lerner (DL), University of Hawaii, Water Resources Research Center
Representative Nicole Lowen (NL), House of Representatives
Mike Montgomery (MM), EPA Region 9
Erica Perez (EP), Coral Reef Alliance
Sina Pruder (SP), Department of Health

Not present: Senator Kalani English, Senate
Ken Hiraki, Hawai'i Association of Realtors
Jason Kagimoto, County of Kauai,
Eric Nakagawa, County of Maui
Dr. Kawika Winter, Hawai'i Institute for Marine Biology

AGENDA

A. Call to Order at 2:35PM on September 13, 2018 by Bruce Anderson

B. New Business

- a. Introduction of Working Group Members
 - All members in attendance had an opportunity to introduce themselves.
- b. Roles of the work group members
 - There was discussion of creating subgroups to address the objectives under Act 132
 - Subgroups identified:
 - Subgroup to evaluate the best and most economical technology available. This would include identifying areas that can be sewered. Recommendations will be site specific.
 - Subgroup to evaluate the financial mechanisms to fund upgrades and connections
 - Subgroup to re-evaluate prioritization report for cesspool upgrades. Identify areas where data is insufficient to determine a priority classification of cesspools for conversion and determine methods and resources needed to collect the data

and conduct analysis. Evaluate the need to accelerate upgrades in priority areas.

- Identify cesspools that would be exempt from 2050 mandate.
- c. Discuss the objectives of the working group
 - DL was asked to identify the objectives that UH WRRC could address. The other objectives could be handled by a consultant
- d. **Discuss future meetings to be scheduled**
 - Members selected October 9th for the next meeting.
- e. Questions and Comments

BK comments: Suggested we have 4 subgroups.

- Priorities of area (where & when)
- What technologies are better? Important to note, sewer connections can cost just as much as upgrading to an individual wastewater system
- Everything hinges on finances. How are we going to finance upgrades and connections? Large population on the Big Island are living below the poverty level
- Exemptions
- Should consider DHHL lands as one subgroup for financing.

DL comments:

- Useful life of septic systems average 30 yrs
- Research in this area has moved really slow
- We should also be concerned about phosphorus and other contaminants
- Mentioned that phosphorus could be mined.
- Identified a need for WRRC and DOH to improve coordination efforts. Will be hiring an Outreach Specialist in the next 6 weeks to assist in this efforts.

MM comments:

- Suggested different subgroups to address the objectives
- Address financing & funding in one group. Technology should be in another group.
- Discussed ways to expand marketing into technology
- Federal monies available through the 604B grant for Counties eligible for planning purposes
- Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA), a low-interest loan program that is available to fund public and private wastewater infrastructure projects.

LF comments:

- The 2050 mandate is going to impact future homeowners when obtaining a mortgage. Homeowners are required to certify that they comply with both State and Federal regulations. This will affect homeowners in the sales contract. She mentioned that it will be important to identify cesspools that would be granted an exemption for upgrade.

BA comments:

- Wants to look at exempting cesspools that do not impact drinking water and surface waters. Suggested that the work group should evaluate the non-critical wastewater disposal maps that were created by the Wastewater Advisory committees in the 1990s.
- Big problem with cesspools – we need to hammer out the details
- Maybe we need to move faster to accelerate cesspool upgrades
- Revisit point of sale and grants and loans
- Address the financing piece
- The work group should retain contract services of a facilitator to run our meetings

NL comments:

- She felt that there was a need to develop a comprehensive long-term plan for cesspool upgrades after the 2050 mandate
- She drafted the language for Act 132 and provided background on the development
- Funding for the WRRRC under Act 132 was to evaluate the other areas that in the Prioritization Report for Cesspool Upgrades that hasn't been prioritized yet due to the lack of data
- When upgrading cesspools, she felt that decisions should be fact based

EP comments:

- Coral Reef Alliance has been evaluating solutions for the water pollution problem from cesspools in Puako
- Mentioned that septic tanks do not work well in Puako and that DOH should re-evaluate the need for upgrades when there is a building permit.

SC comments:

- He suggested that we should look into an approach which involved establishing short-term, mid-term and long-term solutions
- We should focus on the priority cesspools that need to be upgraded

- DOH should take enforcement on the worst offenders that let their cesspools intentionally overflow into streams like in Kahaluu. We should focus on the bad actors. The funds collected from the fines and penalties could be put into an account to fund cesspool upgrades.

f. Next Steps

- Members should finalize the subgroups and decide which subgroup they would like to participate in.
- DL provide us with the list of objectives that we could contract UH WRRC to work on. Review the remaining objectives and decide if we should get contractor support.
- Hire a facilitator for our working group.

C. Adjournment: Time - 4:15PM

Next Scheduled meeting: October 9, 2018, time TBD