

The Surfrider Foundation, Maui Chapter



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Ground Water Office (WTR-9)
75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105
Attn: Nancy Rumrill
fax (415) 947-3549
e-mail : rumrill.nancy@epa.gov

Aug 19, 2009

From: Surfrider Foundation, Maui Chapter

page 1 of 2

Re: COMMENTS ON DRAFT UNDERGROUND INJECTION CONTROL (UIC) PERMIT
FOR THE LAHAINA WASTEWATER RECLAMATION FACILITY

Surfrider Foundation Maui Chapter is part of an international network of Surfrider Chapters dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves and beaches for all people, through conservation, activism, research and education. Represented by over 50,000 members and 60+ local chapters in the U.S., the Surfrider Foundation also has affiliations in Australia, Japan, France, and Brazil.

SURFRIDER recognizes the biodiversity and ecological integrity of the planet's coasts are necessary and irreplaceable. SURFRIDER is committed to preserving natural living and non-living diversity and ecological integrity of the coastal environment.

Surfrider members and supporters spend many hours in Maui's marine environment. a clean and healthy marine environment is a top priority for them. Surfrider Foundation Maui Chapter has sponsored a water quality testing program (for coliform levels) in ocean waters for many years in cooperation with local Health Department.

Surfrider Chapters from San Diego to Florida have worked tirelessly through legislation, litigation and education to reduce levels of nitrates and other potential pollutants in wastewater and to divert reclaimed wastewater from discharge into the ocean into safe and beneficial reuse.

Surfrider Foundation Maui Chapter supports Mayor Tavares' goal of 100% wastewater reuse and zero injection announced on May 22, 2009. We are here to support the Mayor's goal and to ask EPA, the Mayor, the County Council, and the Department of Environmental Management to work together to achieve this goal as soon as possible. We were unable to send a representative to the November 2008 EPA hearing, and are grateful for this extended opportunity to offer comments on this topic of vital concern to our members.

On behalf of Surfrider Foundation, we ask the EPA reconsider its current draft recommendation to renew the Lahaina Wastewater Treatment Facility's UIC permit for a ten-year period, with little change in the business as usual approach of injecting nitrogen rich effluent that impacts the health of our reefs. The small reduction in nitrogen proposed over 10 years will not undo the damage to our reefs that is currently underway. A bolder action is needed.

The Surfrider Foundation, Maui Chapter

Page 2 of 2

We note that growing public awareness of the need to transition into a better wastewater treatment effluent disposal process has even caused some citizens to file legal challenges to the County's South Maui Wastewater facility under the Clean Water Act.

Surfrider Foundation Maui Chapter prefers to work in support of the County administration, EPA and the numerous civic organizations, who see this as the right time to move forward in a cooperative partnership to improve Maui's wastewater systems. But the message is clear: the time for business as usual is passed. Citizens are concerned with the longterm impacts of injection wells on Maui. They are asking the EPA to take a far more bold, visionary and engaged approach to meeting the requirements of the Clean water Act. The LWTF permit renewal process offers a key opportunity to move forward in the right direction. We summarize the key objectives we support below.

We agree with the members of DIRE and other community groups who want to see any permit for injection at Lahaina must be conditioned on a number of specific requirements to support the reality of the Mayor's goal being reached and the health of our ocean waters, coral reefs and ocean users protected.

We support conditions in the permit which require a reduction of nitrogen and phosphorous levels. We very much want to see better disinfection of pathogens, as we receive reports from our members not only of the noxious odors in the vicinity of the Lahaina treatment plant, but a higher instance of infections in those exposed to long hours in the ocean waters of the region..

Improved and continuing monitoring of ground and ocean water quality also needs to be an essential part of the wastewater impact review process. We also need a timely plan to transition from injection of wastewater to reuse. This plan should have clear benchmarks that can be evaluated and give accountability. We very much support the complete phase out of injection wells in West Maui over the next 5 years.

Mahalo for coming to Maui and listening to our concerns and hopes for our future.

Jan Roberson, MPA
Maui Chapter President
The Surfrider Foundation