Summary of Findings and Preliminary Recommendations Presented at the October 19, 2006 Public Meeting in the Pahoa High School Cafeteria

October 19, 2006 – Community meeting at Pahoa High School – The main purpose of the meeting was to inform the public, and the residents of Kapoho, of the results of the INSAR study and to discuss preliminary direction of the Subsidence Report.

Dr. Benjamin Brooks showed a PowerPoint on the concepts behind INSAR. He compared the results of the study with independent measurements from high resolution GPS taken by the Hawaii Volcano Observatory. The match was very good for the existing two locations. Measurements taken by the INSAR in the Kapoho region over a three year period indicate subsidence relative to Hilo at about 1 cm or 10 mm per year. This is consistent with the 30 year trend revealed by independent measurements taken by the Hawaii Volcano Observatory. Since Hilo is experiencing sea level rise on the order of ~1 mm per year, the relative sea-level rise measurements over the 3-year period of study gives a rate of about 1.1 cm or 11 mm per year relative sea level rise at Kapoho.

Dennis Hwang gave a PowerPoint that covered preliminary direction of the three major areas of the report. With regard to risks of hazards, the area is very vulnerable to hurricanes, tsunamis, and earthquakes. Subsidence makes mitigation of these risks even more difficult. Subsidence appears to be both episodic (1838, 1868, and 1975 events) and continuous (INSAR study). The second major area of the report dealt with options to deal with the shoreline certification process and its applicability. Four options were considered including: (i) using the existing method of surface connection, (ii) encouraging the State to rely on an increased emphasis of the vegetation line, (iii) using the transition to gravity flow and (iv) setting an arbitrary boundary such as the mauka edge of the road. Options ii through iv would provide the county greater flexibility in granting building permits but the down side is that this could increase development pressure in the areas of severe flooding. The third major part of the study dealt with various issues in the Special Management Area. It was suggested that: (i) the area continue to be monitored for subsidence, (ii) an engineering report accompany applications for new seawalls or to heighten existing seawalls; (iii) zoning and subdivision changes factor in flooding and subsidence; (iv) the wastewater study to be done under legislative appropriation consider subsidence. There was much discussion about building a new house on existing lots and developing the right strategy, considering the frustration felt by landowners as well as the hazard risks. If new houses are built, it was suggested there be sufficient elevation, with freeboard for subsidence and that the structure can also accommodate anticipated earthquake forces.