

Notice of the Availability of a draft Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact – Drinking Water Spigot Project

Department of Water Supply, County of Hawaii

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has awarded \$970,000 of federal grant funds to the County of Hawaii (County) for Water Infrastructure Improvements – Upgrade of Drinking Water System. The County of Hawaii Department of Water Supply (DWS) will use this funding, in combination with local funds, for two discrete projects: Drinking Water Spigots and Mamalahoa Highway Waterline Improvements.

As required by the National Environmental Policy Act, the EPA has prepared a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) that evaluated the potential environmental effects and consequences of the proposed project for the Drinking Water Spigots Project. This Notice announces the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and the unsigned Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for public review and comment. (Note – this draft EA and unsigned FONSI are for the Drinking Water Spigots Project only. The Mamalahoa Highway Waterline Improvements Project was described and covered in a separate environmental assessment and FONSI issued in 2004).

Approximately 40,000 to 50,000 residents on the Island of Hawaii presently use water catchment systems for their household water supply, and must go outside of their homes to acquire potable water. Many of these persons obtain their drinking water from public water spigot facilities provided by the DWS. Currently, there are fifteen (15) spigot locations. Many of the existing spigots are placed in areas that are unsafe (close to high speed roadways), are in need of maintenance, lack adequate vehicle parking and Americans with Disability Act (ADA) access. The County has identified the greatest need for improvements and/or additional spigot locations in the Puna, Kau and South Kona Districts of the Island of Hawaii. This proposed Project will allow the DWS to construct or improve six (6) new or upgrade existing spigot facilities at various locations around the island. These installations will allow for safer and improved access to potable water for persons living in communities which predominantly or exclusively use rainwater catchment systems.

The alternatives considered to the proposed project include:

1. No action – would preclude all impacts, short and long term, beneficial and adverse, described in the EA. This alternative would not address the need for safer and improved access to potable water.
2. Expansion of County public water system to cover all residents of the island of Hawaii. This is not considered financially possible at this time.
3. Construction of six safe, accessible, sanitary water spigot sites to improve access for persons without current access to potable water. This is the preferred alternative.

Copies of the draft Environmental Assessment and the unsigned FONSI are currently available for review at the following locations:

Holualoa Public Library, Kailua-Kona Public Library, Keauhou Public & School Library, Kealahou Public Library, Laupahoehoe Public & School Library, Mountain View Public & School Library, Naalehu Public Library, Pahoa Public & School Library, Department of Water Supply (Hilo) and Office of Environmental Quality Control (Honolulu).

Public meetings will be held with representatives from the County, DWS, and the State Department of Health to discuss the draft EA and unsigned FONSI. The meetings will be held:

Yano Hall	Thursday, March 9, 2006	6:00 p.m.
Naalehu Elementary School	Friday, March 10, 2006	6:00 p.m.
Nanawale Community Center	Wednesday, March 15, 2006	6:00 p.m.

Any person interested in commenting on this proposed project EA or unsigned FONSI should submit comments to the following EPA address by mail, fax or email, no later than March 27, 2006:

United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, California 94105
Attention: Barry Pollock, WTR-6

Phone: 415-972-3563 fax: 415-947-3549 email: pollock.barry@epa.gov