

BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
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December 15, 2021

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The Honorable Tommy Waters
Chair and Presiding Officer
and Members
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Waters and Councilmembers:

**Subject: City Council Resolution No. 21-276: – Urging the Permanent Removal
and Relocation of the U.S. Navy Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility
Underground Storage Tanks**

The Honolulu Board of Water Supply (BWS) strongly supports City Council Resolution No. 21-276. The resolution is a statement affirming the City Council's commitment to preserving and protecting our irreplaceable drinking water resources by urging the permanent removal and relocation of the U.S. Navy Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility (Red Hill) underground storage tanks.

As indicated in the resolution, the Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu Article II, Section 2-102 states:

"All city powers shall be used to serve and advance the general welfare, safety and aspirations of its inhabitants in a sustainable manner and promote stewardship of natural resources for present and future generations."

Red Hill stores over 180 million gallons of fuel in World War II vintage single-walled underground storage tanks (USTs) just 100 feet above a high-quality sole source groundwater aquifer. Navy documents have revealed of at least 72 leaks from the Red Hill fuel facility. These leaks have continued and pose a significant threat to our water source and the community at large. It is clear to the BWS that the risks associated with storing enormous amounts of fuel directly above our drinking water cannot be sufficiently mitigated by simply continuing the status quo of cleaning, inspecting, and repairing these aging single-walled tanks.

For the past eight years, the BWS has long called for the relocation of these USTs that store enormous volumes of fuel directly above our sole source aquifer; the alternative is

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to provide for secondary containment tank-within-a-tank. The U.S. Navy has determined these options infeasible.

The BWS believes the 20 fuel tanks at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility (Red Hill) continue to pose a serious threat to Oahu's aquifer. The recent petroleum contamination from the Red Hill drinking water well and the health threat it poses to the military residents is another example of what could happen to Oahu's community at large. BWS believes the best solution for now is for the Navy to comply with the Director of Health's Emergency Order to remove the fuel from Red Hill facility immediately. These aging tanks are a major threat to Oahu's aquifer and fuel contamination to our aquifer would not likely be salvageable.

Unfortunately, in late November 2021, many military families living at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam that are served by the Navy's water system reported that their potable water smelled of fuel and complained of skin rashes, headaches, vomiting and other illnesses affecting families. Initially, Navy officials stated publicly the water was safe to drink before investigating the matter. Water samples were taken by the Hawaii Department of Health and a preliminary testing by the University of Hawaii showed petroleum in the water sample. The Navy's water samples tested in California confirmed the water was tainted. The lack of transparency and accountability is worrisome.

The need to protect groundwater quality and quantity now and into the future outweighs the continued operation of these large field-constructed underground storage fuel tanks at Red Hill. The fuel in the tanks and pipelines should be removed immediately!

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of Resolution No. 21-276.

Very truly yours,


ERNEST Y. W. LAU, P.E.
Manager and Chief Engineer