

Environmental Assessment for Waiahi Hydropower Plants Published for Review and Comment

Līhu'e, Kaua'i, HI – 10/08/2019 – A draft environmental assessment (EA) in support of Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative's application for a long-term water lease for its Waiahi hydropower plants has been published by the State of Hawai'i Office of Environmental Quality Control (OEQC). The public will have 30 days from the date of publication to comment on the document.

“This is an important milestone in the lease application process,” stated KIUC's President and Chief Executive Officer, David Bissell. “We hope members of the public and other interested parties will take the time to review the document and provide comments by the deadline of November 7.”

KIUC uses water from diversions at North Fork Wailua and Waikoko Stream, collectively referred to as the “Blue Hole Diversion,” to produce electricity from its Waiahi hydropower plants. The Upper and Lower Waiahi plants have been in operation for nearly 100 years. Use of power from these hydro facilities allows the utility to avoid burning 675,000 gallons of diesel a year, and are among the cooperative's lowest cost sources of electricity: saving members an estimated \$1.7 million dollars a year when operating at full capacity.

KIUC has been using water from the Blue Hole Diversion since the cooperative was formed in 2002 via a revocable permit issued annually by the Board of Land and Natural Resources. In 2004, the cooperative applied for a long-term lease.

“We have done extensive studies, resolved a contested case filing, restored stream flow and have collaborated with numerous agencies at the local, state and federal level over the past 15 years in pursuit of the lease,” stated Bissell. He noted that while the state still has not fully defined the process and timeline for issuing water leases, he is hopeful that action on the EA can be taken prior to the end of 2019.

The EA document includes cultural, flora and fauna and socio-economic studies. It can be accessed on the OEQC website, <https://health.hawaii.gov/oeqc/>, in the latest edition of “The Environmental Notice.”

More information on the Waiahi hydros can be found in the “Renewables” section of KIUC's website: www.kiuc.coop.

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The Lower Waiahi hydro plant generates power and returns water to Waiahi stream

Water flows past the spillway of
the North Fork Wailua diversion
structure in January 2019

