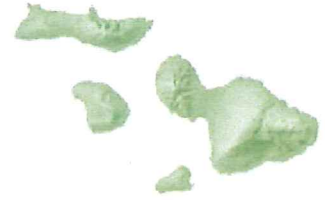
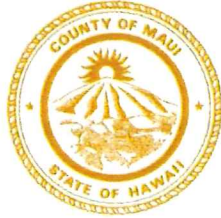


MICHAEL P. VICTORINO  
Mayor

JEFFREY T. PEARSON, P.E.  
Director

HELENE KAU  
Deputy Director



DEPARTMENT OF WATER SUPPLY  
COUNTY OF MAUI  
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET  
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793  
<https://www.mauicounty.gov/water>

January 25, 2022

Via E-mail and U.S. Mail  
[dsheehan105@gmail.com](mailto:dsheehan105@gmail.com)

Kula Community Association Board  
c/o Mr. Douglas Sheehan, Secretary  
P.O. Box 417  
Kula, HI 96790

Dear Kula Community Association Board:

SUBJECT: KONA LOW STORM AND WATER QUALITY

We have received your January 12, 2022 letter and understand your community's frustrations and concerns. We are doing our utmost to resolve these matters. The following are responses to your specific concerns:

In this emergency situation the initial communication via a press release from the DWS regarding the loss of water and the need to boil water did not reach most of those affected.

**Response:** The initial communication of the Boil Water Advisory notice occurred on December 16, 2021. Initially, the press release was originated from the DWS and sent to the communications office for release. The press release was distributed to Media partners (Maui News, websites such as mauiNOW.com and Maui 24/7), for wide release in addition to being put on the county website and social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram.

**Actions Taken for Improvement:** At the time the DWS did not have access to update its website and had to submit requests through the IT department which delayed the process of information dissemination. To improve information flow, DWS has received approval to update information on its website and has been doing so daily in addition to the above-mentioned information outlets.

*By Water All Things Find Life*

Consequently, many were drinking water that was below EPA standards. Then we were informed the water was okay. Then the press release reversed that saying to continue to boil water but further down in the same press release stated that if service was not lost the water was okay. Then that changed and some additional residents learned they did need to boil water.

**Response:** Out of an abundance of caution, the DWS cast a wide net over the area of Upper Kula in its initial Boil Water Advisory notice. As the water quality sampling test results were taken daily, information was updated. Areas that were initially not on the list were added and areas that were on the list came off. Initially, the department relied on flushing the system as the best course of action to eliminate *E.coli*.

**Actions Taken for Improvement:** Information released is based upon information provided. As the DWS learned more about what was occurring, press releases were updated. Due to the influx of consumer phone calls concerning the confusion over if they never lost water service they were safe, evidence suggested that this was not the case. Although the storm on 12/5 -12/6 produced wide swaths of water service outages, some services remained intact even services in the boil water advisory areas, so to eliminate confusion the line was removed, because the general statement was no longer accurate.

The continued flushing of the system resulted in debris being dislodged and displaced and travelling to new areas. Water quality sampling test results indicated positive test results at test sampling sites that were previously negative. Information will continue to change as locations are updated and procedures are implemented to eliminate *E. coli* in the system.

Steps the DWS has taken to eradicate *E. coli* in the Upper Kula distribution system include:

- Increased flushing/continual flushing
- Switching disinfectant from chloramines to chlorine
- The disassembling, cleaning, disinfection and reinstallation/replacement of equipment such as pressure-reducing valves (PRVs), standpipes and fire hydrants

Calls to the number in the press release and emails have gone unanswered or when answered just repeated what was in the press release.

**Response:** The DWS has received thousands of phone calls since the boil water advisory went into effect. The DWS does its best to answer phone calls or return phone calls in a timely manner. As to responding with what is in the press release. The fact that we do not deter from the public message is not a bad thing.

**Actions Taken for Improvement:** The DWS has made strides to provide information to the public and listens to consumer complaints

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Examples include:

**Complaint:** Consumers complained of no maps of affected areas.

**Action:** Maps are provided on the county home page and DWS main page which are updated daily.

**Complaint:** Consumers do not know if it is safe to drink, shower, wash dishes etc.

**Action:** DWS took the most frequently asked questions and developed an FAQ section on the county main page and DWS main page.

**Complaint:** Consumers complained that website was not updated daily.

**Action:** Internal process changed to decrease wait time for information. Now, information is provided daily.

**Complaint:** Consumers are not notified of updates.

**Action:** The county has a notification system in which people that sign up to receive notifications through newsflashes can receive them via email or text message. The DWS updates their newsflash daily.

**Action:** DWS personnel that are sampling and flushing lines communicate with those in the area. Answering questions and concerns.

**Action:** Multiple contact information on press releases have been provided to include DWS PR Officer, Lab telephone number, the 24-hour service line number and the EPA Safe Drinking Water hotline.

Our Department of Health did not know what to tell us.

**Response:** The DWS cannot speculate what the Department of Health knows or does not know or how they chose to respond.

**Actions Taken for Improvement:** None.

In an emergency situation, the community requires timely, frequent, comprehensive and accurate information that is not transmitted only by press releases. If it is not safe to drink the water, we cannot rely on people reading a limited circulation paper to find this out. This is especially true when dealing with such lethal organisms as *E. coli*.

**Response:** Agreed. However, as the above-mentioned pages have indicated, the DWS does not solely rely on people reading a limited circulation paper. In fact, the DWS has shown numerous ways in which it disseminates information.

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**Actions Taken for Improvement:** The DWS has made and continues to make improvements in communications with the public. The DWS is in the process of developing a Communications Plan.

In response to your second area of concern regarding the status of the Upper Kula System:

**Response:** DWS and the Administration are also very concerned about the status of the Upper Kula water infrastructure. The Mayor's proposed budget for fiscal 2023 requests up to \$5 million for design and repair of damaged gulch crossings in the Upper Kula system.


The final area of concern involves the January 10, 2022 switch to chlorine:

**Response:** The Department of Water Supply has utilized chloramines in the Upper Kula system for decades. We believed this disinfectant was able to remove *E. coli* from the system after the Kona Low storm in December 2021. After multiple samples and continued re-sampling, it became evident that the chloramines were not effectively removing the *E. coli* in the system. DWS needed a week's time to notify DOH of the switch of water source and change to chlorine for a large portion of Upper Kula (Omaopio to Kanaio). This process included testing and flushing of booster pumps and the pump line to Omaopio Tank; reducing Upper Kula tank levels; and preparing Piiholo Water Treatment Facility, Kamole Water Treatment Facility, and Pookela Well for boosting and supplying water to Upper Kula.

After the injection of chlorine at our Omaopio Tank, it takes time for the chlorine to flush out chloramines and pass through the water system. It takes time for the chlorine to reach the far areas of the system and this process is usually hastened by increased system use and flushing. DWS has increased flushing until we could see the disinfection change at the end of the system. Reduced consumer use has resulted in this process taking longer than usual.

The Department looks forward to working with the Kula Community Association Board to address your concerns, improve system reliability, and deliver safe drinking water to Upper Kula.

Sincerely,



JEFFREY T. PEARSON, P.E.  
Director