

Clean Water for Reefs in Puakō, Hawai‘i

Project Fact Sheet

Through the Clean Water for Reefs program, the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) is working in Maui, Kauai, and Roatan, Honduras to address water quality issues facing coral reefs. CORAL is excited to partner with the Puakō community to bring this program to Puakō, Hawai‘i.

THE ISSUE: Poor water quality is posing a threat to human health and coral reefs in Puakō, some of the most ecologically important reefs in Hawai‘i.

- Residential sewage is leaking into the marine environment from cesspools and faulty septic tanks without being properly treated, according to recent studies by the University of Hawai‘i.
- It brings high levels of bacteria and other pathogens that contribute to human health issues and bacterial infections.
- It brings high levels of nutrients and pharmaceutical drugs and toxins from household cleaners that threaten coral reefs.
- Live coral cover was reduced by 50% in Puakō between 1970 and 2010.
- The area has been declared a priority site for protection by several state and federal agencies.

THE SOLUTION: Replacing ineffective wastewater treatment systems with better technology can help reduce this threat.

- We are exploring improved wastewater treatment options available to the Puakō community.
- These options can be divided into:
 - Individual Treatment Units (ITUs): installed in households to treat wastewater onsite.
 - Centralized treatment system: involves piping wastewater to a nearby treatment facility or plant, such as the Kalahuipua‘a Lagoons Facility.
- The ultimate goal is to choose an option that is the most financially feasible, the most suitable for the community, and the best outcome for coral reefs.

THE TEAM : CORAL is leading this project, working closely with the Puakō community, the University of Hawai‘i Hilo, The Nature Conservancy, and the South Kohala Coastal Partnership.

- CORAL has established the Clean Water for Reefs in Puakō Advisory Committee—comprising experts and representatives from county regulatory bodies, academia, and the Puakō community, as well as from the construction, civil engineering, and non-profit sectors—to contribute to the planning and execution of the project.
- Those interested in contributing to this project should contact Erica Perez from CORAL.

For more information:

www.coral.org/Puako

Erica Perez • eperez@coral.org • 808.494.5770



CORAL REEF ALLIANCE