

Statement on exemption of Hawai'i from secondary treatment of wastewaters discharged deep into ocean

Senator Hiram L. Fong Papers

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Statement on Exemption of Hawaii from
Secondary Treatment of Wastewaters
Discharged Deep into Ocean
By Senator Hiram L. Fong
Hearing by Senate Subcommittee on Environmental Pollution
Honolulu, Hawaii
March 18, 1974

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

We in Hawaii welcome your interest in Hawaii's efforts to comply with the spirit and intent of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, particularly as amended in 1972 by Public Law 92-500.

Thank you for making time in your busy schedules to journey so many thousands of miles to hear testimony on Hawaii's problems with the Act's requirement that municipal sewage wastewater facilities must receive secondary treatment by July 1, 1977.

Before proceeding further with my brief statement, I want to assure the Subcommittee that Hawaii agrees fully with the purpose of our national clean water program. We agree that our waters should be cleaned up where raw sewage is now being dumped into it. Our people have demonstrated their support for the clean-up efforts -- not just in words, but in dollars, which have been appropriated by our State Legislature and our County Councils to get on with the job. Hawaii's State Legislature has to date appro-

priated \$40.3 million for water pollution control projects. Our Counties have appropriated a total of \$10 million and, in addition, have pledged their full share will be available when construction requires it.

As a former member of the Senate Public Works Committee, where it was my privilege to participate in drafting the earlier water quality and clean air statutes, my commitment to clean water and clean air remains as firm as ever.

It is easy enough to agree upon the goals of clean water and clean air. It is when we get to such questions as "How clean is clean?" and "What are the deadlines for achieving the various degrees of clean?" and "How much will it cost, not only in dollars, but in resources?" that we run into differences, as this Subcommittee knows only too well, having wrestled long and diligently with these questions on a national scale.

This Subcommittee also knows well the many difficulties involved in setting national standards that are valid and attainable in all areas of these very diverse 50 States and of our U. S. territories. What may be appropriate for the Potomac River may not be appropriate at all for Mamala Bay or Kaneohe Bay here in Hawaii.

Yet, as far as we in Hawaii can ascertain, there is no flexibility whatever in the statute - Public Law 92-500 - and therefore no flexibility in administration of the secondary treatment requirements of the 1972 Water Pollution Control Act amendments.

While we in Hawaii are preparing to build secondary treatment facilities in many areas of the State, we believe that secondary treatment in the Mamala Bay area of Oahu is unwarranted for the following reasons:

- . . . It would be wasteful of both Hawaii and Federal tax dollars.
- . . . It would be costly in terms of use of Oahu's critically limited land.
- . . . It would be a heavy but needless drain on electric power supplies in energy-poor Hawaii, where every drop of fuel must be imported.
- . . . It would actually be detrimental to the environmental waters of Mamala Bay.

The cost of constructing secondary treatment works at the Sand Island and Honouliuli waste water facilities would total \$46 million. These dollars could be better spent to move ahead sooner on other high priority sewage treatment works in Hawaii.

In addition, operating costs would increase to the tune of \$1,450,000 annually at these two sites on Mamala Bay -- and that doesn't include the cost of energy to run the secondary treatment equipment.

Secondary treatment at Sand Island would require an additional 15 acres of land. On Oahu, where land sells by the square foot, 15 acres is important, particularly as this land would have to come from a park long sought by residents of downtown Honolulu.

Going to secondary treatment at the two sewage treatment works in Mamala Bay would require approximately 28,000,000 additional kilowatt hours per year, more than double the amount of electrical power required for the advanced primary-deep water outfall system which Hawaii is recommending. Secondary treatment would force a needless drain of 47,000 barrels of oil from Hawaii's already-short supplies of fuel oil, every drop of which must be imported. No one knows better than our Subcommittee Chairman, the senior Senator from Maine, what it means for a State to have no oil resources within its boundaries.

Finally, according to studies made of the deep ocean waters of Mamala Bay, we believe secondary treatment will not be beneficial to the marine environment, but on the contrary is likely to be detrimental. To understand why this is so, it is necessary to know something of the deep ocean waters into which

advance primary effluent would be pumped through a long outfall and then scattered through diffuser ports at depths of several hundred feet.

Marine scientists liken the present ocean environment to a desert, not for lack of water obviously, but for lack of nutrients to sustain life in this ocean area. These scientists believe that it is possible to stimulate ecologic production of zooplankton by utilizing properly treated municipal wastes. Zooplankton is a basic link in the food chain of marine life. With zooplankton in Mamala Bay, it is believed production of marketable fish for the people of Hawaii would be possible.

For all these reasons, we in Hawaii are advocating a measure of flexibility in the secondary treatment provisions of Section 301 (b) (1) (B) and 301 (b) (2) (B).

Of course, the burden is on us to provide the technical and scientific data to justify a change in the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. I point out that, even if the language to be proposed today by Acting Governor George R. Ariyoshi should be acceptable to the Subcommittee and, subsequently, to the Congress, it will still be necessary for Hawaii to justify to the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency any request to bypass the 1977 secondary treatment requirement in any area of Hawaii while we proceed to the 1983 standard of

best practicable technology.

We believe there are valid scientific and environmental grounds for not requiring secondary treatment where the ocean environment and water circulation pattern are favorable for safe discharge of advance-primary-treated wastes at sufficient depth. I trust the testimony you receive today will substantiate Hawaii's case in those few instances where we propose secondary treatment exemption in these islands, surrounded as we are by 25 to 50 million cubic feet of deep ocean.

We hope that, as a result of these hearings, we can enlist the support of this Subcommittee in finding a way out of the very real financial, energy, and ecological dilemma Hawaii faces.

As the ranking Minority Member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture-Environmental and Consumer Protection, I am acutely aware of the pressing financial needs for construction of sewage treatment facilities. Because our Federal, State, and local dollars must stretch so very far, we must be all the more alert to those areas where

we can save these dollars.

In the particular Hawaii situation at Mamala Bay which will be described in greater detail by other witnesses, some \$46 million could be saved in construction costs and nearly \$1-1/2 million in annual operating costs -- in addition to saving 47,000 barrels of oil per year -- and all this without jeopardizing in the least Hawaii's progress towards compliance with the Federal Water Pollution Control Act goals of 1983. All we ask, is the flexibility to do the job in the way that is most economical in dollars and in resources and most sound in terms of ecology.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to testify on this matter of such importance to the people of Hawaii.

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