

HCPT Overlay Project – O‘ahu Coordination Meeting Summary

Date: October 14

Context: Virtual coordination meeting held via Zoom between the University of Hawai‘i Water Resources Research Center (UH WRRC) and the City & County of Honolulu Department of Environmental Services (ENV).

Participants included:

- **UH WRRC:** Chris Shuler (Project Lead – HCPT & OSDS Inventory), Aimee Schriber, Robert Litt
- **C&C Honolulu ENV:** Paul Christiansen (Civil Engineer, Planning & Programs), Daniel (Deputy Director), Lisa (Planning Division – referenced, not present), and Roger Babcock (ENV Director)
The meeting occurred during an ongoing legislative cycle related to Act 217 implementation and in advance of a planned legislative briefing with Speaker Nakamura and Rep. Lowen.
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Purpose of Meeting

The meeting was convened to:

- Coordinate HCPT wastewater overlay methods with O‘ahu ENV
- Validate potential sewer expansion “project areas” and cluster outputs
- Review data alignment needs between UH WRRC, ENV, and Carollo Engineers
- Discuss terminology for public-facing communication to avoid misinterpretation
- Prepare UH WRRC ahead of legislative briefings regarding Act 217 deliverables

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Key Narratives and Findings

1. Project Scope & Goals

The HCPT wastewater overlay update is mandated under **Act 217**, requiring UH WRRC to identify and display on a public tool “**the most feasible areas for centralized wastewater upgrades to cesspools.**”

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Key scope points discussed:

- The original Hawai'i Cesspool Prioritization Tool (2021) is being expanded with a wastewater overlay.
- Legislators set an aggressive timeline (~9 months), though statutory deadline is **June 30, 2026**.
- Findings must feed into both:
 - **The public-facing HCPT web map**, and
 - **A formal report** intended for legislative decision-making.
- UH WRRC is simultaneously performing a major **OSDS inventory cleanup** to fix inaccurate cesspool locations and add missing ones.
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- A central intent of the update is helping homeowners answer:
“Will a sewer ever come to my neighborhood, or must I upgrade individually by 2050?” (as highlighted by Roger).
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2. Data Coordination

Several layers of data integration were reviewed:

Cluster / Project Area Logic

- UH WRRC used an algorithmic density-based approach mimicking Carollo's threshold:

- **≥50 cesspools within 1/8 mile** (Carollo's "project area" standard).
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- Local clusters were sometimes merged where density was contiguous. UH acknowledged that Carollo applied more manual engineering judgment.
- Areas that failed the threshold (e.g., portions of Pupukea) do **not** appear as clusters.
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Proximity to Existing Infrastructure

- Carollo advised using **2-mile proximity** to existing sewer systems as a preliminary threshold for "centralized feasibility."
- UH adopted this while noting cost and plant capacity must ultimately override distance.
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CIP, TFP, and County Project Data

- Counties instructed UH early in the project to rely heavily on **Six-Year CIPs** and existing plans to categorize projects.
- However, across counties, CIP and TFP formats proved inconsistent, requiring a custom "rubric" to harmonize project status categories (A1–A4, D categories).
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- UH requested ENV's help validating whether project areas:
 - Are missing,
 - Are mis-categorized, or
 - Require updated shapefiles (e.g., Waimānalo beach lots).
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Carollo's Data

Topics included:

- Carollo has already delineated project areas for O'ahu and created **GIS cost models** (cost per linear foot of mains/laterals).
- These cost estimates are relatively objective and “not likely to change.”
- UH stressed the need for ENV help to secure permission for Carollo to share:
 1. **Project area polygons**
 2. **Cost estimates**
 3. **Plant capacity + existing flow data**
for integration into the statewide HCPT map.

OSDS Inventory Revision

- UH is performing deep-clean reconciliation of cesspool locations, removing false positives in sewered neighborhoods and rectifying older inventory errors.
- Private system service areas required “brute force” extraction from PUC PDFs due to lack of accessible digital records.
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3. Terminology & Communication

Key concerns from ENV centered on **public misinterpretation**:

- **“Feasible” is problematic**—homeowners may incorrectly assume sewer service is planned or imminent, causing them to delay conversion.
- **Carollo’s feasibility** simply means *physically possible*, not economically or politically realistic.
- UH is working to craft **uniform statewide messaging** that:
 - Avoids implying county commitment
 - Explains cost realities
 - Distinguishes engineering feasibility from planned policy actions

- Emphasizes decentralization + IWS upgrades where no sewer is expected
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- Roger emphasized the tool must clearly show when **no SID or sewer expansion is under consideration** so homeowners understand they remain responsible for upgrades.
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- UH committed to adding narrative disclaimers and refining language based on county feedback.

4. County / Project-Specific Details

Area / Project	Status / Notes	Cost / Constraints
'Ewa Beach (SID underway)	Identified as active construction/planning (A1/A2 type). UH's output matches ENV understanding.	Costs high; to be refined once Carollo shares cost models.
Multiple North Shore clusters	Visible in HCPT due to density algorithm, not because ENV has SID plans. ENV warns these areas appear misleading to the public.	No county plans; would require homeowner-initiated or private system development.
Pupukea / Waimea fringes	Fail density test; excluded by HCPT cluster tool. Carollo might include based on engineering rationale.	No SID planned; topography + distance increase costs.
Urban Core pockets (small cesspools)	UH identified residual cesspools inside already sewered areas (1–2 units). Requires OSDS cleanup.	Expected to be resolved by parcel-level corrections; not suitable standalone project areas.
Private System Areas	Service areas incomplete; UH manually digitizing PUC filings.	Costs and capacity vary widely; needs Carollo + county validation.
Potential missing areas (e.g., Waimānalo Beach lots)	UH requested updated shapefiles from ENV (Lisa) to integrate.	To be recalculated with cost modeling once polygons received.

5. Cross-County / Coordination Issues

- Carollo's **Big Island data is being held tightly** due to the County of Hawai'i's contract structure; EPA-funded work for other counties is more shareable.
- All four counties have expressed discomfort about public-facing feasibility labels and the political consequences of implying commitments.
- UH is mediating between counties, Carollo, and EPA to ensure **standardized project areas and cost layers statewide**—avoiding contradictory outputs between Carollo's integrated wastewater plans and the HCPT overlay.
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- Timing pressure exists: legislators expect a near-term demonstration of progress and a larger “lawmakers’ education session” is forthcoming.
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6. Next Actions

UH WRRC

- Incorporate ENV feedback into cluster/project area updates.
- Add narrative disclaimers and refine “feasible” terminology.
- Continue OSDS inventory cleanup.
- Attempt to harmonize HCPT project areas with Carollo once data is accessible.
- Prepare materials for legislative briefing with Speaker Nakamura & Rep. Lowen.

City & County of Honolulu (ENV)

- Review UH's project area list/spreadsheet for accuracy and identify any missing or mis-categorized regions.
- Provide shapefiles for known project areas not captured in UH's algorithm (e.g., Waimānalo).
- Coordinate internally regarding possible release of Carollo project areas and cost data.

- Clarify messaging preferences for public-facing HCPT descriptions.

Carollo Engineers

- Pending county approval, share:
 - Project area polygons
 - Cost models (linear-foot estimates)
 - Plant capacity + existing flow data
- Align statewide project area naming and boundaries with UH for consistency.

Legislators / Policy Stakeholders

- Receive UH update (October 17 pre-meeting)
 - Prepare for larger statewide legislative session on Act 217 progress
 - Provide guidance on public communication needs
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Core Takeaways

The meeting established strong alignment between UH WRRC and Honolulu ENV regarding the need for standardized project areas, consistent cost communication, and careful terminology to avoid misinforming the public. While cluster identification is technically sound, ENV emphasized that density-based outputs should not imply county commitments. A major dependency remains: access to Carollo's project areas, cost estimates, and plant capacity information, which is essential for statewide harmonization. Both sides committed to continued coordination ahead of UH's legislative briefing, with the shared goal of producing a transparent, accurate, and politically responsible wastewater overlay.