

**Honolulu Board of Water Supply**  
**Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting 43**  
Thursday, July 21, 2022, 4:00 – 6:00 pm  
Virtual Meeting

Draft Meeting Notes

**PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF MEETING NOTES**

The purpose of these notes is to provide an overview of the Board of Water Supply (BWS) Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting. They are not intended as a transcript or as minutes. Major points of the presentations are summarized herein, primarily for context. Copies of presentation materials were provided to all participants and are available on the BWS website. Participants made many comments and asked many questions during the meeting. These are paraphrased to be more concise.

**ATTENDEES**

This was a virtual meeting in which 14 stakeholders participated on-line and/or by phone, in addition to BWS staff, consultants and members of the public. The stakeholders represent diverse interests and communities island wide.

The following Stakeholders Advisory Group members participated:

Bill Clark	Resident of Council District 6
Mark Fox	Environmental
Markus Krebs	Outrigger Reef Hotel
Bob Leinau	Resident of Council District 2
Helen Nakano	Resident of Council District 5
Dean Okimoto	Nalo Farms, Inc.
Christine Olah	AARP Hawaii
Elizabeth Reilly	Resident of Council District 4
John Reppun	KEY Project
Cynthia Rezentes	Resident of Council District 1
Alison Richardson	Coca-Cola Co.
Walter Thoemmes	Kamehameha Schools
Cruz Vina Jr.	Resident of Council District 8
Cheryl Walthall	General Contractors Association of Hawaii

**WELCOME**

Facilitator Dave Ebersold welcomed everyone to the 43rd meeting of the BWS Stakeholder Advisory Group.

Meeting objectives were identified as:

- Discuss Mohala I Ka Wai
- Accept notes from meeting #42
- Receive Update on BWS Water Conservation Program
- Discuss results of 2021 BWS Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Receive BWS Updates

## WATER CONSERVATION UPDATES

Dave introduced Steven Norstrom, Information Specialist with the BWS Communications Office, to provide an update on water conservation efforts.

Steven started his presentation by sharing the BWS's 7 tips to conserve water. These are the big water-saving tips that resonate with customers most and are featured in all the BWS's conservation initiatives, such as:

- Hawaii News Now Water Wisdom Wednesdays: A weekly television segment that shares information on operational initiatives BWS is undertaking in response to the Red Hill contamination issue.
- Waiwai E-newsletter: Provides timely and valuable updates on operational actions BWS's is taking in response to Red Hill.
- ProtectOahuWater.org: Website with pumpage data, additional water conservation information, and more.

These water conservation resources are shared with a wide variety of key stakeholders across the island.

Steven highlighted several social media contests and events BWS participates in every year, including World Water Day in March, Detect-A-Leak Week in April, and Imagine-A-Day-Without Water in October. He also shared examples of various water conservation-related messaging BWS posts on its social media platforms.

Steven provided an overview of the BWS's WaterSensible Program that offers rebates and water-saving incentives to residential and commercial customers.

- Commercial customers can apply for rebates on water-efficient commercial kitchen, plumbing and landscaping products.
- Food Service customers can request a Water Audit, install high-efficiency spray nozzles and/or display table tent cards that advise water will be served upon request.
- Residential customers can apply for rebates on water and energy saving clothes washers, rain barrels or weather-based irrigation controllers.

Each of these offerings help customers save water and money. Instructions, eligibility, and applications for these incentives are available at [www.boardofwatersupply.com/rebates](http://www.boardofwatersupply.com/rebates).

Steven highlighted the BWS's WaterSmart program, where customers can sign up to receive detailed information on their water use and personalized recommendations for using water more efficiently. He also shared screenshots of the BWS's Water Sensible Monthly Dashboard, which provides the BWS with data on the effectiveness of the residential and commercial programs.

In addition to working with single-family homes and businesses, the BWS launched a Water Wisdom Large Condominium Program that provides residents and building managers a free comprehensive

toolkit to help them to save water. These toolkits help educate a large segment of customers that use water but may not directly pay a water bill. The BWS also is a partner in the State of Hawaii's Green Business Program that assists and recognizes businesses that strive to operate in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. In 2020, BWS was honored as a Hawaii Green Business Program awardee.

This concluded Steven's presentation on Water Conservation Efforts. Dave opened the floor for questions and further discussion.

Q: With tourism bouncing back to pre-covid levels, how do water consumption levels compare now to when hotels were less occupied?

A: BWS Information Officer Kathleen Elliott-Pahinui explained that there was not a huge drop in water usage because the bulk of the water usage is by residents, not tourists. However, BWS is doing aggressive marketing and outreach to remind visitors to conserve water.

Dave shared that ongoing analysis of water usage during the global pandemic found that island-wide water demand remained the same. Decreased usage by non-residential customers was offset by increases in water use by single family residential customers since more people stayed home.

Q: Can BWS do anything to remind restaurants to only serve water upon request and to not constantly refill glasses of water, which wastes gallons of water every day.

A: Kathleen shared that BWS did meet with the Hawaii Restaurant Association to remind restaurants to serve water only upon request. She also stated that, as a customer, you can tell your server that water refills are not needed.

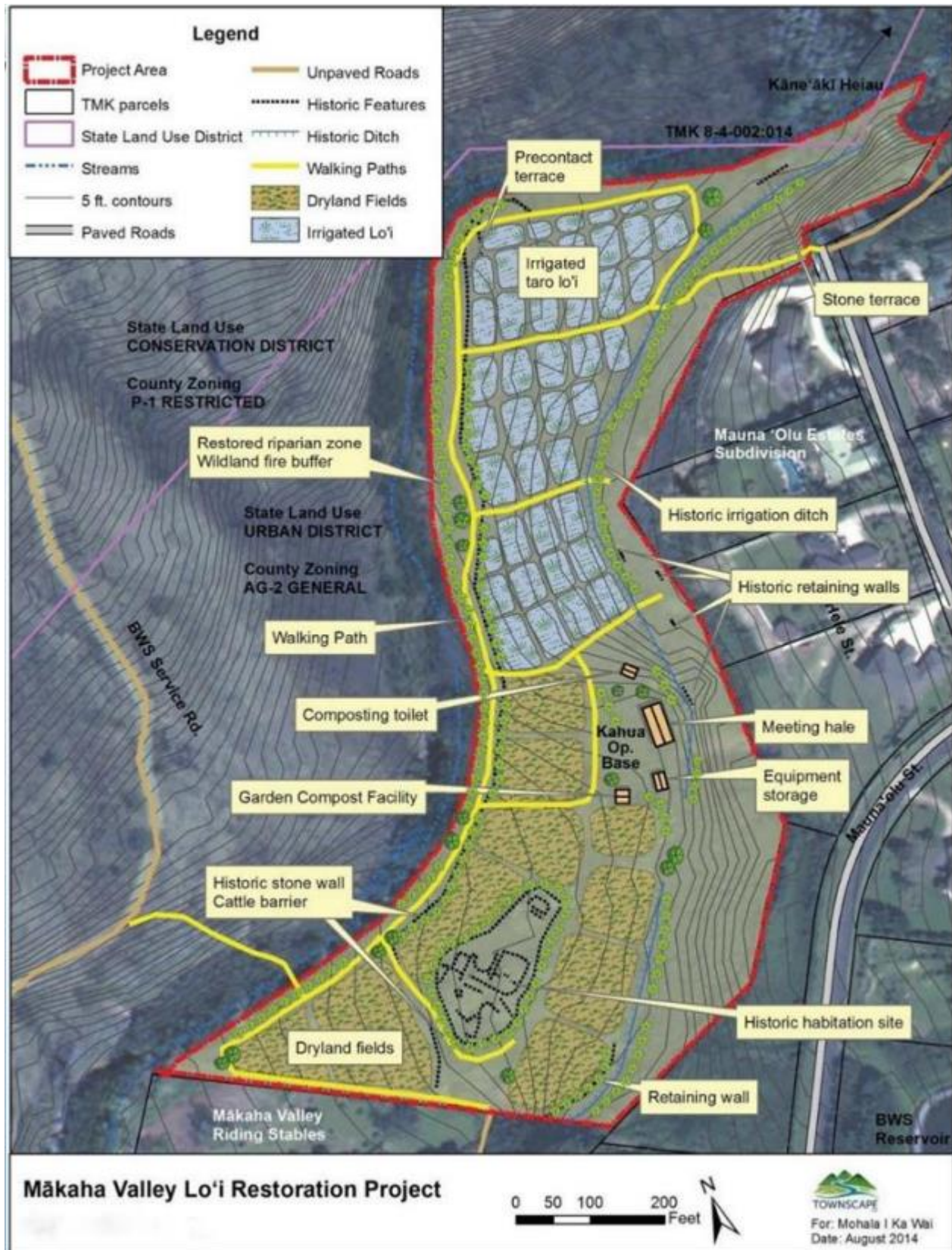
BWS Manager and Chief Engineer Ernest Lau commented that customers can file a report with BWS staff, and we will follow up with the restaurant.

COMMENT: A suggestion was made to collaborate with the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources to create an informative video providing guidelines on how to care for fruit trees and other plants while being water efficient.

## **MOHALA I KA WAI**

Dave introduced Cynthia Rezentes, Mohala I Ka Wai Board Member and BWS Stakeholder Advisory Group Member, to provide an overview of watershed restoration efforts in Makaha Valley.

Mohala I Ka Wai has been in existence for 20+ years and has been a 501(c)(3) for over 10 years. Since 2006, Mohala I Ka Wai and BWS have discussed various projects on BWS lands in Makaha Valley. Presently, Mohala I Ka Wai has a Management Access contract for a project aimed at restoring 13 acres of BWS land in Makaha Valley for lo'i restoration and providing traditional resources for practitioners. Below is a screenshot of the project area and planned developments:



Much of the 13 acres is overgrown with Kiawe and Koa Haole trees and Molasses Grass. Their work has cleared 1-1.5 acres of land to prepare for planting.

Cynthia shared various photos of their restoration efforts, including:

- BWS Manager Ernest Lau helping with the first planting of kalo (taro) in the mala (dry land garden) back in January 2018.
- Volunteers cleaning a taro patch that became overgrown with weeds after heavy rains
- Ulu, Wauke, and Hala trees that will provide resources for cultural practitioners
- Various Banana trees (thai, langatan, apple banana, iholena), sugar cane and papaya trees for harvesting.

Cynthia shared an overview of the next steps for the Makaha Valley Lo'i Restoration Project, which include:

- Continuing the management agreement contract with the BWS from January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2031 (with 2 5-year extensions)
- Increasing outreach to schools and other organizations to access the area and learn about Makaha Valley and its resources
- Selecting and ground proofing a location for its Kahua Operational Base to include halau, composting toilets, storage container for equipment, etc.
- Eventually work with Cultural Surveys to determine how best to protect and provide access to cultural sites
- Working to establish another ingress/egress path to the property. Would like to work with new owner of Makaha Stables property for emergency ingress/egress access.

This concluded Cynthia's presentation on Mohala I Ka Wai. Dave opened the floor for questions and further discussion.

Q: Has anyone explored or researched traditional trails to the back acreage of Makaha Valley? These trails could be used by the project.

A: Cynthia stated that they are aware of traditional trails in the area. She walked those trails herself and there have been publications of the analysis of trails in the mid to upper valley. However, they are working within the specific management agreement area to establish soils to condition it to be turned into loi.

Q: Does the management plan include fire-wise practices?

A: They have not discussed specific fire-wise practices for the Mohala I Ka Wai management area. One of the challenges is since the property is at the bottom of a gulch, any fire on the higher slopes can spread down. However, they are working to manicure grass and minimize trees in the area to mitigate fire spread.

Q: What is the sugar cane used for?

A: Sugar cane, much like many other plants and fruit trees, were donated by residents and planted on the property. Over time, the property can become a resource for cultural practitioners to tap into.

COMMENT: Sugar cane can spread and become invasive if unchecked, but in this managed environment it should be ok.

COMMENT: A recommendation was made to grow more Ulu because it is an extremely productive and beneficial plant. Cynthia commented that they have two ma'afala ulu trees that have been on property for 3 years. They also planted more traditional ulu trees a few months ago. They also planted avocado and mountain apple trees that were donated. They are planting a variety of fruit that will produce at all times of the year. Once more of the 13 acres is cleared, they will have more space to provide more fruit trees and resources on the property.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

**ACCEPT MEETING 42 NOTES:** Accepted.

### 2021 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Dave introduced Becki Ward, President of Ward Research Incorporated, to give a presentation on her report on understanding resident perceptions of the BWS.

This customer satisfaction survey is the 4<sup>th</sup> wave of biannual tracking surveys which began in 2015. The mixed method survey involved 675 phone and online interviews that were conducted August 7, 2021 – September 1, 2021. It is important to note that the survey was conducted prior to the most recent Red Hill contamination events.

Becki noted several key takeaways from the survey, including:

- Overall satisfaction with the BWS decreased in some areas, particularly relating to affordability and fairness of water rates. This low level of satisfaction was more evident in non-bill-payers.
- Overall satisfaction with the BWS's ability to provide safe and dependable water remained strong and unchanged.
- There remains strong trust in the BWS as a source of information about freshwater issues, which is valuable as BWS continues to inform the community about impacts of fuel leaks at Red Hill.
- Participants responded positively to BWS conservation messages and behaviors.

Becki began sharing several graphs comparing results of BWS customer satisfaction surveys taken in 2015, 2017, 2109, and 2021. A synopsis of the results is found below:

- **Overall Satisfaction:** “Strong Satisfaction” with the BWS declined from 63% in 2019 to 58% in 2021. Becki noted that, in many areas throughout the data, the number of “Strong Satisfaction” ratings declined but the number of “Don’t Know” ratings increased. She also noted that lower levels of satisfaction was with Non-Bill Payers.
- **BWS Mission:** There was tremendous stability and satisfaction for the BWS's ability to provide safe and dependable water. Becki noted a steady decline in the BWS's ability to keep water rates affordable from 2017 until now. This lower level of satisfaction could reflect the COVID-19 experience and economic uncertainty when this survey was taken in August 2021.
- **Customer Service:** Just over half indicated Strong Satisfaction with overall customer service from the BWS. However, that number has been trending down when compared to previous surveys. Becki also noted that the number of respondents who rated “Don’t Know” increased significantly, which may reflect less interaction with BWS customer service during the pandemic.
- **Quality of Water:** Residents continued to express strong satisfaction with the quality and taste of water, as well as water pressure. Additionally, respondents continue to be strongly satisfied with the BWS's ability to protect, manage, and sustain water resources.
- **Delivery of Water Service:** Strong satisfaction with the BWS providing water to customers and

for having reliable service remained the same. Satisfaction with the BWS's response to trouble calls dropped off sharply, but the number of respondents who rated "Don't Know" increased sharply as well.

- **Water Delivery System:** Half are strongly satisfied with the job the BWS is doing with repairing, maintaining, and replacing Oahu's water delivery system.
- **Perceived Fairness of Water Rates:** The perceived fairness of water rates has been trending down since 2017.
- **Perceived Affordability of Water Service:** The perceived affordability of water service has decreased since 2017, particularly among billpayers.
- **Water Conservation:** Perceptions of the BWS's efforts to inform residents of how to conserve water and keep bills lower have been trending downward slightly, with less than half of respondents rating Strong Satisfaction.
- **Making Routine Changes to Conserve Water:** 56% of customers said they made changes in their daily routines to conserve water, with the majority saying they are taking shorter or fewer showers. This could be in response to BWS's recent commercials and communications to customers.
- **Responsibility in Water Conservation:** This was a new question added in 2021. The results show that residents understand that we all share responsibility for conserving water, but the BWS shoulders a greater responsibility from a resident perspective.
- **Awareness of BWS Programs and Activities:** Awareness of BWS activities & programs relating to water conservation increased. However, awareness of activities & programs relating to water system repair and maintenance, watershed protection, school programs, and water recycling all decreased.
- **Trusted Sources of Information about Freshwater Issues:** There was strong trust in scientists and BWS to provide honest and accurate information about freshwater issues. Low trust in the State Department of Health increased, while business leader and elected officials continue to be the least trusted sources of information about freshwater issues.

Becki shared data on the bill paying status, age, ethnicity, household size, household income, and gender of the respondent pool. The people interviewed matches the profile of the of our population demographically.

This concluded Becki's presentation on the 2021 Customer Satisfaction Survey. Dave opened the floor for questions and further discussion.

COMMENT: Dissatisfaction about the fairness of water rates could be attributed to residents not understanding what they are getting in return. BWS may need to help customers understand the value of water service and how rates help to improve the water system.

A: Ernie commented that BWS did tremendous outreach to customers about the need to increase water rates to improve our water infrastructure. Since then, we've been implementing those projects and need to do a better job of reminding customers about how these projects benefit them.

Dave commented that, regarding the fairness of water rates, satisfaction increased around the time when the BWS communicated vigorously about water rates and cost of service ahead of rate increases. Dave also mentioned that, in previous message testing for the value of water, perceptions of affordability significantly increased when customers were told that tap water costs less than a penny per gallon.

COMMENT: Food security and resource sustainability are important concerns for our island. One of the

major problems right now is access to water for farmers. The State and City need to cooperate to make improvements to water infrastructure in farming areas.

A: Ernie commented that BWS is willing to work with the State and other agencies to discuss these challenges facing the agriculture sector. He also commented that more resources and support are needed for the Department of Health, Food Safety Branch.

Q: Does this survey separate opinion on the BWS water rates versus the entire water bill so the study is not impacted by rising wastewater rates?

A: Becki commented that past surveys asked questions about awareness of the bill containing drinking water and wastewater components. They found that respondents' perceptions were focused on the entirety of the bill they paid. Since there was confusion about the wastewater and water components of the bill, this survey focused on other topics.

Ernie mentioned that this topic can be brought back into future surveys. With people spending more time at home during the pandemic, residents are using and paying more for utilities, which could be affecting their perception of these utilities. Lastly, he commented that the BWS values this feedback and is interested to see how perceptions of the BWS change in future surveys.

#### **BWS UPDATES – WATER MAIN REPAIR NEAR KAHANA BAY BEACH PARK**

Ernest Lau, BWS Manager and Chief Engineer, provided an update on ongoing 30-inch water main repairs on Kamehameha Highway near Kahana Bay Beach Park. The first call about this main break was on the evening of Saturday, July 16. BWS convened its Departmental Operating Center for a meeting at midnight to assess and discuss the situation. On the morning of Sunday, July 17, BWS and State Department of Transportation administrators inspected the area and found the bridge structure wasn't intact and the approach road for one bridge was undermined. It was determined that the roadway was unsafe for vehicular traffic.

BWS Field Operations staff, lead by Jason Nikaido, worked closely with Department of Transportation staff to develop a plan to:

- **Stabilize the roadway for vehicular traffic.** This was accomplished at 4:30 a.m. this morning, Thursday, July 21, when crews opened a single contraflow lane on Kamehameha Highway.
- **Maintain and restore water service.** The 30-inch water main provides 60% of the water supply from Kahana to Waimanalo. As of today, Thursday, July 21, repairs to the water main were completed and the main was put it back into service. Thanks to water conservation efforts by the community, we were able to maintain some level of water in the reservoirs to provide service to customers for the duration of the repair.

Kamehameha Highway is expected to be closed for another few weeks. Crews still need to clear debris from the stream, restore a guard rail, restore the pedestrian walkway, and repair the road. Ernie thanked the State Department of Transportation and City Department of Transportation Services for their cooperation and assistance. He also thanked Kathleen Elliott-Pahinui and the Communications Office for their work to keep residents informed.

Ernie commented that this is the fifth large transmission main break in the past month. Crews have been very busy.

#### **BWS UPDATES – RED HILL**

Ernie continued his report by providing an update on Red Hill.



- On June 30, the Navy released its Command Investigation into fuel leaks at Red Hill. The investigation was very critical of Navy personnel, citing procedural failures, lack of training, human error, and command structure issues.
- Also on June 30, the Navy submitted its defueling plan to Department of Health. The plan was only 19-pages long and lacked detail on how they will address concerns raised in an Emergency Order issued by the Department of Health. The Navy made promises to have a full plan submitted by August.
- BWS continues to track Red Hill-related bills in congress. Ernie has spoken with all 4 members of the Hawaii Congressional Delegation. He also participated in a Red Hill Town Hall hosted by U.S. Congressman Ed Case and U.S. Congressman Kai Kahele on June 20. This town hall gave the community an opportunity to get valuable information about the Red Hill situation and to share their concerns.
- The BWS Water Conservation team and Communications Office continues to get the word out to residents in the Honolulu and Aiea/Halawa water systems to cut back water use. BWS adjusted its water system in both areas and projects that conservation will remain voluntary through the summer.

Q: What is the status of the exploratory wells in the Aiea/Halawa area?

A: Erwin Kawata, BWS Program Administrator for Water Quality, explained that there are 2 exploratory wells planned at reservoir sites in the Aiea/Halawa area. We have a draft environmental assessment for the exploratory well for the Aiea '497 site.

Additionally, there are planned exploratory wells for a reservoir site in the Waimalu area and one in the Newtown area. Those are currently in progress.

Q: What is the BWS doing to recover costs associated with Red Hill? Is the BWS incurring most of the expenses, or is the Navy footing the bill?

The BWS recently wrote a letter to the Hawaii Congressional Delegation to inform them that it is estimated to cost \$195 million to develop wells to replace the capacity lost due to fuel leaks at Red Hill. The members have committed to look for opportunities to recover these costs over a long-term schedule.

Ernie mentioned that Mayor Rick Blangiardi and the City Council gave BWS a \$50.3 million dollar allocation of federal funds that will be used for 6-7 different capital improvement projects. The City Council also included \$25 million as part of City budget for the Red Hill situation.

Q: With your current name recognition, will Ernie Lau be running for political office?

A: Ernie commented that running for political office is not in the cards for him. He is just a public servant doing his job and is looking forward to retirement in the near future.

Ernie provided a final comment that the BWS is forming a Commercial Stakeholders Advisory Group (CSAG) that will provide input on the Red Hill crisis and its impact on our water system. The current SAG remains vital to the future of the BWS and continues to make a real difference in our community. The SAG will be kept informed of the discussions at the CSAG meetings.

## NEXT STEPS

Dave reminded the group of the dates for upcoming stakeholder advisory group meetings: Thursday, October 20, 2022; Thursday, January 19, 2023; Thursday, April 20, 2023; Thursday, July 20, 2023; and Thursday, October 19, 2023.

Dave thanked the attendees for their attention and participation and concluded the meeting.