Mauna Kea Soil & Water Conservation District

November 28, 2005

Aloha:

The Mauna Kea Soil and Water Conservation District is launching an exciting new watershed management project in the Waiulaula watershed. This watershed, delineated in the attached map, encompasses an area of about 32,000 acres, including Waimea and the residential neighborhoods on the south side of Kawaihae Road. As part of the watershed management project, the District is establishing a Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) comprised of interested community members and stakeholders within the watershed. The directors of the District would like to invite you to participate on the WAG. Its charter meeting will be held on December 13, 2005, 6 – 8 p.m. at Tutu's House in Waimea. The purpose of this initial meeting will be to establish the WAG and determine its role and organizational structure.

A watershed is the land area that drains water to a stream, river, lake or ocean. Watersheds have three primary purposes: to capture water, store it in the soil, and release it. Since we all live, work or play in a watershed, looking after our watershed is everybody's business. The Waiulaula Watershed stretches from the tops of Kohala Mountain and Mauna Kea, flowing down into inner Kawaihae Bay near the Mauna Kea Beach Resort, a distance of less than 15 miles. The primary tributaries are Waikoloa and Keanuiomano streams, which both originate at about 4,000-ft. elevation and flow relatively parallel to one another until they join at the 1,440-ft. elevation to form Waiulaula. Smaller tributaries include: Mamaewa Gulch, Momoualoa Gulch, Ouli Gulch, Lanikepu Gulch, Waiaka Gulch, Haleaha Gulch, Kohakohau Stream, and Oolamakapehu Gulch. Localized heavy rainfall and storms cause frequent flooding, which contributes to the flashy characteristic of Hawaiian streams. Rainfall moving over and through the ground carries natural and manmade pollutants in stormwater into our streams and, ultimately, the ocean. The goal of the Waiulaula watershed management project is to minimize this pollution.

Stakeholder involvement and community input is essential to the success of our watershed management project. A partnership among those who live, work or play in the watershed can help identify concerns, educate those involved, and encourage them to take action. A watershed advisory group is made up of people who have an interest in how the watershed is managed. They are representatives of communities, businesses, land users, and interested parties or individuals which effect or are affected by the management of the watershed. The Waiulaula WAG will advise the District on matters of concern to the community, contribute to the education of the residents of the watershed on water quality issues, help identify contributing pollution sources in the watershed, recommend specific actions needed to effectively control sources of pollution, and help develop a watershed management plan.

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Through the Waiulaula watershed management project, the District seeks to be proactive in the management of this important watershed, focusing on the prevention of pollution rather than waiting until there is a water quality problem downstream that requires an expensive and difficult clean-up. The South Kohala District which encompasses this watershed has experienced tremendous growth over the past 20 years. Between 1980 and 1990, the population increased by 98.4%, and between 1990 and 2000 it increased by a further 43.7% (County of Hawaii Databook 2001). Much of this growth has occurred within the watershed. No studies have been done on the impacts of this cumulative and ongoing development on the riparian and coral reef habitats, and stream and coastal water quality. In addition, only preliminary biological surveys of the stream system have been conducted. Expanding residential and urban development threatens stream habitat by altering vegetation patterns and increasing the potential for flooding; it threatens the water quality of the streams and ocean by (a) increasing the potential for polluted runoff, and (b) changing natural freshwater flows as a result of diversions and the imperviousness of increasing amounts of hardened surfaces. Agricultural operations may also contribute to polluted runoff, primarily in the form of excessive loss of sediments, chemicals, and nutrients.

Please join us in this exciting and timely project and take this opportunity to become involved. The goal of this phase of the Waiulaula watershed management project is to develop a management plan that identifies types and sources of polluted runoff in the watershed and recommends management measures to address these problems. There will also be opportunities to become involved in volunteer water quality monitoring of our streams, to participate in site visits with local experts, and to educate your friends and neighbors about the project.

We look forward to seeing you at the WAG meeting. The meeting agenda is attached. Please contact Carolyn Stewart, our watershed coordinator, at 885-6354 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Hind III
Chairman

Attachments

Waiulaula Watershed Advisory Group
Charter Meeting
December 13, 2005 6- 8 p.m.
Tutu's House, Waimea

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. What is Watershed Management and Why is it Important?
3. Information about the Waiulaula watershed.
4. Goals of the Waiulaula watershed management project.
5. Purpose of the Watershed Advisory Group.
6. Set Ground Rules and Determine Organizational Structure of WAG.
7. Evaluation and Next Steps.
8. Adjourn