

KIUC to Conduct Environmental Studies Related to Blue Hole Diversion

Līhu'e, Kaua'i, HI – 02/02/2018 – The KIUC Board of Directors approved funding for additional environmental studies to support the cooperative's request for a long-term lease for the Blue Hole and Waikoko diversions, which supply water to KIUC's upper and lower Waiahi hydroelectric plants.

Both diversions are operated and maintained via a revocable permit pending completion of tasks in support of the lease application process. The hydro plants have been in operation for nearly a century, and are an important component of KIUC's renewable energy mix. The energy generated by the plants displace the use of roughly 500,000 gallons of diesel annually, and is KIUC's lowest-cost source of power. Diverted water also provides irrigation for agriculture, supports recreational activities, and provides a source of drinking water for the people of Kaua'i.

This week the Board authorized additional environmental studies, including stream and habitat surveys, in support of an environmental review process as required under Hawai'i law.

During the meeting it was confirmed that KIUC has been in contact with Department of Hawaiian Homeland's officials to ensure their water needs are considered under the lease approval process, which ultimately will be subject to approval by the State of Hawai'i's Board of Land and Natural Resources.

"KIUC remains committed to responsible operation of all of our facilities in pursuit of the state's mandate to achieve 100 percent renewable generation," stated KIUC's President and Chief Executive Officer, David Bissell. "We will continue to collaborate with all state and federal agencies with jurisdiction over these waters to insure our natural resources are appropriately protected."

(more)

At its December 2017 meeting, the KIUC Board approved authorization for short-term modifications to diversions at Blue Hole, Waikoko Stream and 'Ili'ili'ula Stream, which will immediately return some water to these tributaries and reduce flow to the hydro plants. Work on the short-term modifications is already underway, along with improvements to flow gauging infrastructure.

Work on design and implementation of long-term modifications that will ensure mauka to makai flows in both North Fork Wailua and Waikoko Stream has also been authorized by the KIUC Board. Those designs will be finalized once the State Commission on Water Resources Management has established interim instream flow standards for the North Fork of the Wailua River.

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Photo: Water flows past the Blue Hole diversion down the North Fork of the Wailua River in December 2017



Photo: Water flows past the upper Waiahi hydroelectric plant