

Ala Wai Flood Risk Management project (2019)

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers:

What is the current status of this project?

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been authorized to move forward from the Feasibility Phase to the Design and Construction Phase, meaning the project is economically justified and environmentally compliant and has received authorization from Congress for construction. The USACE Honolulu District has been working with the State and City and County of Honolulu to identify the appropriate non-Federal partner to move the project into the Design and Construction Phase. The State of Hawaii, City and County of Honolulu, and USACE Honolulu District will continue further community involvement after the Project Sponsor has been identified and agreements have been reached for partnership. In the meantime, the USACE Honolulu District is working to refine data collected during the Feasibility Phase through site specific surveys; as appropriate we will communicate with Stakeholders in cooperation with the State and City and County. The intent has been to assist the City and County of Honolulu and State of Hawaii in implementing this project to protect the people, infrastructure, and economy within the Ala Wai Watershed.

Some local citizens have raised concerns about a lack of transparency and proper protocol for the Ala Wai Flood Management project. Some allegations state some stakeholders were left out of the EIS and revised EIS process and public outreach wasn't done when the scope of the project was revised. Is there a means to submit new comments to be part of the planning for this project?

People are encouraged to communicate with their locally elected leaders, City & County of Honolulu, and the State of Hawaii. The Honolulu District is in constant communication with our partners on this project and are happy to assist in answering questions. Once an agreement is in place between USACE and our non-Federal partners, formal channels will be established for the public to communicate questions or concerns.

There was significant public participation and outreach from 2004 to 2015 to meet the Federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements and also to follow the Hawaii state environmental compliance policies to the extent possible. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State DLNR held a public meeting, presentation and open comment session with the public during the public review period on Sept. 30, 2015, which was attended by approximately 180 people. The public review produced written comments from 64 individuals and organizations, to which USACE-DLNR provided individualized written responses. In addition, the Feasibility Study Report documents 44 other specific engagements with stakeholders since 2012 including open houses, focus groups, and specific agency outreach. Prior to 2012, there was also a significant amount of outreach documented in the Feasibility Study Report, however, this was during a phase of the study which focused on multiple project purposes (ecosystem restoration, flood risk management), so most of the material in the Feasibility Study

Report is centered on the period after 2012 when the study was re-scoped to focus exclusively on flood risk management. The USACE Honolulu District worked in cooperation with both the City and County of Honolulu and the State of Hawaii on developing the Feasibility Study, community outreach, and developing the recommended plan. Any party who submitted comments during the public review of the document received a written response to their specific comments from USACE and the State Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Some people have raised concerns about how they can be assured the detention ponds and other structures will be properly maintained. What is your plan for this?

A partnership agreement will be signed with our non-Federal Partner, which may be the State of Hawaii, the City and County or both. Within that agreement is a requirement to maintain the project into perpetuity in accordance with the project guidelines. As such, it will be inspected annually by USACE who will provide a report to the sponsor to ensure project features are in good working order and ensure resiliency during a storm event. Operations and maintenance is an integral part of the overall project design. Design development includes safety assurance reviews by the USACE Dam Safety Center and technical reviews to ensure a level of safety and operability. The structures will also be constructed to meet Hawaii Dam Safety requirements so that the non-Federal Partner can maintain the project features in a way that will ensure the safety of the community and the project.

How many private owners do you expect will have their homes and lands or a portion of their homes and lands taken away to make way for this project?

Preliminary designs and real estate requirements are included in the Feasibility Report, available on the USACE website (<https://www.poh.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Civil-Works-Projects/Ala-Wai-Canal/>).

Because the designs for the project are not complete, it is inappropriate to speculate on the exact location and size of the project features. USACE and our partners will complete data collection at specific project sites to further inform the design. During the Feasibility study, the State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) encouraged all private homeowners to participate in public meetings and comment periods if their property was identified as potentially falling within the footprint of the project area. Rights of entry to public and private property were requested in October 2018 for a preliminary data gathering exercise, and additional rights of entry will be requested of private landowners in 2019 to make additional data gathering efforts to further refine project designs. Acquisition of private lands is highly regulated under Federal law and is the responsibility of the non-Federal partner.

A City of Honolulu Councilwoman has stated she objects to private lands being taken for this project and that the project should be on public lands. Why are private lands being taken and how feasible would it be to redo the project sites using only public lands?

The objective of this project is to reduce the damages and risks associated with flooding in the Ala Wai Watershed. The project study examined many different alternatives and measures, maximizing the use of public lands where feasible. The project was

developed to minimize the impact to private lands and maximize the use of public lands, but some impacts to private lands are unavoidable. The project itself has been authorized by Congress. While minor changes to the size, scale, and precise location of the project features may occur, the project is the recommended plan included in the Feasibility Report.

What are the deadlines to use the federal and state funding that have been allocated for the project? Could these deadlines be extended?

The appropriation received from Congress is an emergency appropriation to invest in projects located in areas prone to flooding that were determined to be economically justified and environmentally compliant. There is no expiration of funds provided under PL 115-123, for the Long Term Disaster Recovery Investment Program. It is at the discretion of the Congress and Assistant Secretary of Army for Civil Works to reallocate funding from those projects if projects do not proceed.

How close are the detention ponds and other structures to schools and neighborhoods? What extra protections would be put in place to address concerns of schools and neighborhoods with children near the proposed detention ponds and other structures?

Many of the public lands selected for the project features were identified due to their existing flood risk. For example, areas adjacent to the Ala Wai Canal currently flood annually as the flood waters rise and leave the canal. The construction of the project features will take flooded areas and control the water through use of the project to hold flood waters back and protect private property. All designs have been reviewed at several levels both within the USACE and outside organizations for safety, residual risk, compliance, and operability. Final designs will undergo a similar level of review. Mitigation, warnings, signage and education have been funded as part of this project to help increase the awareness of these structures and how to mitigate risks associated with them.

Why is this project needed and what's at stake if we don't get it done soon?

With increased frequency of storms in the Pacific, the geographic nature of the watershed, the increased development of the watershed, and the unique micro-climates within the watershed, there are significant flood risks to the people in the community, damage to the infrastructure, and risks to the people who work in and visit Waikiki. This project seeks to implement an integrated system of project features that operates together to reduce those risks. In areas that are not provided direct protection, a warning system will be constructed that will provide an opportunity for residences to be proactive during an event. Hurricane Lane (2018) was a near miss, however, with the increasing number of storms and intensity of those storms, this project is necessary to protect the community, the infrastructure, and the economy from the risks of those future storms. The intent of the appropriating legislation and the project team has been to work as quickly as possible to ensure that protection is in place before a major storm arrives.

There has been concerns about the 4-foot wall concrete flood mitigation wall around the Ala Wai Canal. Some agencies say they would only support the project if the wall were placed on the opposite side of the sidewalk. Is this part of the project still up for debate? Could you consider moving the wall to the other side of the sidewalk?

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the State of Hawaii and the City and County are working together on the layout, design and level of protection. The design was approved for a flood wall because of space constraints, and the need to protect the surrounding areas from riverine flood drainage and sea level rise in the Ala Wai Canal. People are encouraged to communicate their concerns and suggestions to the project partners as they understand our requirements and boundaries of authority. Decisions will be made in cooperation with our partners.

Is this project taking into account the purported effects of climate change?

Frequent extreme and nuisance events, amplified by increasing urbanization and impacts from climate change, result in severe costly impacts wherever they occur. Investment in resilience makes a difference.

It is the policy of USACE to integrate climate change preparedness and resilience planning and actions in all activities for the purpose of enhancing the resilience of our built and natural water-resource infrastructure and the effectiveness of our military support mission, and to reduce the potential vulnerabilities of that infrastructure and those missions to the effects of climate change and variability. USACE shall continue undertaking its climate change preparedness and resilience planning, in consultation with internal and external experts and with our districts, divisions, and Centers, and shall implement the results of that planning using the best available – and actionable – climate science and climate change information. USACE is on the forefront of federal construction agencies in integrating climate change (including sea level change) into project planning and climate change adaptation into project design, construction and repair. Honolulu District works closely with State and local partners to provide a better understanding of (and ways to reduce) erosion, within our missions and authorities.

If I want to provide feedback or have a question about the project, who can I contact? Will my concerns be considered/addressed?

People are encouraged to communicate with their locally elected leaders, City & County of Honolulu, and the State of Hawaii. The Honolulu District is in constant communication with our partners on this project and are happy to assist in answering questions. Once an agreement is in place between USACE and our non-Federal partners, formal channels will be established for the public to communicate questions or concerns.

If you have questions about the project, please email them to Jeffrey.A.Herzog.usace.army.mil