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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington Middle School Students Sample, Assess Ala Wai Watershed on World Water Monitoring Day 2008

(HONOLULU NR 041-08) Over two days in early November, 270 8th grade students and teachers from Washington Middle School in Honolulu created a snapshot of the water quality in Makiki Stream and at the mouth of Ala Wai Canal as they participated in a safe sampling and assessment of the Ala Wai watershed as part of World Water Monitoring Day 2008.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District, Storm Water Quality Branch of the City and County of Honolulu's Department of Environmental Services, Clean Water Branch of the State of Hawaii's Department of Health hosted the event in coordination with Washington Middle School science teacher Joanna Lee. Cooperating organizations included Hawaii Water Environment Association Public Education, Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources, Hui Ku Maoli Ola, City and County of Honolulu Board of Water Supply, State of Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife and Punahou School.

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“Water quality sampling provides the students with hands-on experience into another dimension of the environment they may take for granted and often do not see in their day to day activities,” said Michael Wong, hydraulic engineer and acting chief of Honolulu District’s Civil Works Technical branch.

On Nov. 7 and again on Nov. 14, students were introduced to the Makiki sub-watershed in an outdoor lab setting that included: hands-on water-sampling where they learned how sediment and nutrients impact water quality and how life in the lower watershed is dependent upon upstream conditions; examining live native stream animals and modified stream assessments. The interactive components were geared to impact a three-fold message:

- we all live in a watershed: everything is interconnected, the waters of Makiki Stream flows from the mountain to the sea
- we all have an effect on water quality: how we impact water quality by our activities upstream and how our activities affect those downstream
- we can all change our behavior to benefit the watershed, rather than harm it.

According to one of the event’s primary organizers, Iwalani Sato, City and County of Honolulu's Department of Environmental Services, the specific goal was “to increase student awareness of the impact their behaviors have on the quality of Makiki Stream, the Ala Wai Canal and the ocean.”

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Since 2003 the City and County of Honolulu, State of Hawaii Department of Health and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have sponsored World Water Monitoring Day learning activities with Washington Middle School.

This year's primary goal for the event was to build public awareness and involvement in protecting water resources around the world by engaging citizens to conduct basic water monitoring of their local water bodies.

“A key learning point for them is environmental stewardship - how their actions or inaction affects their environment. The Corps' co-hosting of this learning opportunity helps reinforce the students' awareness,” Wong said.

Students collected and measured water samples using both field instruments and educational monitoring kits to determine how the parameters of pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature, turbidity, nitrate and phosphate relate to each other.

World Water Monitoring Day was initiated by America's Clean Water Foundation (ACWF) in 2002 as a significant part of the events in observance of the 30th Anniversary of the United States Clean Water Act. It serves as a global international education and outreach program that builds public awareness and involvement in protecting water resources around the world by engaging citizens to conduct basic monitoring of their local water bodies. The month-long event kicks off each year on September 18 with data collected by the Washington Middle School students uploaded into global databases at <http://www.worldwatermonitoringday.org/> by December 18.