

**DHHL Beneficiary Information Meeting #2**  
**Wai‘anae Valley Homestead Cesspool Conversion**  
**June 26, 2025 Meeting Notes**

**Meeting Purpose:**

1. Introduce the pilot project and project team
2. Discuss how we'll determine cesspool alternatives
3. Identify the timeframe of the project
4. Provide an opportunity for community comments and questions

DHHL began the meeting with introductions, a summary of outreach efforts to date, what was accomplished since the February 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, and a review of answers to questions from previous meetings. The consultants then gave an informational presentation on project objectives, timeline, cesspool pollution, options for conversion, key considerations and next steps.

**Summary of Meeting Conversation Between Beneficiaries, Consultants and DHHL**

Q1: Waianae Valley Hawaiian Homestead is the pilot project for all cesspool conversion projects. How is DHHL addressing all other homesteads?

- A. DHHL plans to address cesspool conversions in other homesteads by using the approach taken for Wai‘anae Valley as a model and incorporating lessons learned.

Q2: How do grinder pumps work?

- A. Plumbing from one home flows by gravity into a tank underground on the property. When there is enough sewage in the tank, the pump turns on and pumps the contents out to the sewer. When it is empty, the pump turns off.

In a traditional sewer system, plumbing from the home flows by gravity to the sewer. At the low point in the sewer, there is a pump station that is shared by the community that pumps up to a point where it can flow by gravity towards the treatment plant.

Q3: Sewer conversion seems to be the most likely alternative. How much does constructing a sewer lateral cost?

- A. The gravity sewer alternative appears to be favorable due to the existing sewer system located nearby within the homestead. Sewer lateral costs will be referenced through similar gravity sewer projects. Gravity sewer lateral costs are a fraction of the cost of a septic tank.

Q4: For those that have cesspools with an existing lateral, what do they do?

- A. We will be evaluating each home, because there are site specific considerations. Existing sewer lateral and sewer main elevations must be evaluated to determine if gravity flow or pumped flow is required.

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Q5: Before the hurricane in 1982, they observed cesspools being installed. The lessee's cesspool had been installed close to a wall. If they have a sewer connection, how will electricity be sourced? If power goes out for an extended period of time, is there a backup?

- A. Pumps are 120V AC powered and are housed in a holding tank that has capacity to last through a typical power outage. We will investigate and include in the report what the backup power options are for all alternatives.

Q6: How come sewer lines weren't constructed on certain streets?

- A. It is not known why some streets in the homestead do not have sewer lines.

Q7: What are the typical dimensions for a septic tank and leach field?

- A. Leach field sizing depends on soil percolation and number of bedrooms. A ballpark estimate for planning or sizing a leach field is 30' x 30'. Square footage can be rearranged according to available space on the lot. The septic tank itself would be in the range of 15' x 8', buried underground.

Q8: Can lessees use an existing cesspool as seepage pit to eliminate the need for a leach field? Could a septic tank be used to push effluent into gravity sewer main? We are looking for an action plan for the federal mandate to connect to sewer. Also, a contractor told us that low pressure sewer system is not feasible for our neighborhood.

- A. Regulations (DOH 11-62) do not permit the use of a cesspool as a seepage pit. It is possible that variances have been allowed in the past when no other option was available. If the home is downgradient from the sewer, a pump would be needed to push the flow to the sewer. This study will evaluate and recommend alternatives, with the community's involvement, for converting all cesspools in the homestead. The recommendation will likely include a combination of IWS and connection to the sewer. We're unsure why a contractor would say that LPSS is not feasible.

Q9: It was mentioned that the PER will be used to find funding. Who is the funding for?

- A. The intent is for DHHL to secure the funding to perform all the work, so lessees don't have to pay for and coordinate the work themselves.

Q10: What work is required at Kepauala Place?

- A. Kepauala Place is sloped toward the existing sewer. It's likely that a gravity sewer main and lateral connections would be constructed on this street, but we are evaluating several options.

Q11: How much is the cost of decommissioning a cesspool?

- A. Cesspool closure costs will be calculated by referencing similar projects. Costs can range from \$10 - \$20k, but there may be cost savings for decommissioning cesspools on multiple lots in one project. It is intended that DHHL would be responsible for cesspool closure costs, not lessees.

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Q12: When soil testing is done, who decides the alternatives?

- A. Soil testing is not within the scope of work for this project. It is not required for this evaluation, but if IWS are ultimately recommended for installation at some homes, soil tests would be required as part of the design process.

Q13: When will the lessees find out the viable option for their lot?

- A. The next community meeting is tentatively scheduled for the Fall 2025 timeframe. Draft recommendations will be presented and discussed then, and we'll be looking for input from the community at that time.

Q14: How is the conversion funded?

- A. Two of the main funding sources are the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and USDA Rural Development. We are coordinating with other agencies to investigate other funding sources as well.

Q15: Does DOH have the final say on which alternative will be picked?

- A. DOH does not choose the alternative, but the alternatives must meet the requirements of DOH 11-62 and other applicable codes and standards.

Q16: What is the difference between a leach field and a seepage pit?

- A. A seepage pit has a vertical orientation while leach fields have a horizontal orientation. Leach fields have a large surface area and are engineered to promote biological treatment in the soil before the sewage reaches the water table. Seepage pits do not provide treatment in the way that leach fields do.

Q17: You said that we will only consider options that are "proven". Why can't we think outside the box and try something new? Incinerating toilets have been known to be used. Why are we not looking at these new options?

- A. Though incinerating toilets are a proven technology and seem to work well for certain applications, other household wastewater from sinks, showers, washing machines, etc. must also be included in our evaluation and ultimately collected, treated, and disposed of.

There are systems for sale on the market that claim to be effective but are not necessarily proven on this scale. It is important that we only evaluate processes and technologies that have a proven track record for this specific application, and can be procured, installed, operated, and maintained.

Q18: Where will pump stations be located?

- A. Maps will be provided that include tentative locations for each neighborhood pump station. Community input on pump station location would be greatly appreciated.

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Q19: Can we install a leach field within the park? That seems like a large area that is available.

- A. We can consider whether using park land for leach field(s) or other treatment space is feasible. However, there are likely significant challenges with using park land for wastewater infrastructure.

Q20: Who pays for the sewer laterals?

- A. The goal of this project is to obtain funding that would pay for the lateral construction so that lessees don't have to be responsible for that cost.

Q21: Older existing pipes are cast iron. Will these be needed to change out for this project?

- A. There is no expectation to replace cast iron pipes or other home plumbing. However, a portion of existing lateral in the yard would likely need to be replaced to connect to a new IWS or sewer system.

Q22: What is the timeline for the conversion? Will we have to stay in a hotel while construction is occurring?

- A. Construction for each house connection will take hours, not days. It will be important for DHHL to coordinate with the contractor and lessees during construction to minimize impacts to lessees.