From: David Albright
To: Gary Kubota
Cc: Dean Higuchi
Subject: Re: Query from Honolulu Star-Advertiser
Date: 09/16/2011 09:42 AM

Hi Gary,

I have responded to your questions below. Please let me or Dean know if you have any further questions.

Regards,
David
****
David Albright
Manager, Ground Water Office

USEPA, Region IX
75 Hawthorne Street
Mail Code: WTR-9
San Francisco, CA 94105

Phone: 415.972.3971
Fax: 415.947.3549
Email: albright.david@epa.gov

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▼ Gary Kubota ---09/13/2011 04:00:11 PM---Hi David: Thanks for fielding the questions. Below are the questions:

From: Gary Kubota <GKubota@staradvertiser.com>
To: David Albright/R9/USEPA/US@EPA
Date: 09/13/2011 04:00 PM
Subject: Re: Query from Honolulu Star-Advertiser

Hi David:

Thanks for fielding the questions. Below are the questions:

Gary Kubota,
Staff Writer
Honolulu Star-Advertiser
500 Ala Moana Blvd
Suite 7-210
Honolulu, HI 96813
Maui cell: 808-268-3918
Phone: 529-4753
Fax: 529-4750

Questions to EPA:

1) What is prompting the current tracer study and when do you expect to reach a conclusion? What are you testing for and what will it indicate? The current study was prompted by questions about the fate and transport of effluent injected at the Lahaina Wastewater Reclamation Facility, especially in light of research by the USGS which showed evidence of wastewater constituents in West Maui's nearshore coastal waters. I do not know when the study will reach its conclusion, however, EPA is hopeful of having some information to share with the public by the end of the year. The primary purpose of the tracer study is to determine the time of travel of wastewater injected at the Lahaina facility to the coastal waters. Detection of the tracer at the nearshore ground water seeps would also confirm the connection between the injection wells at Lahaina and the nearshore coastal waters.

2) How far offshore and at what ocean depth was the trace amounts such as pharmaceuticals and fabric brighteners found seeping from the ground? The 2008 USGS study concluded that wastewater effluent from Lahaina was present in the vicinity of the submarine springs (i.e., seeps) in the nearshore waters based on detection of pharmaceuticals, synthetic musk fragrances, a fire retardant, and a plasticizer compound, all of which were present in the effluent sampled at the Lahaina facility. These chemicals were detected as close as 30 feet from shore in less than 10 feet of water. Chip Hunt with the USGS was the lead researcher on this study. Please contact him for any further details about the USGS work.

3) Was the concentration enough to be of concern? Why? Any potential for health problems? What kind?

Testing conducted thus far has not provided EPA with information on the concentration of any specific pollutants. We are working with Hawaii DOH to conduct a seep monitoring study to measure specific pollutants of concern under the Clean Water Act over a one-year time period to better understand and assess the potential for environmental and public health risk.

4) Is there a potential for visitors in Kaanapali becoming sick from it? As noted in response to the prior question, EPA and DOH will be conducting seep monitoring to gather more specific data regarding the chemicals being released and their concentration levels in order to better understand and assess the risk potential. In addition, Hawaii DOH administers various monitoring programs in nearshore waters to help ensure public health protection. DOH monitors for nutrients, fecal-indicator bacteria, and other water quality parameters in the beach area. Beach monitoring has been ongoing year round in Maui and concentrations of the pathogen indicator - enterococcus - have typically not exceeded health-based standards. For further details about the DOH beach monitoring program, please contact Watson Okubo with the DOH Clean Water Branch.

5) Has there been a higher than normal incidence of infections in these areas? I am not aware of this. The State Department of Health or County of Maui would be a better source of information for this topic.

6) Has there been evidence of environmental degradation including algae blooms as a result of the sewage seepage? There have been historic incidences of algae blooms in West Maui and DLNR has documented apparent declines in coral reef cover, however, it is unclear what is causing these impacts.

7) My understanding is that the EPA wants Maui County to eventually shut down the injection wells? What is the timetable for compliance? The County of Maui itself has established a goal of reducing, and ultimately eliminating, injection wells for municipal wastewater disposal. EPA strongly supports this goal, and, generally, increased water reclamation in Maui. The County has not established a firm timetable for accomplishing this goal. The proposed agreement between EPA and Maui County to fully disinfect all wastewater at the Lahaina facility by 2013 is a key step that should help Maui County increase their level of water reclamation.

8) What does this mean for other areas using injection wells? I think one of them is the Kahului treatment plant? Are there any using injection wells elsewhere in Hawaii, including Oahu? The USGS and UH research has highlighted concerns specific to the Lahaina facility in West Maui, and does not affect other injection wells. EPA is aware of the other municipal injection wells on Maui and has not identified the same concerns as those at Lahaina at this time. While there are other injection wells in the State of Hawaii, the injection wells on Maui are unique in their size and much higher volume of wastewater disposed. The vast majority of wastewater on Oahu is treated and discharged via deep water ocean outfalls, regulated by DOH-issued CWA permits.

9) What other studies are expected after this one and what would you be testing for? As noted above, we are working with DOH to conduct a seep sampling study. The purpose is described above.

On Sep 13, 2011, at 3:57 AM, <Albright.David@epamail.epa.gov> wrote:

> Hi Gary,
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> Depending upon your specific interests/questions, I can access a few different people. If you would please provide a list of the questions you still have about the tracer study, I will be able to get you the information.
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> Regards,
> David
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> **********
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> David Albright
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From: Gary Kubota <GKubota@staradvertiser.com>
To: David Albright/R9/USEPA/US@EPA
Date: 09/12/2011 08:51 PM
Subject: Query from Honolulu Star-Advertiser

Hi Mr. Albright:

Thanks for the interview. You mentioned someone in your office who was familiar with the details and mechanics of the tracer study west Maui. I need more details. What's his name and how can he be reached?

Thanks,
Gary Kubota,
Staff Writer
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