

Dear Governor Neil Abercrombie,

I am writing to express disappointment with the State's action in regards to the chronic shoreline erosion issues at the Ukumehame section of the Honoapi'ilani Highway.

As you are aware, the Honoapi'ilani Highway, which serves as Maui's major connection into and out of its West Side, is severely threatened by coastal erosion. This situation prompted *you* to approve shoreline armoring along the Ukumehame portion of the highway as part of the tsunami disaster declaration. While your actions were no doubt well intended, they have, unfortunately, resulted in both direct and indirect consequences that threaten to significantly alter the adjacent beaches and coral reef ecosystems.

Despite what we think (and how we act), beaches are not static piles of sand – they are dynamic systems characterized by constant change, and are natural responses to the ocean's ebb and flow. Shoreline erosion is thus part of this natural process, and only becomes a problem when static structures (e.g. roads, houses and buildings) hinder nature's course. Seawalls are, by design, constructed to protect structures by stopping the natural movement of sand by the waves, yet in doing so, they displace the open beach upon which they are built, and also prevent the natural landward migration of an eroding beach.

With these facts in mind, approval of the Ukumehame shoreline hardening project was shortsighted and ill-planned. For starters, exemption from environmental monitoring of projects along Maui's shoreline is completely unacceptable under any circumstance, and in the case of Ukumehame, has resulted in the replacement of sandy beaches and coral reef ecosystems by muddied waters and concrete structures. The State's act of circumventing the customary permitting process and requisite environmental impact assessments furthermore stripped Maui residents of their right to protect their public, natural resources, and failed to provide consideration of more environmentally sound alternatives (e.g. relocation of the highway). It is hard to believe that a State so reliant on its near shore marine resources could make such imprudent and single-minded decisions.

Shoreline armoring at Ukumehame is a short-term solution with long-term impacts. Not only is the reef already threatened by a persistent mud plume, but adjacent beaches are also likely to be robbed of sand – further threatening beach access, surf breaks and community recreational resources. While emergency situations do in some cases call for extreme action, it is likely that environmentally sound alternatives and/or protocols could have been integrated into this project. Furthermore, as Ukumehame's coral now sits smothered under a layer of mud and sediment, I would expect that the State of Hawai'i is working diligently to identify and implement appropriate mitigation measures.

Please understand that even the most seemingly insignificant actions, such as the installation of a 4,000 ft strip of seawall along Honoapi'ilani Highway, can have dramatic and irreversible impacts. I therefore ask that you consider your actions with regards to coastal construction more thoroughly in the future, and to realize the consequences of deliberately exempting coastal projects from environmental monitoring.

Sincerely,

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