

WATER FOR LIFE

Safe, dependable, and affordable water now and into the future



Board of Water Supply
City and County of Honolulu

Honolulu Board of Water Supply NASEM Briefing

August 2025

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WATER, THE GREAT GIFT OF THE GODS

Ka Wai Ola a Kāne

"The Life Giving Water of Kāne" is a term that reflects the special link between the divine and all life forms in nature. The Hawaiians saw gods everywhere in their world: in clouds, trees, stones, and all other parts of the sky, land, and sea that surrounded them.



Man and nature were believed to be part of a larger story of divine creation. Water, the basis of all life, was seen as one of the gods' greatest gifts. The gods would bless the earth with water as long as water was used with respect and water sources were cared for well.



KĀNE AND KANALOA, The Gods of Hawai'i's Water

Kāne and Kanaloa, the gods of water, traveled throughout the island chain, creating water sources to benefit and sustain all living things.

Both gods were fond of drinking 'awa. When thirst overcame them, each would plunge his digging staff into the ground to bring forth water to be seasoned with 'awa root. Kāne was said to be somewhat gruff and impatient in nature, so the water that he drew from the earth rumbled and roared in the form of large rivers and streams. Kanaloa was said to be very passive and easy-going; he is responsible for calmer water sources, such as springs and pools.

Kāne and Kanaloa were known to roam the drier and more desolate countryside to test the generosity of its people. In areas where fresh water was meager or absent, they would appear and ask for water. If they were turned away without being offered a drink, they would punish the inhospitable by drying up a water source. If they were offered even brackish water, the host would be rewarded with a spring of sparkling fresh water.

**Uwē ka lani, ola ka honua
"when the heavens weep,
the earth lives"**

— HE 'ŌLELO NO'EAU, A WISDOM STATEMENT

LONO, God of the Winter Rains

Lono was the god of rain clouds, the sea, agriculture, and productivity. Ho'ōilo (winter) was the season of Lono, the time when the rains fell. Ho'ōilo was the time when the harvest occurred, taxes were paid and spectator sports and sham battles took place between chiefs and royal champions.

During Makahiki, the time of rituals and celebrations in honor of Lono, his carved image was always present, a constant reminder of his role in continuing the productiveness and fertility of land and sea.

Priests of Lono appealed to him for rain at heiau ho'oulu ua (temples to increase the rains). When severe flooding threatened the Islands, Lono's priests invoked at heiau kālua ua (temples to roast rain). Pleading for relief, priests used underground ovens to bake offerings of rainwater wrapped in folded and cupped ti leaves.



**E nū mai ana ka ua i ke
kuahiwi "the mountain
walls leap with rain"**

— A KO'OLAU AU,
AN ANCIENT CHANT



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ANCIENT HAWAIIANS LIVED IN HARMONY WITH WATER

In ancient times as now, fresh water was the key to life and prosperity. The early Hawaiians settled by perennial streams and springs where water was plentiful and reliable. The abundance allowed the Hawaiians to develop an extensive agricultural system and a sophisticated aquaculture structure.

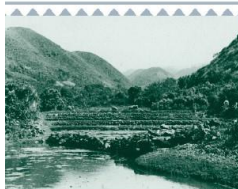


An area that had many fishponds was called 'āina momona or a "fat" land. This 1908 photograph of a Kane'ohe fishpond illustrates the splendor of these structures.

Rivers and Fishponds

Rivers brought life to the landscape. A moderate rainfall sent waterfalls spilling into rivers that carried water to lower elevations. As water flowed to the ocean, it passed through countless wetland taro pondfields before it returned to the river to continue seaward. As it neared the shore, it rejuvenated marshes and wetlands and spilled into loko'i'a (fishponds).

Hawaiians of old were masters of aquaculture. They built loko'i'a at river mouths to take advantage of the blend of fresh water and salt water – a blend that provided a favorite environment for the choicest of fish. Building the kuapā (walls) of a loko'i'a was hard work and took as many as 10,000 men. Every fishpond was unique and built to the contours of the land; kuapā were typically made up of coral or basalt blocks.



The Ahupua'a Encompassed All

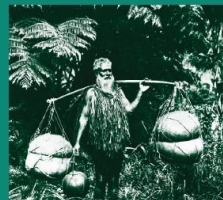
In pre-contact Hawai'i, the land was divided into districts and then into smaller sections called ahupua'a.

Every tenant of an ahupua'a was given access to natural resources. Everyone was allowed to take what they needed to live a full life: spiritually, economically, educationally, and physically.

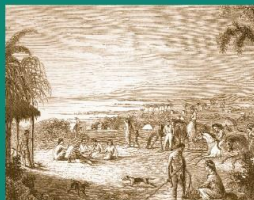
No one could remove or take more than what they could immediately use. The ahupua'a system ensured that natural systems were kept in balance.

Island topography produced very different communities in leeward and windward areas. Hawaiians gravitated to wetter windward valleys and used abundant stream water to cultivate their staple food, taro. Fishponds built at stream mouths provided a ready source of protein.

Drier leeward areas supported smaller communities which often hugged the coast, giving easy access to ocean fishing areas. Sporadic rainfall and intermittent streams could not support wetland taro. Their main crop was sweet potato. Farmers sometimes carried water to their crops in gourd containers.



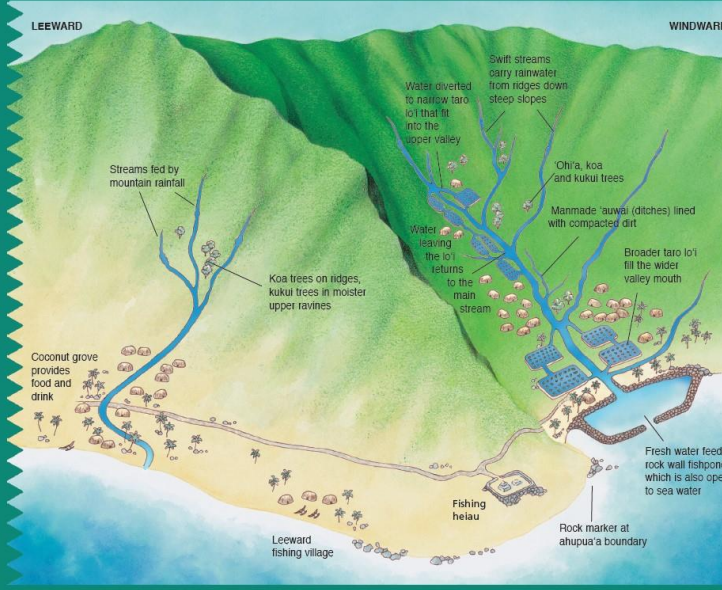
Hawaiians used gourds to transport many things, including water.



Hāloa - Brother Taro

Taro was central to Hawaiian society; it was known as man's older brother, the first-born child of Papa and Wakea, the earth mother and sky father. Hawaiians grew wet and dry taro. Wet taro was grown largely in lo'i (pondfields), which were irrigated with diverted water that flowed through a complex network of 'auwai (ditches).

'Auwai were continually repaired to prevent seepage and waste. Daily water distribution was overseen by luna wai (water manager); farmers were allowed to use water as long as they kept their lo'i productive and helped to maintain streams and 'auwai.

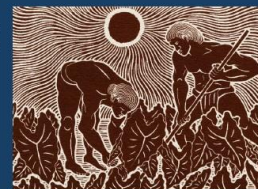


Formal Rules Governed Distribution and Discouraged Waste

Strict rules governed the use of water in ancient Hawai'i, and it was a grievous offense to waste or misuse the precious liquid. The ali'i ai moku (district chiefs) were the trustees of water and exercised control over it as an instrument of the gods. They established and enforced regulations over water use in upland areas of an ahupua'a so that a pure flow was always available to those who lived at lower elevations.

In addition, they set rigid schedules for cleaning and diverting rivers and streams. Rights and privileges to water were earned, not guaranteed. Farmers were expected to keep their taro fields free of weeds and clutter and to help clean communal streams and rivers.

Those who failed in either regard were disposed of their land and banished. If a farmer dared to water his taro fields without the approval of the luna wai, he was put to death. Disobeying water regulations jeopardized all; the gods were seen to be merciless in this regard.



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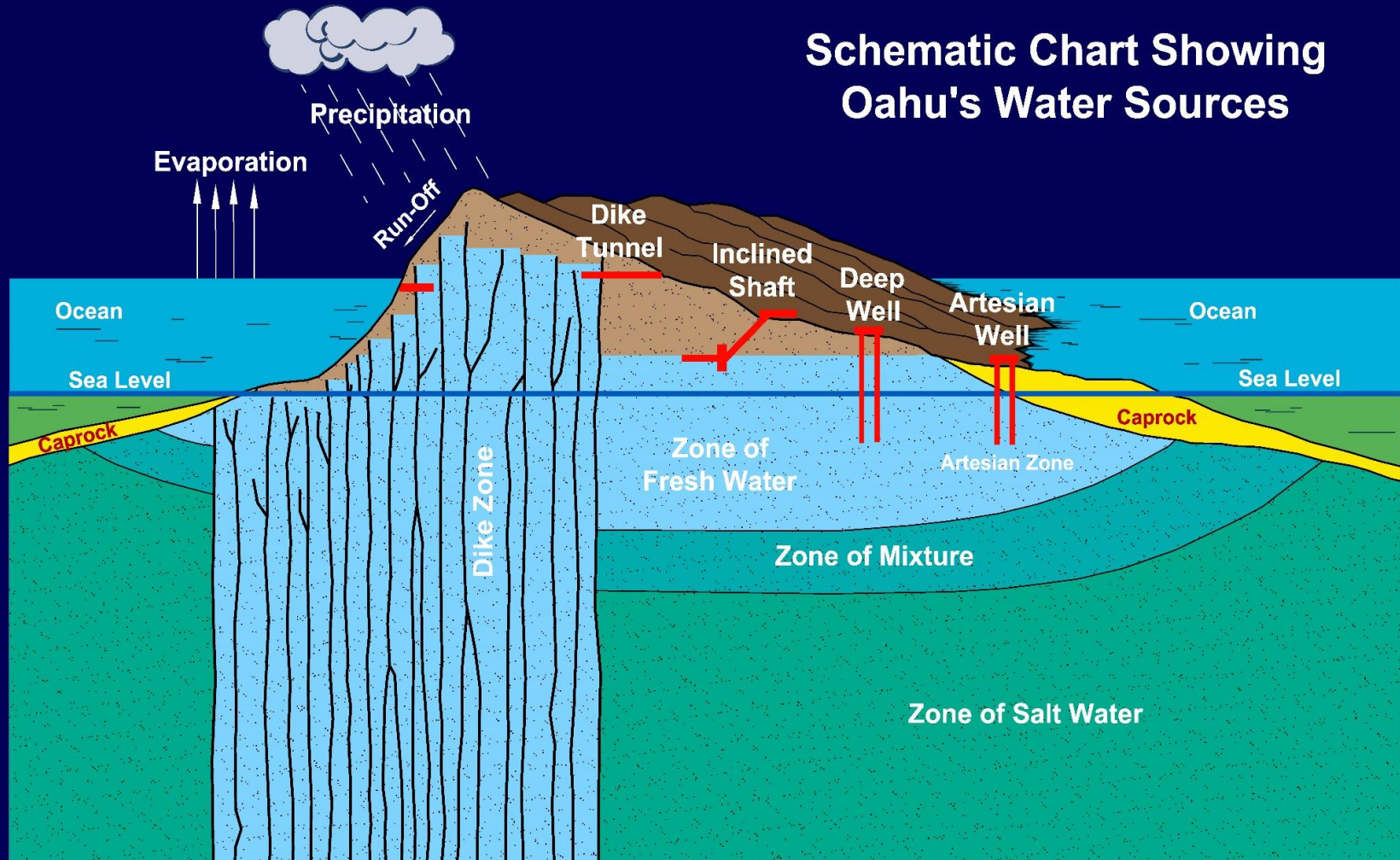
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Schematic Chart Showing Oahu's Water Sources



Oahu's Groundwater Bodies and Caprock

- Oahu is 598 square miles
- About 461 square miles of Oahu (77% of the island) are inland of the caprock
- About 137 square miles (23% of the island) are covered by caprock



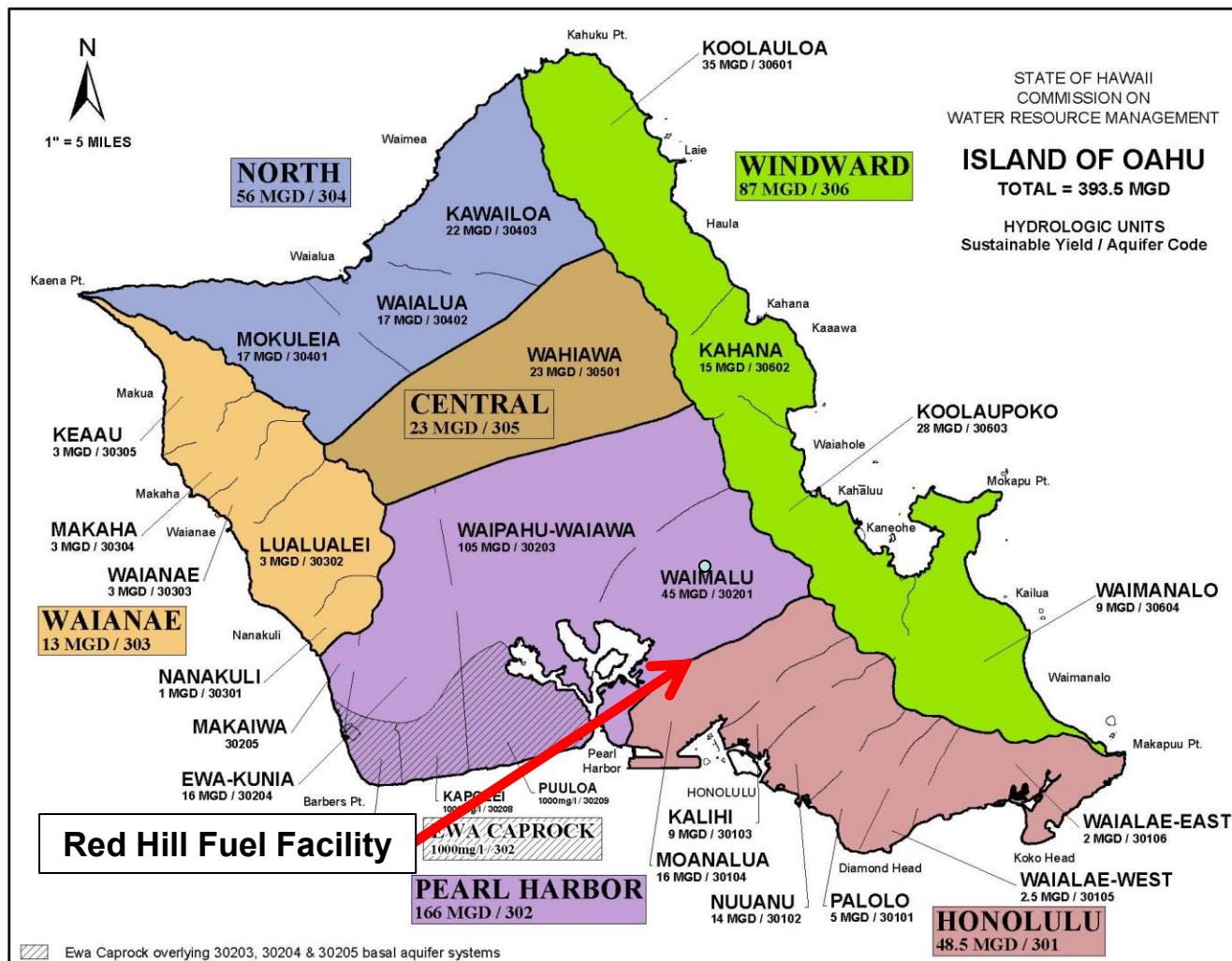
Ref. Izuka, Engott, Rotzoll, Bassiouni, Johnson, Miller and Mair, Volcanic aquifers of Hawai'i—Hydrogeology, water budgets, and conceptual models, Scientific Investigations Report 2015-5164, United States Geological Survey, 2015

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06/20/2018

Map Projection: Universal Transverse Mercator

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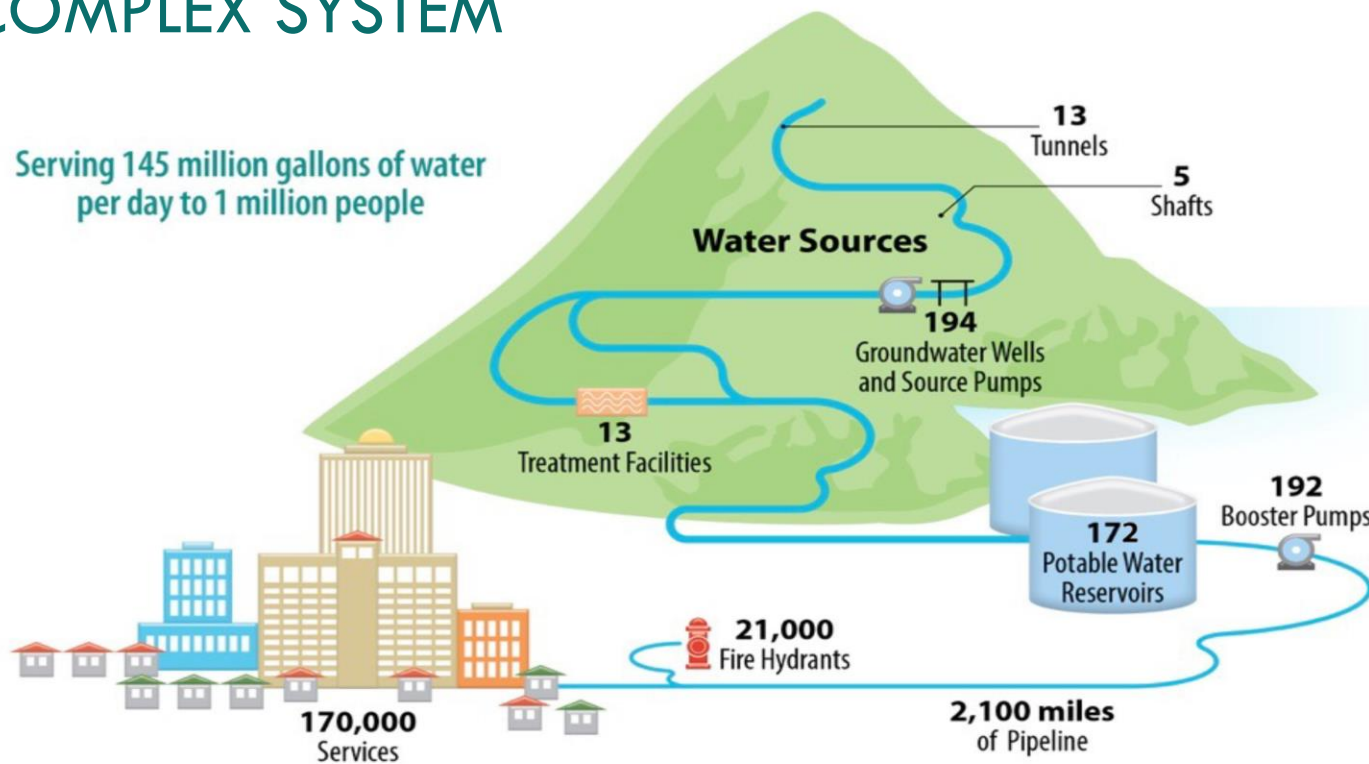


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DELIVERING WATER FROM UNDERGROUND WATER SOURCES TO YOUR HOME REQUIRES A LARGE AND COMPLEX SYSTEM

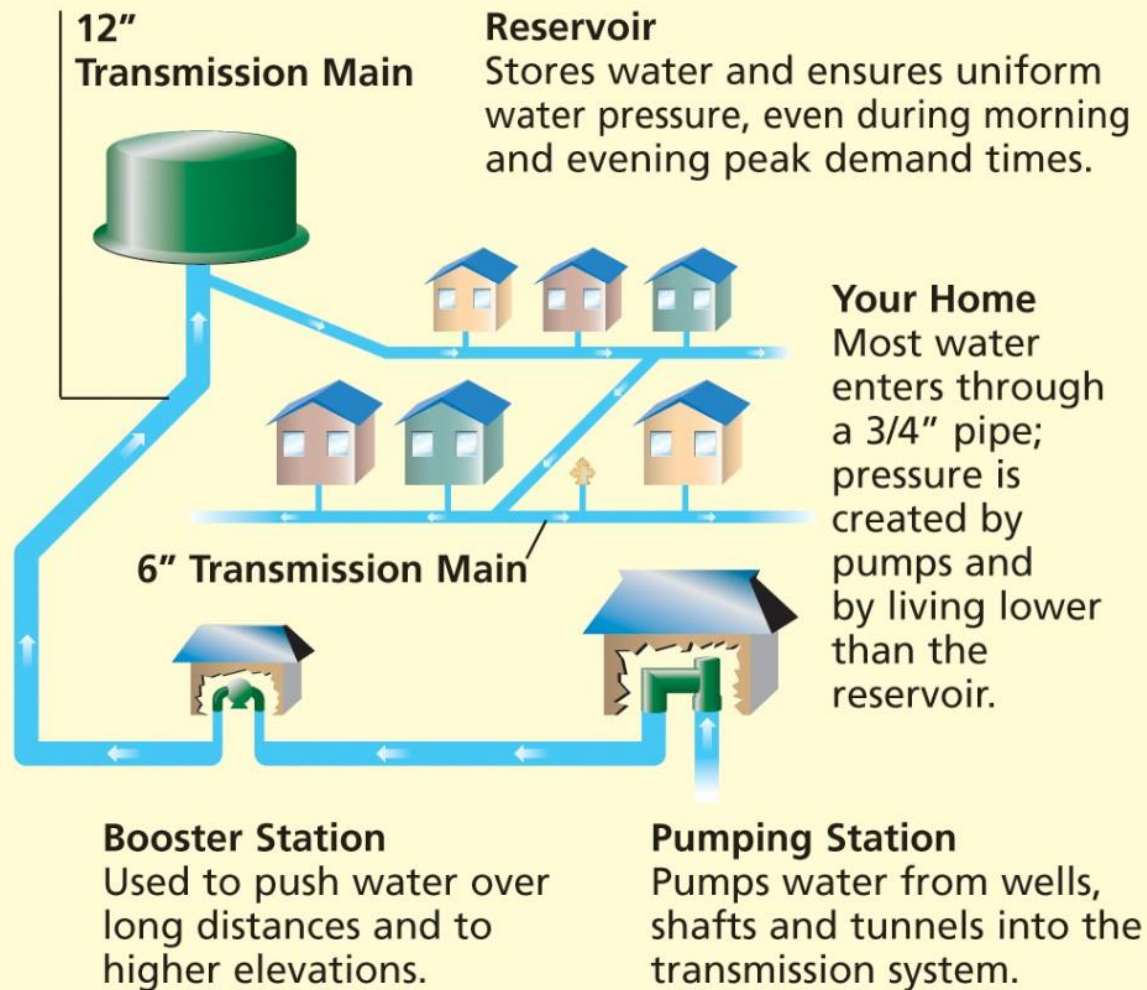


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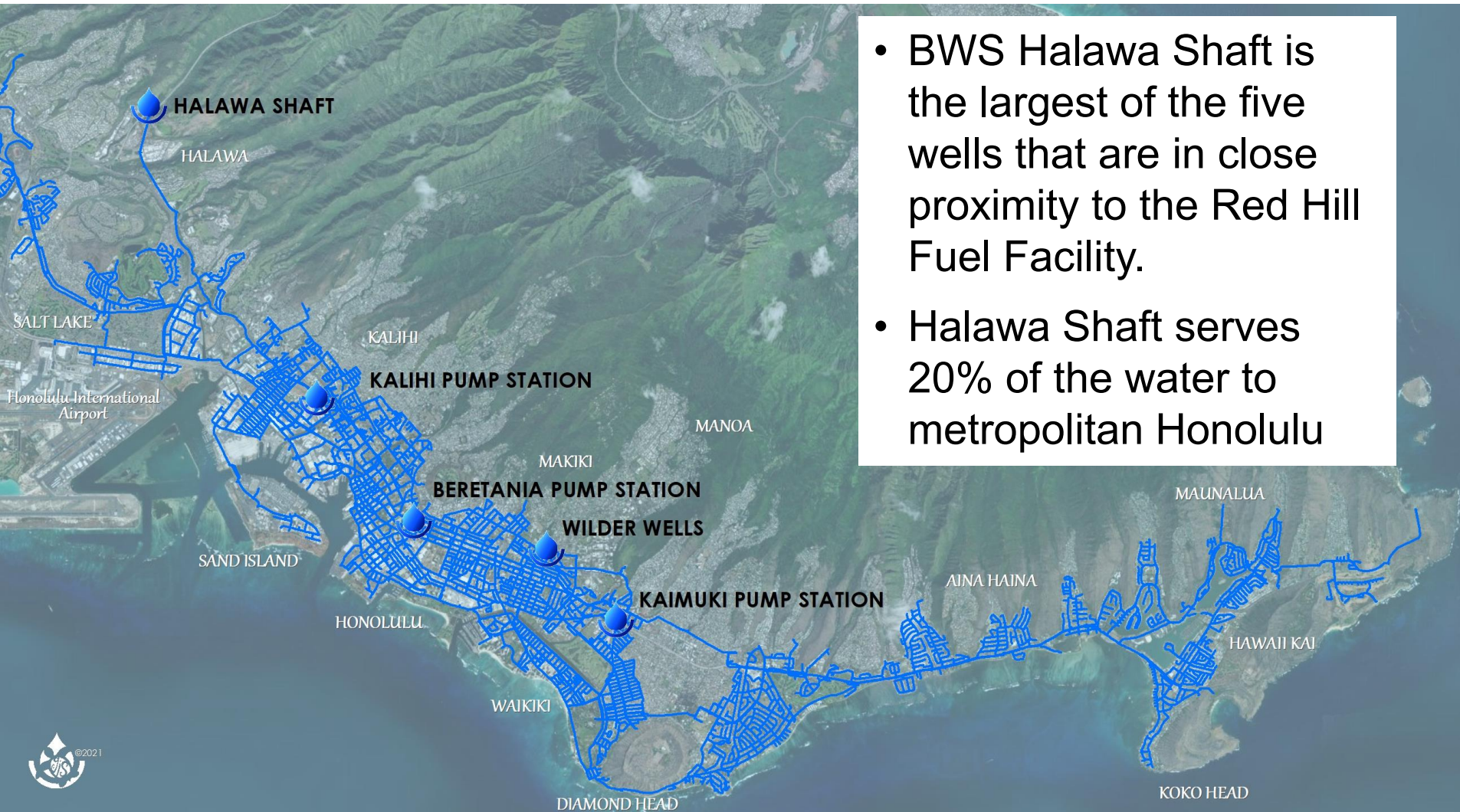


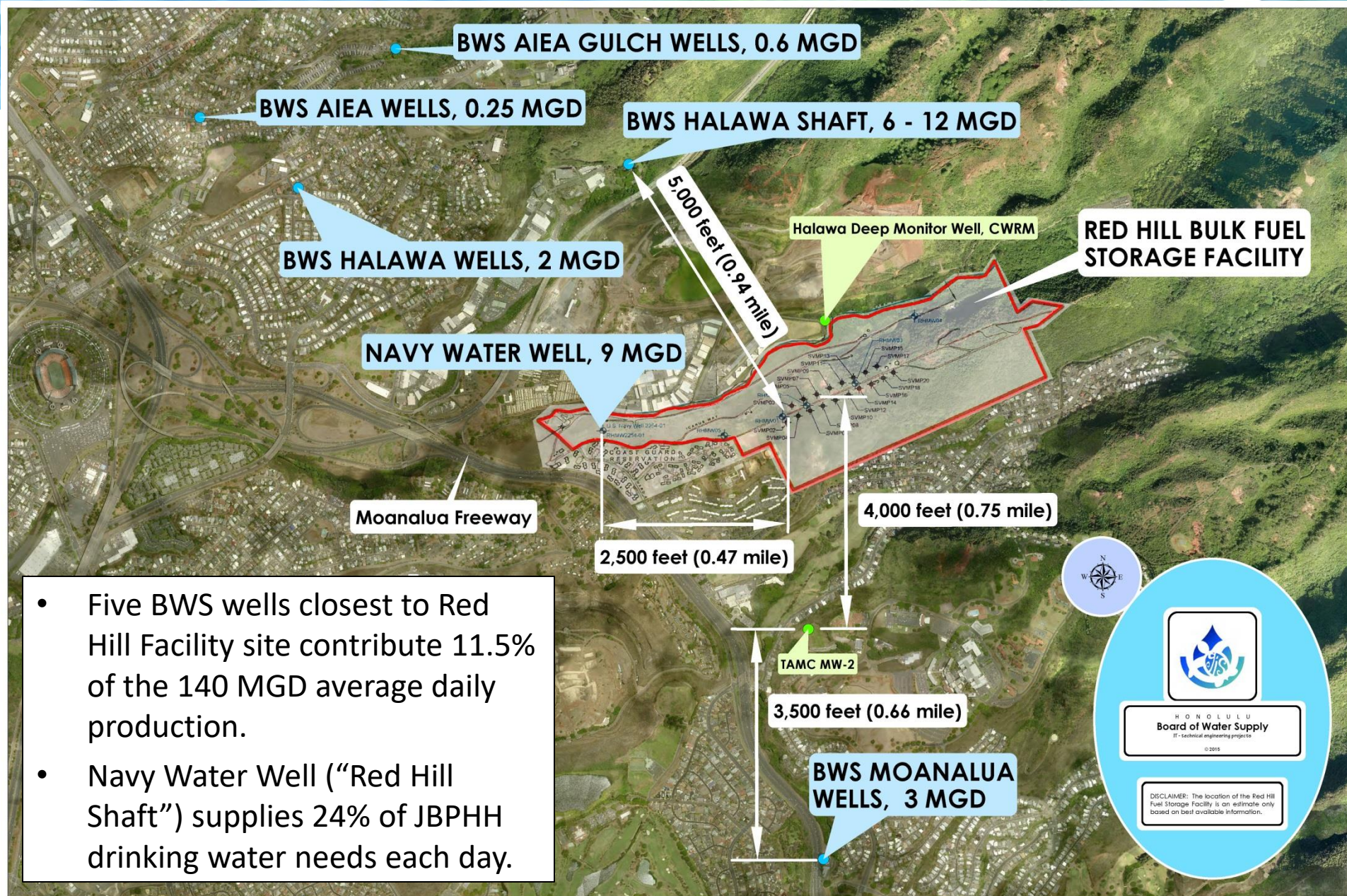
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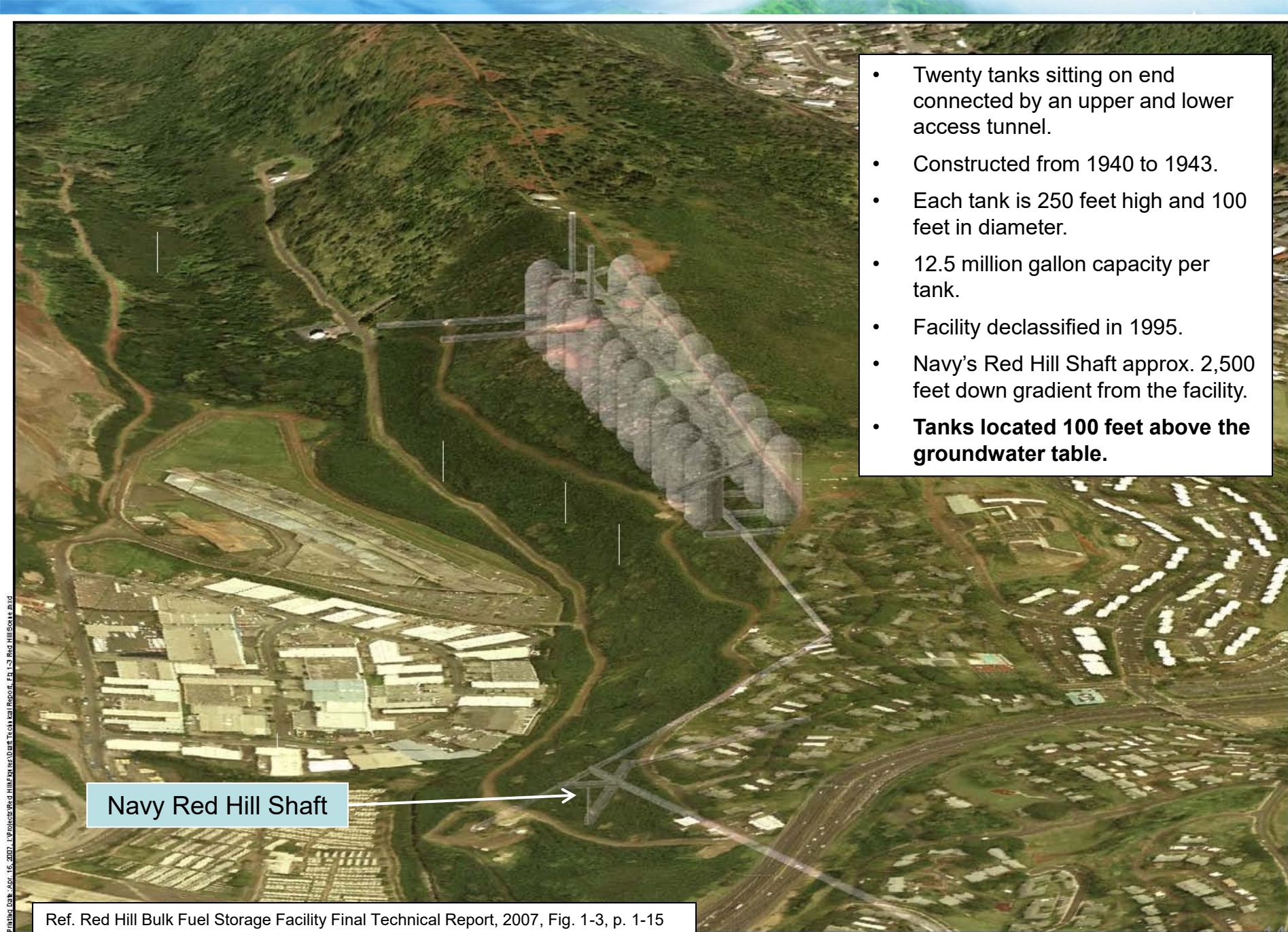
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- Twenty tanks sitting on end connected by an upper and lower access tunnel.
- Constructed from 1940 to 1943.
- Each tank is 250 feet high and 100 feet in diameter.
- 12.5 million gallon capacity per tank.
- Facility declassified in 1995.
- Navy's Red Hill Shaft approx. 2,500 feet down gradient from the facility.
- **Tanks located 100 feet above the groundwater table.**

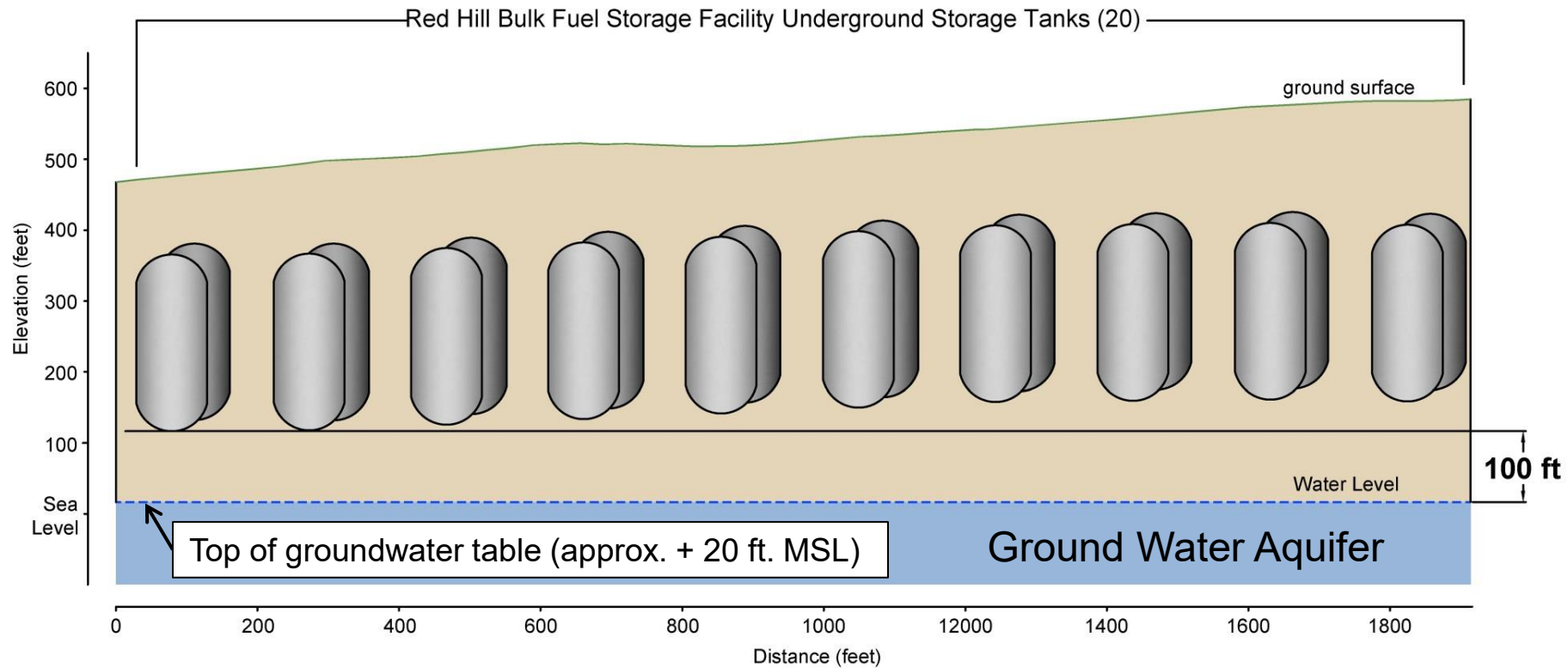
Navy Red Hill Shaft

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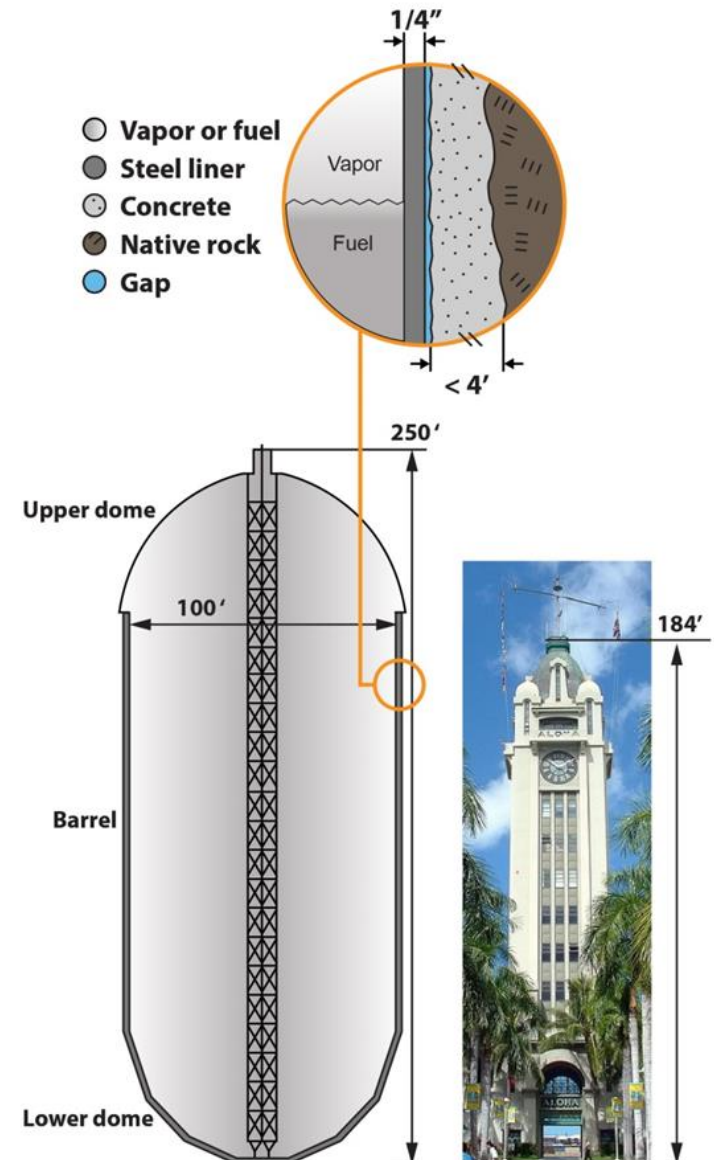


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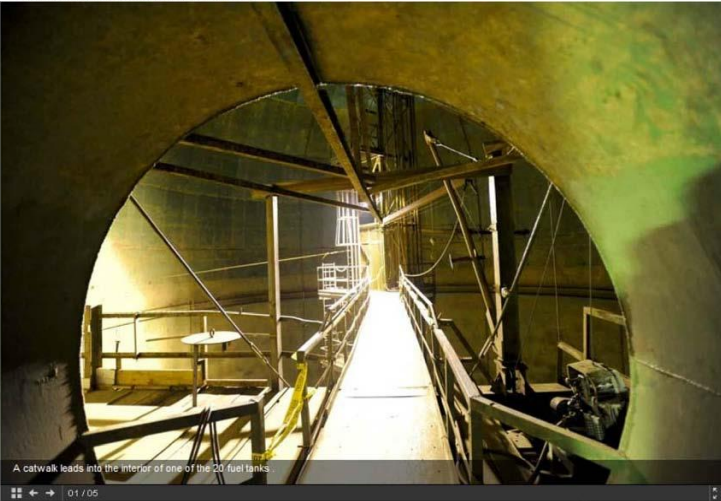
Red Hill Tanks

- Concrete with $\frac{1}{4}$ inch steel liner.
(Upper and lower dome steel is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch), about ten miles of pipelines
- Red Hill Tank large enough to hold Aloha Tower
- Fuel storage
 - Recently stored JP-5, JP-8 and F-76 (marine diesel)
 - Variety of fuels stored over the about 80 years of operation
- Rainwater seeping between $\frac{1}{4}$ inch steel liner and concrete and corroding steel liner
- History of leaks over its history dating back to the 1940s

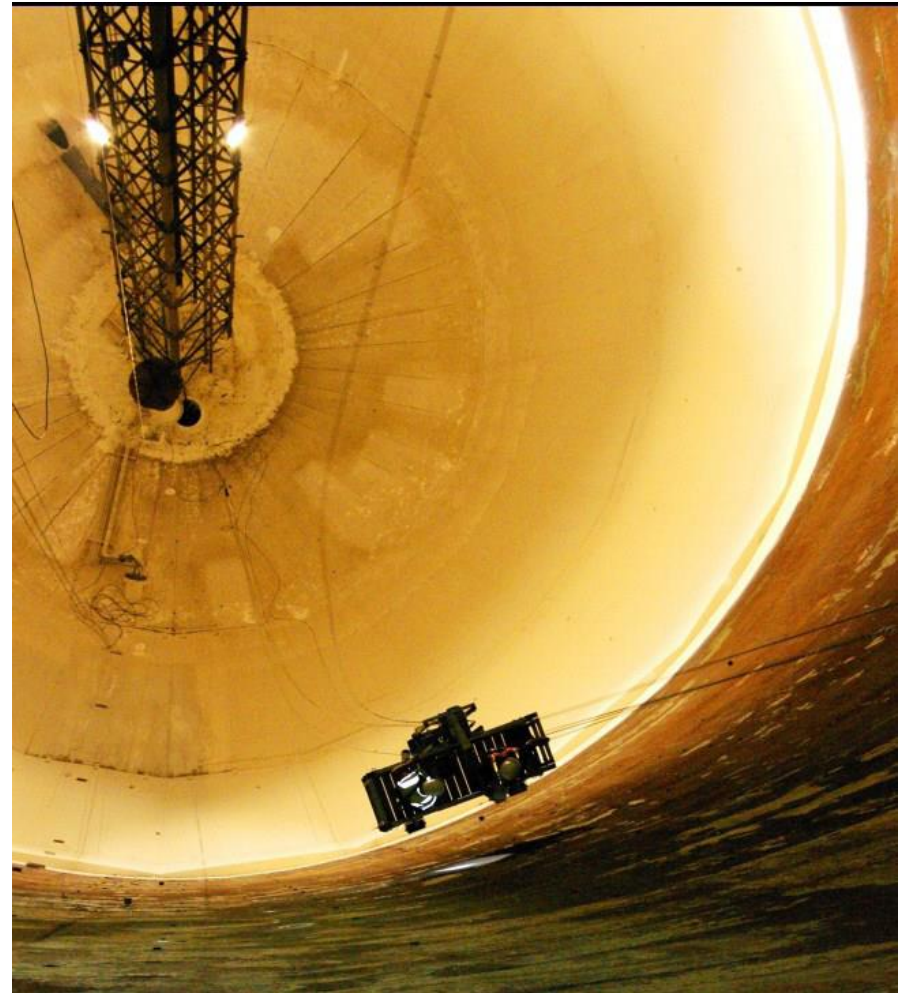


Inside Red Hill Tank

Red Hill Underground Fuel Storage Facility/ Navy Photos



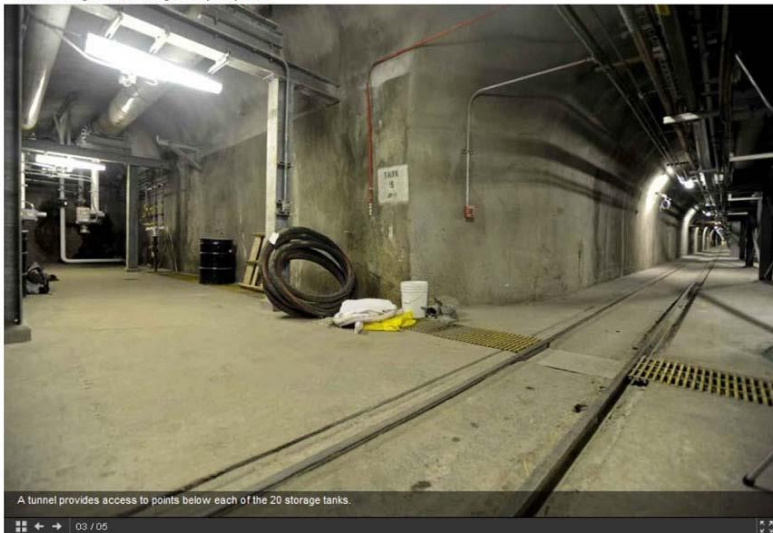
Red Hill Underground Fuel Storage Facility/ Navy Photos



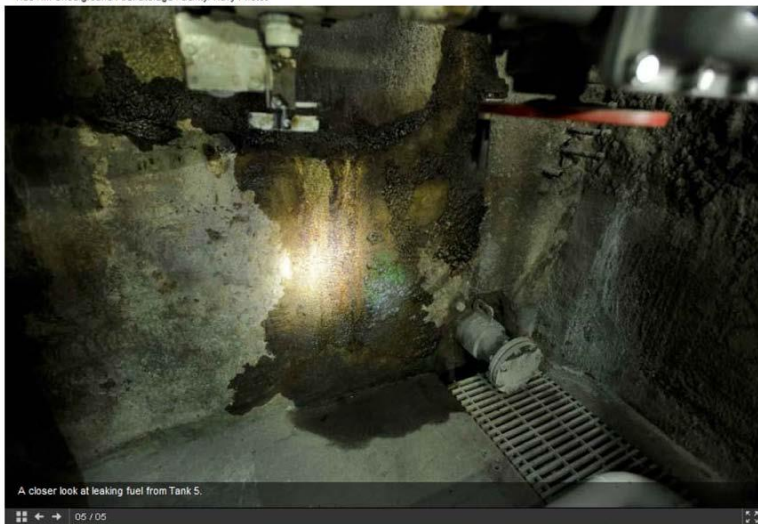
Ref: Red Hill: EPA May Force New Leak Detection System
For Toxic Spills, Civil Beat, S. Cocke, 2/14/14

Tank 5 Leak

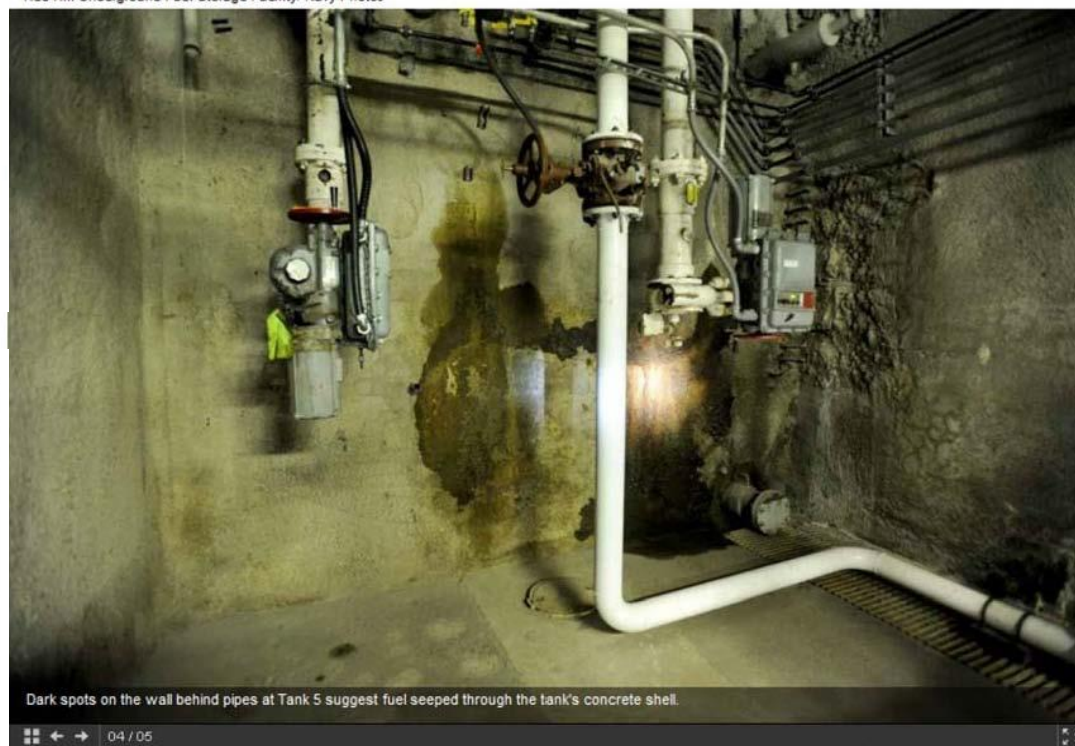
Red Hill Underground Fuel Storage Facility/ Navy Photos



Red Hill Underground Fuel Storage Facility/ Navy Photos



Red Hill Underground Fuel Storage Facility/ Navy Photos



Ref: Red Hill: EPA May Force New Leak Detection System For Toxic Spills, Civil Beat, S. Cocke, 2/14/14



January 13, 2014 leak from Red Hill Tank No. 5

- While refilling Tank 5 following completion of a clean-inspect-repair process, Navy operators detected a fuel level discrepancy in Tank 5.
- Navy estimated fuel loss up to 27,000 gallons of JP-8 fuel(*).
- The Navy drained the contents of Tank 5.
- Groundwater Monitoring Well test results (e.g., RMW02) showed a spike in levels of hydrocarbons.
- A full inspection of Tank 5 found poor workmanship and lack of oversight as the cause of the leak.

(*) Defense Logistics Agency estimates that fuel loss was 39,312 gallons.

Navy Study and Fuel Record Findings

- Navy commissioned studies
 - Petroleum hydrocarbons present in groundwater and rock beneath facility.
 - Warn of increasing facility age and potential catastrophic large volume release.
- Fuel releases
 - Occurred in the past (1947 – 2025)
 - Lack of clear and complete information on releases
 - Information in Red Hill Groundwater Protection Plan indicate 206,190 gallons (1947- mid 1980s)



Fuel Contamination Under Red Hill Tanks

- 1998-2002 Investigations.
- Basalt rock core samples taken from underneath **19 out of 20 tanks show petroleum stains.**

Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, Initial Phase II Site Characterization Report
Date: March 1999

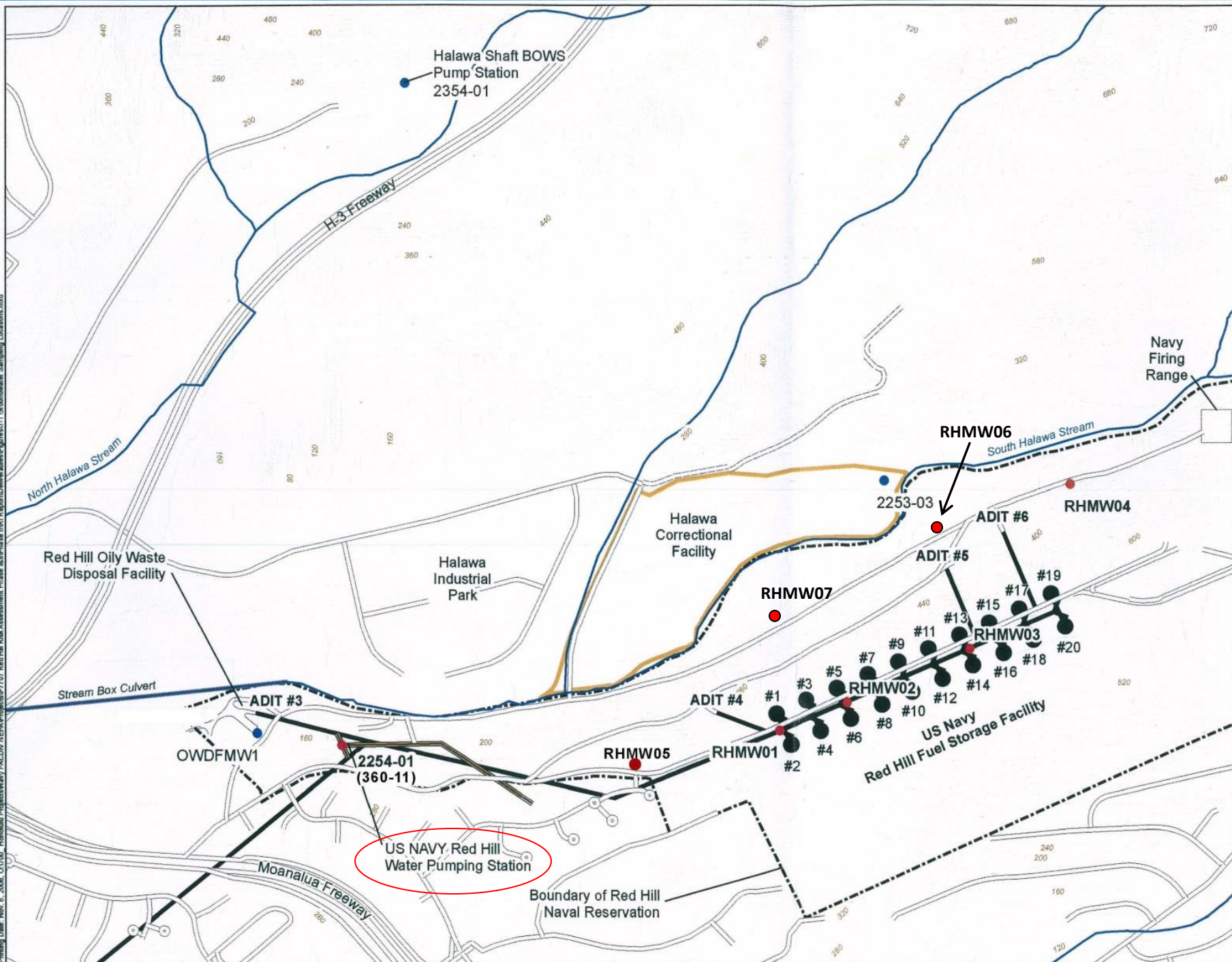
Section: 4
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Figure 4-7 Petroleum Stained Core – B16C, 49' to 60'



Figure 4-8 Petroleum Stained Core – B16C, 60' to 69'



Groundwater contamination underneath Red Hill as of samples taken **January 2016**

Halawa Shaft BOWS
Pump Station
2354-01

Monitor Well (RHMW02)

6,500 ppb TPH diesel
0.51 ppb Acenaphthalene
0.28 ppb Fluorene
48 ppb 1-methylnaphthalene
7.9 ppb 2-methylnaphthalene
120 ppb Naphthalene
0.014 ppb Ethyl benzene
0.21 ppb Xylenes

Navy Red Hill Shaft

21 ppb TPH diesel
<54 ppb TPH oil
<0.005 ppb Naphthalene
0.036 ppb dissolved lead

Red Hill Oily Waste
Disposal Facility

**Monitor Well
(RHMW05)**

26 ppb TPH diesel
0.026 ppb dissolved lead

Monitor Well (RHMW01)

430 ppb TPH diesel
0.029 ppb 1-methylnaphthalene
0.18 ppb Naphthalene
0.035 ppb dissolved lead

Monitor Well (RHMW03)

150 ppb TPH diesel
<0.005 ppb 1-methylnaphthalene
<0.005 ppb Naphthalene
0.093 ppb dissolved lead

Groundwater contamination underneath Red Hill as of samples collected **January 2016**

Monitoring Well (OWDFMW01)

320 ppb TPH diesel
69 ppb TPH oil
0.030 ppb 1-methylnaphthalene
0.020 ppb 2-methylnaphthalene
0.024 ppb Naphthalene
34 ppb Acetone
0.040 ppb dissolved lead

Monitor Well (CWRM 2253-03)

43 ppb TPH diesel
63 ppb TPH oil
<0.005 ppb Naphthalene
0.273 ppb Lead

Monitor Well (RHMW06)

21 ppb TPH diesel
<54 ppb TPH oil
0.010 ppb dissolved lead

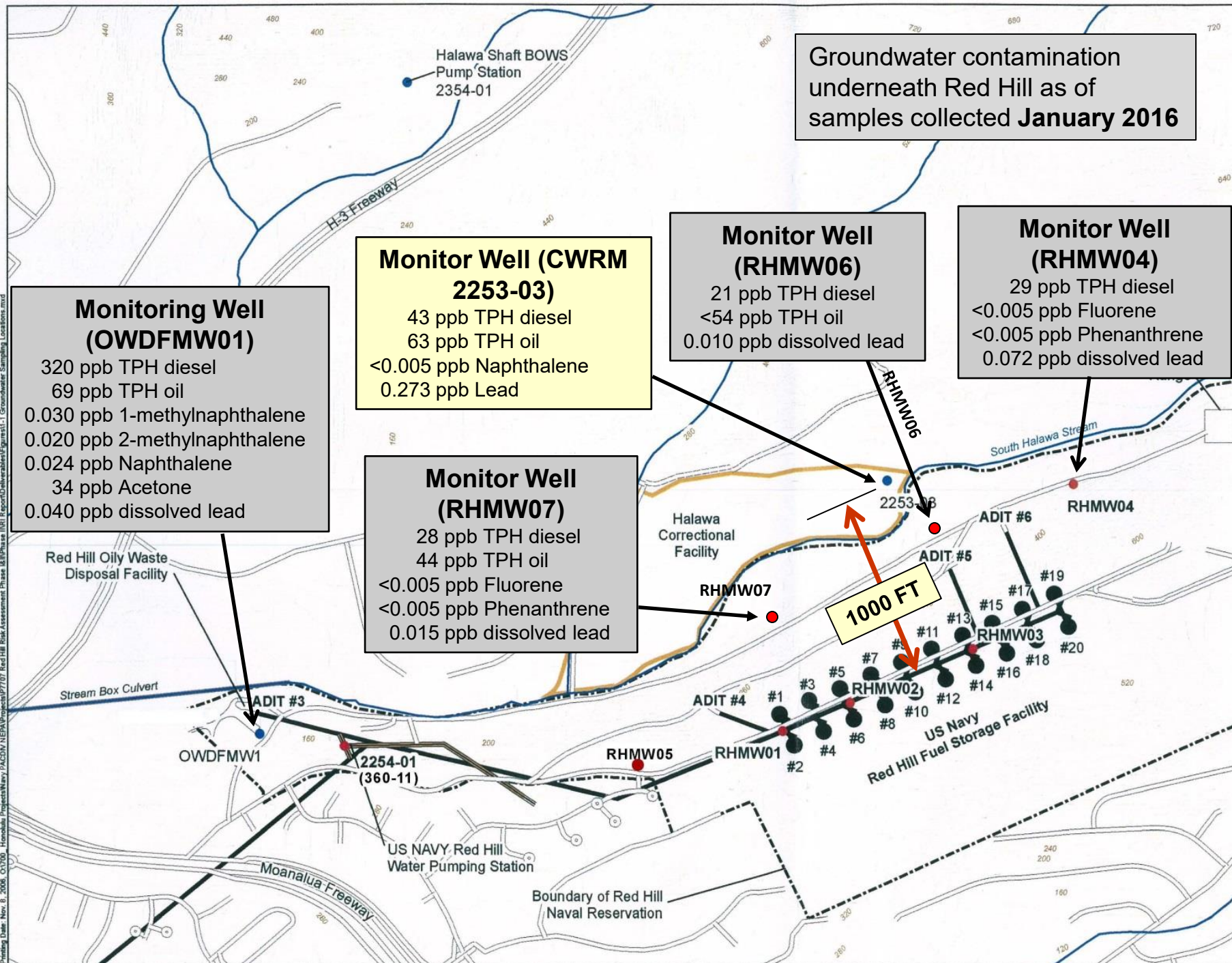
Monitor Well (RHMW04)

29 ppb TPH diesel
<0.005 ppb Fluorene
<0.005 ppb Phenanthrene
0.072 ppb dissolved lead

Monitor Well (RHMW07)

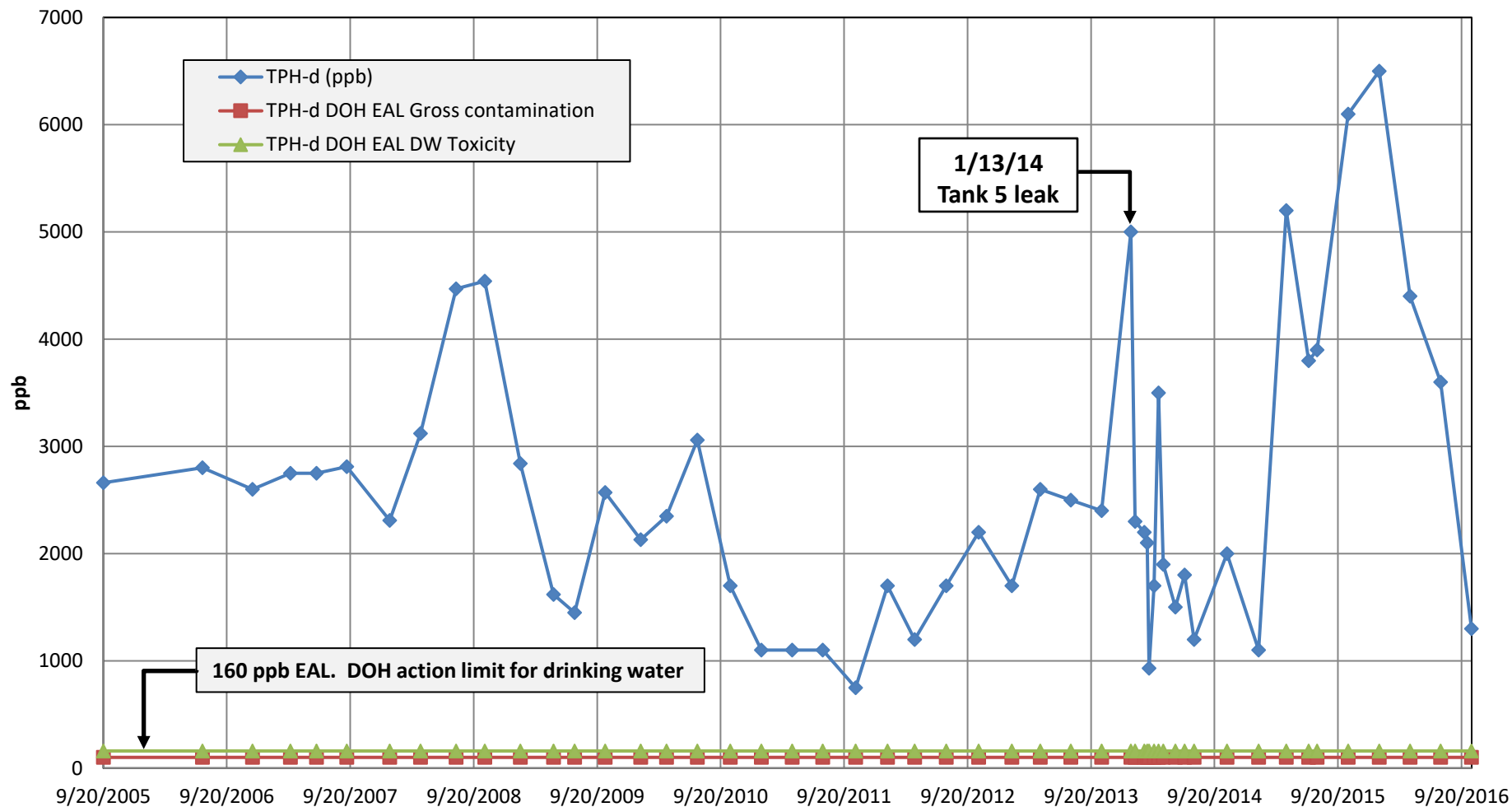
28 ppb TPH diesel
44 ppb TPH oil
<0.005 ppb Fluorene
<0.005 ppb Phenanthrene
0.015 ppb dissolved lead

1000 FT

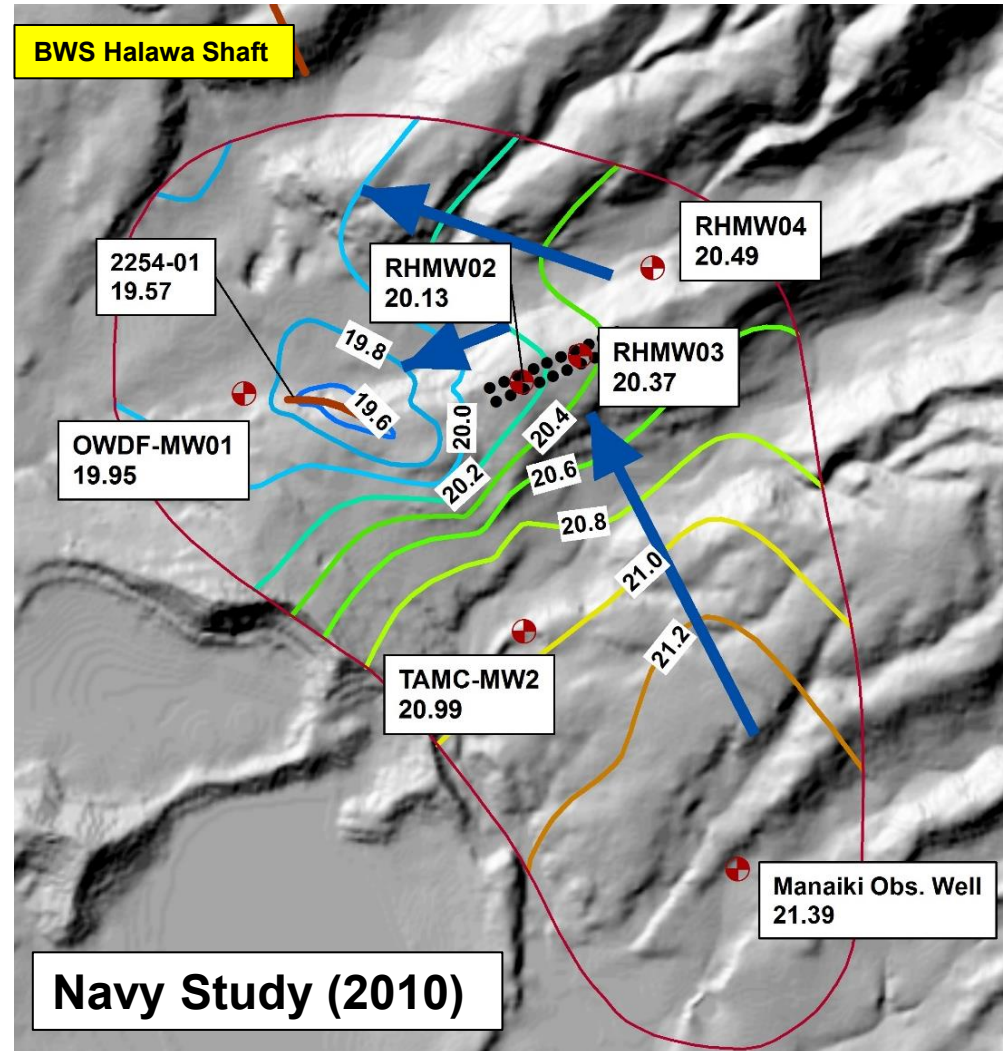
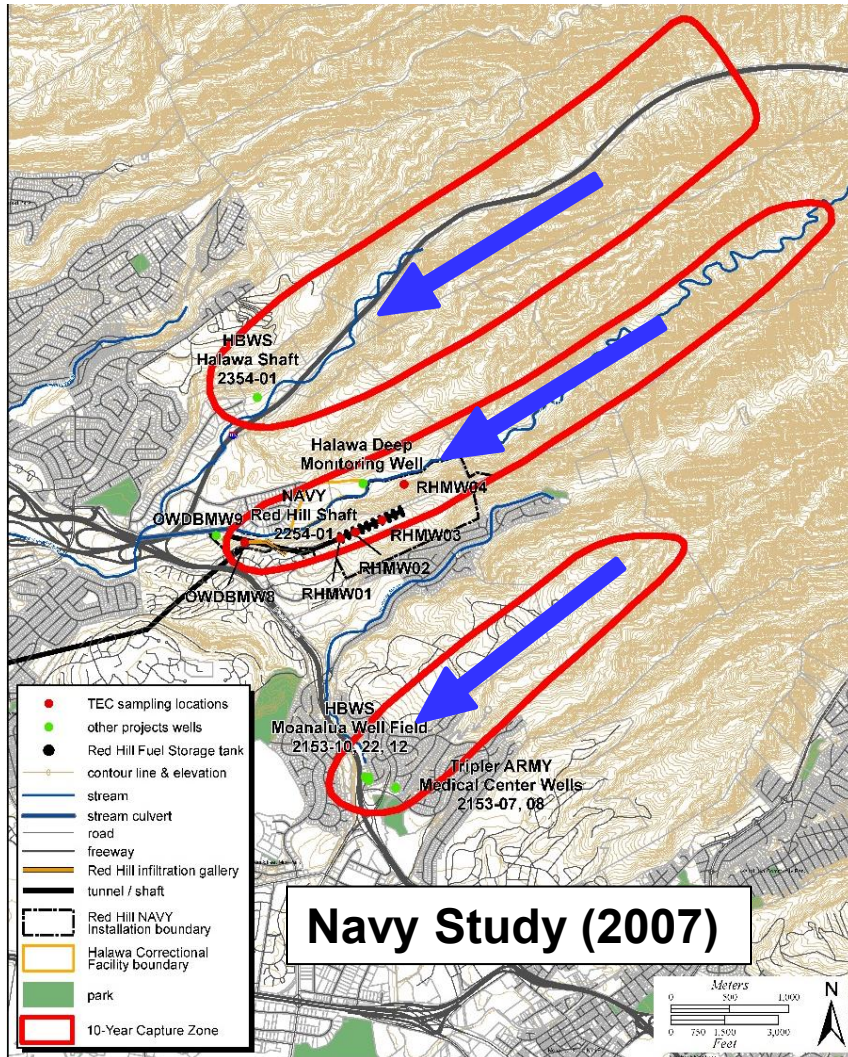




Groundwater Contamination underneath Red Hill Tanks (RHMW02) as of **October 2016**



Navy Study Show Groundwater Flow from Red Hill toward BWS Halawa Shaft





2010 Navy Audit

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Naval Audit Service



Audit Report



Department of the Navy Red Hill and Upper Tank Farm Fuel Storage Facilities

This report contains information exempt from
release under the Freedom of Information Act.
Exemptions (b)(2) high and (b)(6) apply.

~~Do not release outside of the Department of the Navy,
or post on non-Naval Audit websites or in Navy Taskers,
without approval from the Auditor General of the Navy.~~

N2010-0049
16 August 2010

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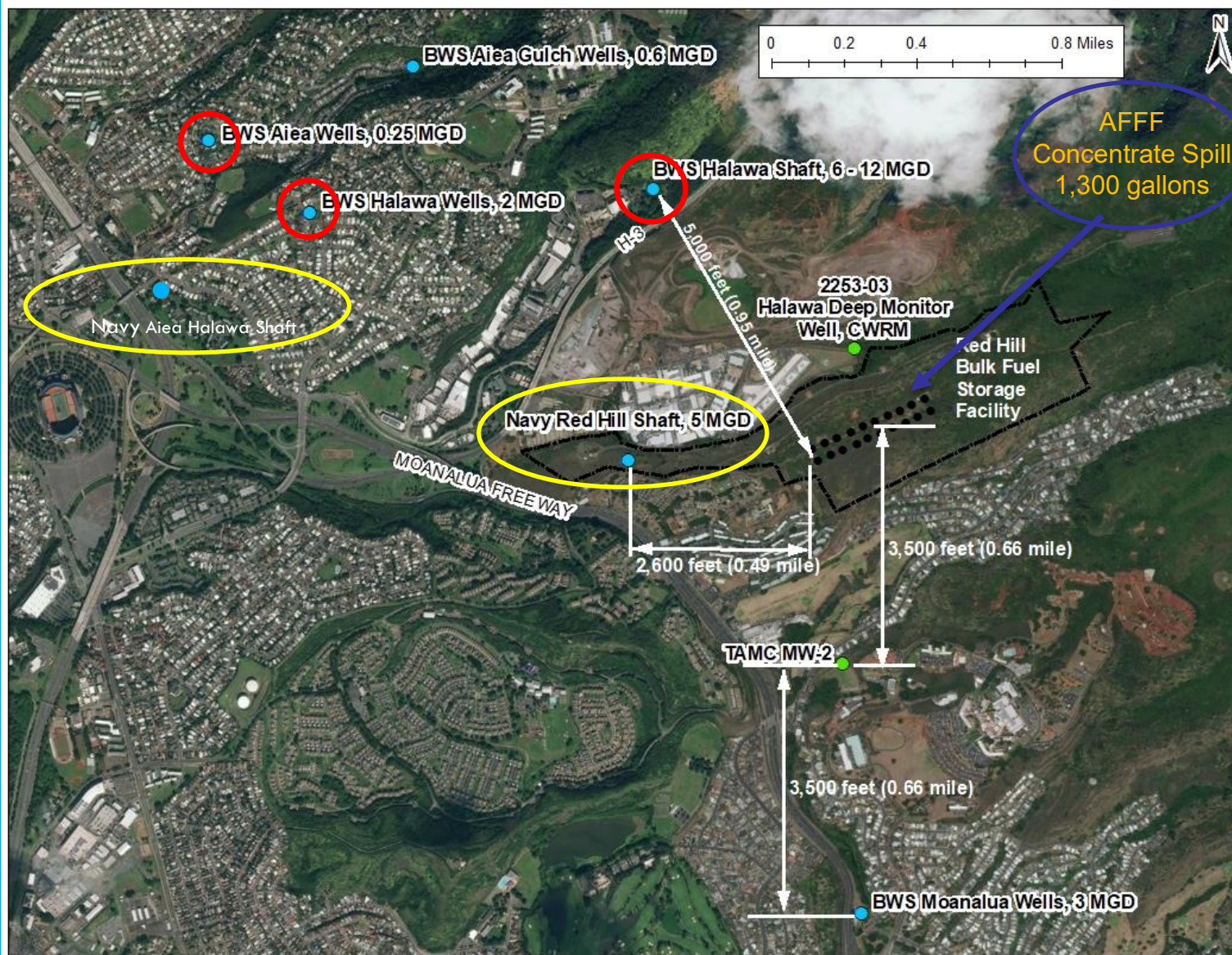
- Findings
 - Groundwater contamination resulting from irregular maintenance and insufficient inspection.
 - Delays in completion of the maintenance cycle due to operational and time constraints.
 - Inability of current leak detection methods in detecting slow, chronic fuel leaks.
 - Non-compliance with terms of the State DOH approved Navy Groundwater Protection Plan (GPP).

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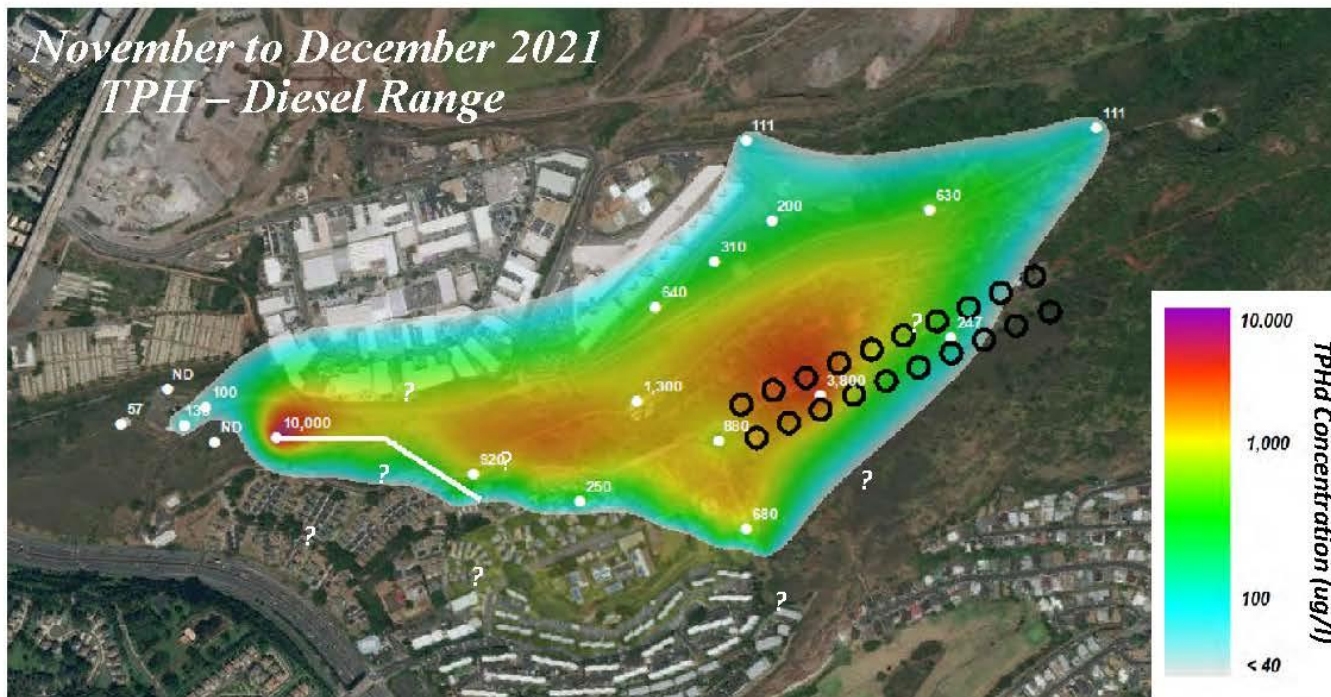
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Several water sources are shut down in response to JBPHH contamination

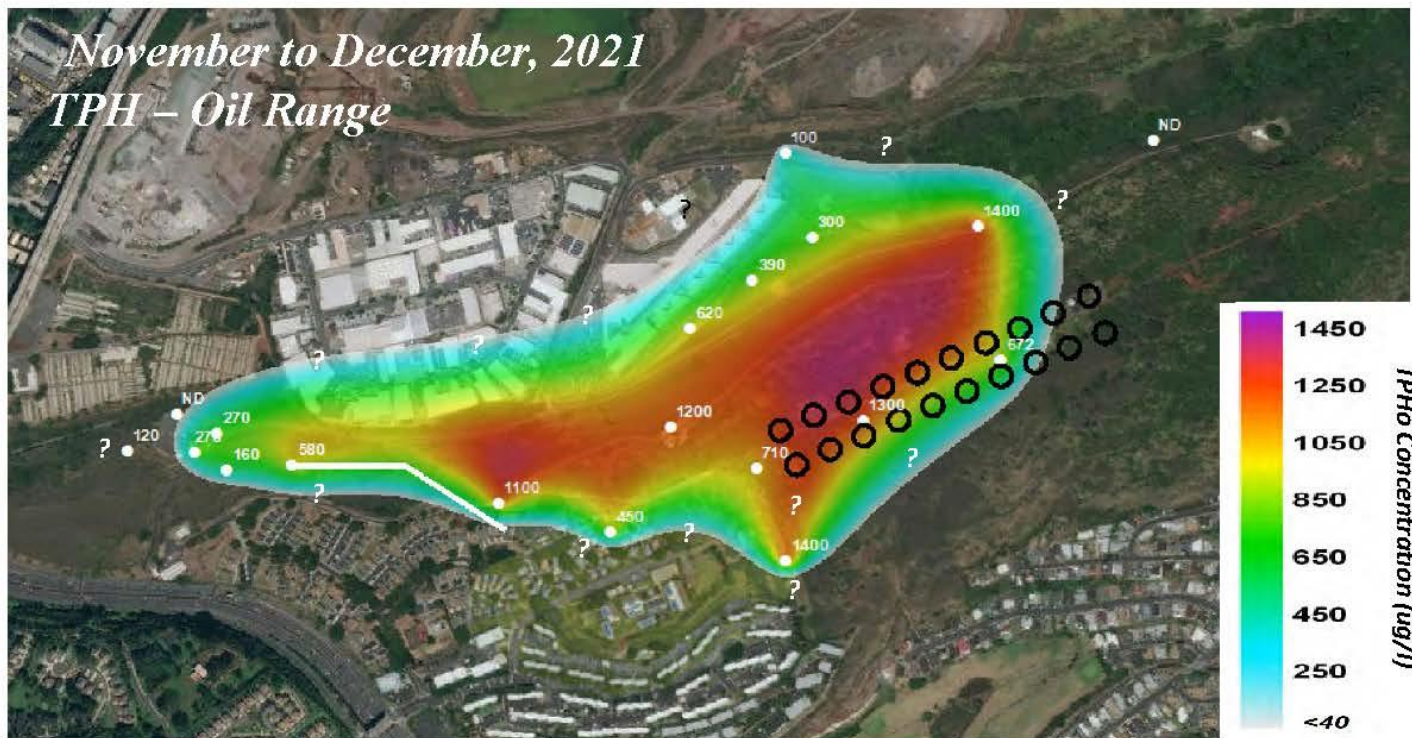
TPH-Diesel Plume Distribution over Time

November to December 2021



TPH-Oil Plume Distribution over Time

November to December, 2021





EPA 2023 RED HILL CONSENT ORDER

Public can comment
through Feb 6, 2023:

[regulations.gov/commenton/
EPA-R09-RCRA-2022-0970-0002](https://www.regulations.gov/commenton/EPA-R09-RCRA-2022-0970-0002)



Defueling



Goal: Enhance infrastructure, testing, and response procedures in preparation for defueling.

Closure



Goal: Establish approval process and steps for safe closure of each tank as it comes out of service.

Drinking Water



Goals:

- Safeguard drinking water quality at the Red Hill Shaft and all Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH) well sites
- Implement a long-term drinking water monitoring plan
- Conduct comprehensive infrastructure assessments and improvements of the JBPHH Drinking Water System.



Recent Events

June 26th

- Monthly Meeting with UH Tracer Study Group

July 1st

- Filing of Federal Tort Claims Act Lawsuit

July 3rd

- Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility Closure Plan Supplemental #4

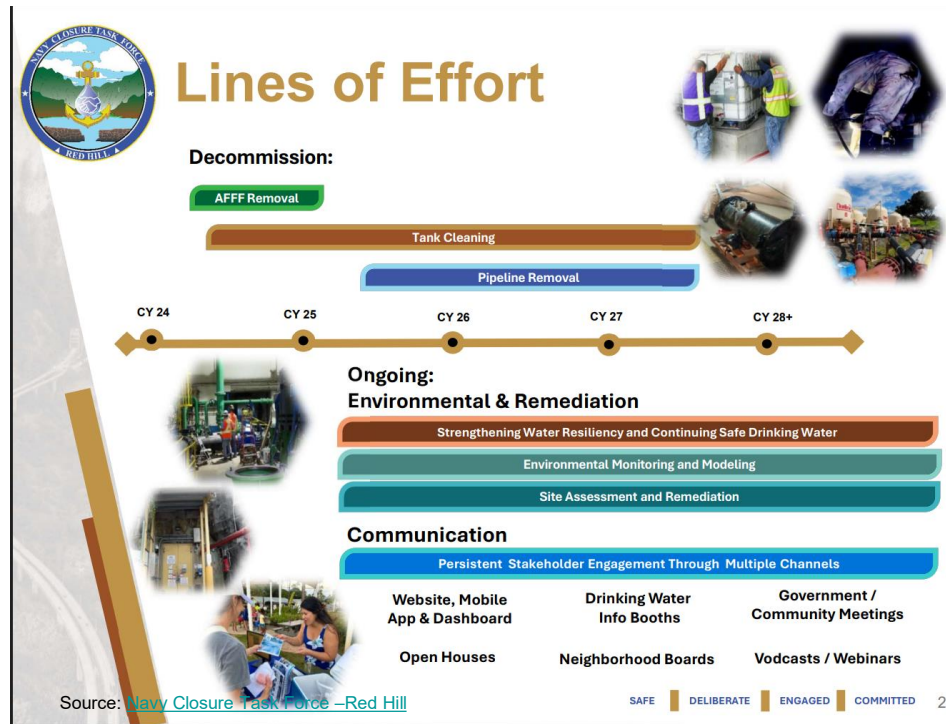
July 14th

- Legislature Information Brief –Update from Navy Closure Task Force
–Red Hill



Legislature information brief -July 14, 2025

- Rear Admiral Stephen Barnett the Navy Closure Task Force.
- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) Investigation following the 2022 Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) is ongoing under CERCLA at Red Hill. Information can be found on www.redhillern.com.
- Reactivation of Aiea-Halawa Shaft anticipated this year in coordination with Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH).
- Reactivation of Red Hill Shaft anticipated in 2027 pending installation of treatment system in coordination with DOH.
- Red Hill Facility closure anticipated to complete in 2028. Remediation and monitoring to follow.
- Long term remediation efforts is anticipated to take decades.



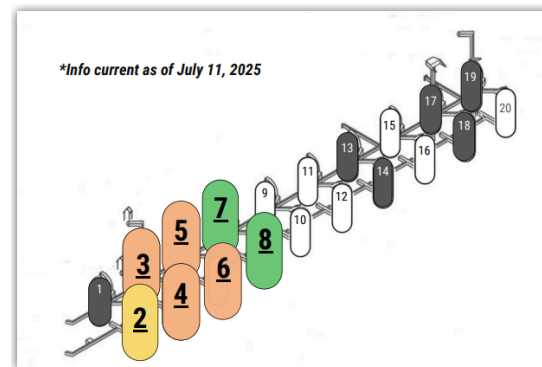
SLUDGE AND RESIDUAL FUEL REMOVAL

GALLONS RESIDUAL FUEL REMOVED

****As of July 11, 2025***

GALLONS SLUDGE REMOVED

Sludge is removed by lowering personnel to the bottom of the tank where it is manually shoveled out and put into drums. The drums are sealed and sent off the island for disposal at a permitted waste disposal facility on the continental U.S.



- ❑ **Step 1 – Preparation** (Approx. 2-3 months):
 - Isolate tank and disconnect piping
 - Install tank ventilation equipment and inject water to soften sludge
 - Remove flowable sludge
 - Begin tank ventilation with forced air
- ❑ **Step 2 – Remove Solid Sludge** (Approx. 2-3 months):
 - Inspect and repair central tower and catwalk
 - Install center tower elevator; load test tower and catwalk
 - Remove solid sludge
- ❑ **Step 3 – Pressure Washing** (Approx. 1-2 months):
 - Set up pressure washing system and
 - Pressure wash with 3% Simple Green
 - Rinse, continuously removing rinsate
 - Dry tank interior and validate cleanliness; submit cleaning report
 - Receive regulatory agency final approval that tank is clean
- ❑ **Step 4 – Tank Decommission** (Approx. 1-2 Months):
 - Remove booms and infrastructure
 - Install permanent lockable steel hatch at the entrance

Black tanks were empty and out of service prior to defueling.



TANK CLOSURE PLAN SUPPLEMENT 4

Detailed Closure Design

May 31, 2025

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Tank Closure Plan Supplement 4

SAFE. DELIBERATE. ENGAGED. COMMITTED.



NCTF-RH is not waiting for 'beneficial re-use' to be established and is proceeding with closing the facility in accordance with regulatory requirements.



RH tanks and surge tanks: interior and exterior tank components will be verified empty and/or clean or removed. Regulator-approved tank cleaning verification plan available online.



RH tanks and surge tanks will be closed in place.



RH tanks will be allowed to passively vent to the upper and lower tunnels.



Drainage from each RH tank will be open to the main sump, and the drainage pathway via the Fuel Oil Reclamation (FOR) line to Tank 311 will be maintained.

Source: [Navy Closure Task Force -Red Hill](#)

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Questions?