

From: CLK Council Info
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2016 10:52 PM
Subject: Testimony

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Meeting Date 06-01-2016
Council/PH
Committee Council
Agenda Item Bill 15, CD2, Proposed FD1 (OCS2016-0542/5/24/2016 4:22 PM)
Your position on
the matter Support
Representing Organization
Organization Sierra Club
Do you wish to
speak at the
hearing? No

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2016 JUN -1 AM 7:40

Honolulu City Council
Meeting June 01 2016
Re: Bill 15, CD2, Proposed FD1 (OCS2016-0542/5/24/2016 4:22 PM)

Aloha Chair Martin, Vice Chair Anderson and Members of the Council,

My name is Anthony Aalto, I am the Chair of the O'ahu Group of the Sierra Club of Hawaii. The Club has more than 12,000 registered members and supporters in the state, of whom more than 8,000 live on O'ahu and on whose behalf I am testifying. I thank you for this opportunity to do so.

Written
Testimony

We respectfully ask you to reconsider the deep cuts to the sewer CIP budget and to support the Floor Draft amendments to restore these budget lines.

Our first concern, as environmentalists, is the quality of the near-shore marine environment. We want the citizens of Honolulu and visitors to our city to be able to swim, surf and recreate in clean waters, not in waters polluted by human waste which can cause sickness and disease. According to the most recent Beach Monitoring report by the NRDC, 36% of the water samples at Kahanamoku Beach exceeded the EPA's Beach Action Values. This is not welcome news for a state so reliant on beaches as a key component of its principal industry.

We are also determined to make every effort to preserve our coral reefs which are highly vulnerable to the pollutants in waste water and outfalls. Reefs are already under great stress as evidenced by bleaching resulting from rising water temperatures and acidification caused by global warming. Coral reefs are one of the foundational building blocks of life in the oceans. They are the nurseries for about a quarter of all the fish in the sea and they protect our coastline from erosion.

It is for this reason that the Sierra Club has worked so diligently for so many years to press the City & County to upgrade its waste water treatment infrastructure.

Of the \$126 million in proposed cuts in the CD1 more than \$87 million are for the Awa

Street Pump Station (project # 2011046) and the Sand Island Secondary Treatment (project # 2012059) which are both required by the 2010 Consent Decree that was signed by the City & County of Honolulu with the federal Environmental Protection Agency following years of litigation by the Sierra Club and its allies.

We spent some \$2 million on that litigation to obtain what we consider to be a crucial victory for the environment. Those are gains that we will not lightly abandon.

We note that in fighting the litigation, the City expended more than \$10 million in attorney fees and eventually agreed to pay a \$1.6 million fine. Surely this is not a scenario we would wish to revisit?

Moreover, the threat of litigation would come not only from environmentalists who have been so passionately engaged in this issue, but from the federal government. If the EPA were to seek redress in court, the city could face the prospect of more hefty fines.

As a party to the Consent Decree, the Sierra Club is copied on all correspondence between the EPA and the City's Department of Environmental Services relating to the agreed project timetables and deadlines. As such we have been able to observe how the EPA has been prepared to grant the City some flexibility and leeway on these specific deadlines. We believe that if the City were to call into question its commitment to the terms of the Consent Decree, as symbolized by the huge proposed cuts, the EPA would likely be far less accommodating. If the City does not fund the planning for these projects it will not be able to meet the deadlines. And if the EPA were to adopt a rigid application of the terms of the Consent Decree, it would undoubtedly inflict costs on the City.

Our concern is not only for the Consent Decree projects. We note that the Sand Island wastewater Basin Odor Control project (# 2010049) is required to avoid ongoing violation of the state Department of Health air permit limits. Failure to address this issue could potentially lead to fines as high as \$25,000 per day.

We note that project # 1994511, the Sand Island Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion, Primary Treatment project is currently on the chopping block. We believe this is short sighted in the extreme. In 2014, when the plant was hit by the effects of Hurricane Ana, the city dodged a bullet. We very narrowly avoided having to tell every resident from Salt Lake to the Niu Valley to stop flushing their toilets. But we are still in the firing line and a similar event could easily force such a draconian prohibition, possibly lasting as long as a week. Why would we want to risk such an outcome?

The Sand Island outfall improvement project # 2009102 is another vital infrastructure upgrade. During the heavy rains last August we noted how the spill levels at the Ala Moana station rose extremely fast. So we know that storm water is infiltrating the waste water treatment system. This has the potential to dump millions of gallons of wastewater with only primary treatment into the near-shore marine environment close to Waikiki and Ala Moana.

Such an outfall would almost certainly lead to beach closures and the attendant bad publicity. Given that severe rain events are increasing in frequency and severity, why would we inflict such a risk on ourselves?

Finally, project #2015055, the Sand Island Plant Return Flow Treatment plan, while not specifically required by the Consent Decree, would go a long way to providing the assurance that we will meet the terms of the Decree.

These are all investments that will pay dividends for years to come. They will benefit

literally hundreds of thousands of residents and our Visitor Industry and help us meet our statutory and moral obligation to protect the environment.

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge this committee to restore the funding for all six projects.

Mahalo.

Anthony Aalto
Chair
Sierra Club of O'ahu.

Testimony
Attachment
Accept Terms
and Agreement 1

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RECEIVED
CITY CLERK
OFFICE OF HONOLULU
2016 JUN -1 AM 17:40

Honolulu City Council
Meeting Date: June 1
Re Agenda item: Bill 15, (2016) CD2 FD1- Kānewai Spring

Aloha Chair Martin, Vice Chair Anderson and Members of the Council,

My name is Anthony Aalto, I am the Chair of the O'ahu Group of the Sierra Club of Hawaii. The Club has more than 12,000 registered members and supporters in the state, of whom more than 8,000 live on O'ahu and on whose behalf I am testifying. I thank you for this opportunity to do so.

Written
Testimony

We respectfully ask you to maintain the proposed Clean Water funding to preserve Kānewai Spring and we urge you to reject the FD1 proposal to cut these funds. We note that this precious water source is the last large open spring that freely flows to the ocean in all of Honolulu. Kānewai Spring is a cultural and historic piko and a vital source of water for many fish and wildlife species. It feeds Kānewai Fishpond and the Paikō Wildlife Sanctuary before flowing into Maunaloa Bay. It is for these reasons that the City Clean Water and Natural Lands Commission strongly recommended funding to purchase and preserve Kānewai Spring.

We fear that without this funding, it is likely that Kānewai Spring will be forever lost to private development.

Mahalo.

Anthony Aalto

Testimony
Attachment

Accept Terms
and Agreement 1