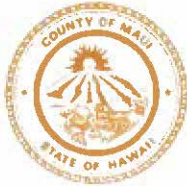


RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSHIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director



DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
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August 19, 2024

Honorable Richard T. Bisssen Jr.
Mayor, County of Maui
200 South High Street
Wailuku, HI 96793

APPROVED FOR TRANSMITTAL

Richard T. Bisssen Jr. *8-20-24*

Mayor Date

For Transmittal to:

Shane M. Sinenci, Chair
Water Authority, Social Services and Parks Committee
200 South High Street
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

Dear Chair Sinenci:

SUBJECT: MAUI WILDFIRE EXPOSURE COHORT STUDY
(WASSP-(14))

Thank you for your letter dated August 7, 2024 requesting an explanation of the steps the Recovery Support Functions (RSF) within the Office of Recovery (OOR) have taken to increase trust between constituents and Maui County following the August 2023 wildfires.

The RSFs are specialized teams focusing on specific areas of recovery including Infrastructure, Housing, Natural and Cultural Resources, Community Planning, Health and Social Services, and Economics. The RSFs include County departments, State and Federal partners, and non-governmental partners relevant to their function. The purpose of the RSFs is to ensuring successful execution of recovery strategies post-disaster.

It is a priority of the Office of the Mayor, OOR, and all RSFs to build trust with those impacted by the August 2023 wildfires through community partnerships, one-on-one interactions, and increased transparency. The

following is a sample list of actions the County has taken to address the needs and requests of the impacted communities.

Office of the Mayor and OOR:

- **Maui Recovers website** – Established mauirecovers.org as the official County of Maui website for recovery efforts related to the August 2023 fires. The website is a transparent source of information and is continually updated and improved to meet the evolving needs of the community.
- **Wednesday disaster recovery community update meetings** – Hosted weekly meetings to update the community on disaster recovery. All meetings are held in Lahaina and provide an opportunity for survivors to hear the latest information on recovery, connect with fellow community members and have one-on-one interactions with County, State and Federal agencies and non-profits supporting recovery efforts. Meetings are also streamed online and recorded so people that are unable to attend can have access to the information presented.
- **Lahaina Advisory Team** – Formed a six-member advisory team comprised of Lahaina residents that meet regularly with the Mayor to ensure the needs and desires of the community are part of the discussions and decisions the County is involved in. This partnership has provided a critical connection between the County and the community.

Infrastructure RSF:

- **Community survey for the permanent disposal site** – Conducted a survey to gather community input on proposed permanent disposal sites for Lahaina wildfire ash and debris. The results of the survey helped to guide the County in selecting the final site and provided transparency in the decision-making process.
- **Emergency building permits** – Launched a streamlined process for building permits for emergency reconstruction in fire-affected areas. The Disaster Recovery Building Permit is for alterations, repairs, reconstruction, and new construction of structures.
- **Water and wastewater service status** – Continually provide transparent and up-to-date information and maps on the status of wastewater and water infrastructure and service via Maui Recovers website.

Housing RSF:

- **Ke Ao Maluhia** – Established temporary housing at Maui Lani through a partnership between the County, State, Hawaii Community Foundation, Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, FEMA, and American Red Cross. When complete the project will have a total of 50 modular homes for Maui wildfire survivors.
- **Residential housing and permitting information on Maui Recovers** – Continually provide up-to-date information and guidance on housing for fire survivors, including finding rental housing, permitting for temporary units, and resources for building a permanent house. The County recognizes that many survivors have never gone through the process of building a home and that step-by-step guidance is needed, especially in a time of trauma.
- **Homeowner's webinars** – Host monthly homeowner's webinars to assist survivors with the rebuilding process. These meetings were initiated out of a direct request from the community.

Natural and Cultural Resources RSF:

- **Direct connection with community, 'āina and wai** – Met with generational and lineal descendants and community members, bringing them to FEMA and other agencies to get information and answers directly from the source during the earliest stages of recovery. Emphasize and prioritize community first in all meetings and decision-making. Community is not just people, but prioritizing the environment and natural resources as having the main seat at the table to learn and make decisions from. The RSF leads made regular trips out to the impacted areas to learn from the land and natural resources on what the status of the environment was.
- **Weekly collaboration with Kula and Lahaina community leaders** – Invited Mayor's advisory team and other community partners to participate in regular RSF meetings. This participation provided two-way communication so both the County and community could know what was happening in recovery and what needs and concerns were arising.
- **Relationship building with community 'āina based organizations and cultural resource organizations** – Building relationships with community 'āina based organization and community cultural resources organizations looking toward project planning and management. There are many community nonprofits doing work within the natural resource field and the RSF is working to create a

space for them to coordinate, collaborate, as well as, access funding, capacity building tools, and technical assistance where needed.

Community Planning RSF:

- **Interviews with community members** – Conducted 190 interviews with community members to hear about vision and priorities for recovery. Most interviews were conducted in-person and were done at times and locations convenient to the interviewee.
- **Community surveys** – Conducted three surveys to gather community input on recovery priorities and goals. Surveys were made available in a number of languages and assistance was provided at in-person community events to elderly and others who needed help with completing the surveys.
- **Neighborhood planning workshops** – Hosted five in-person neighborhood planning workshops to hear from the community on rebuilding needs and priorities on various topics including housing, streets, public safety, natural resources and resiliency, historic and cultural resources, infrastructure, community services, utilities, and community design. Interpreters and councilors were available to the community at all workshops as well as a keiki activities. One-on-one interactions between County staff and community members was a key component of the workshops. The workshop was also provided in an online format for people to engage at their own convenience, especially for survivors that moved off-island. All of the input gathered through community engagement will inform the development of the Lahaina Long-Term Recovery Plan.

Health and Social Service RSF:

- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program** – Distribution of cash benefits to eligible families for food, shelter and other essentials through the TANF Program.
- **Environmental monitoring** – Conducted ongoing environmental monitoring to ensure public health and safety.
- **Disaster case management** – Established disaster case management program to help survivors assess and address their needs through a disaster recovery plan.
- **Direct services for survivors** – Established or reestablished services for survivors including:
 - Construction of healthcare, kupuna care and keiki care at Ka La'i Ola, including healthcare options that are culturally-sensitive and trauma-informed.

- o Crisis counseling and prevention services, including hot line and warm line.
- o Trainings related to substance abuse and domestic violence in the non-congregate shelters.
- o Childcare and early childhood education facilities at Princess Nahienaena.

Economic RSF:

- **Maui Economic Recovery Commission** – Sponsored by the State DBEDT and County Office of Economic Development, created a coalition of influential stakeholders from various sectors to collaborate, innovate and uplift Maui after the challenges posed by the fires. Comprised of influential community leaders spanning business, culture, economics, nonprofits and workforce development, the MERC embodies the spirit of collaboration and service.
- **Maui business health check survey** – Conducted survey of Maui businesses directly and indirectly impacted by the fires to shed light on the post-wildfire challenges faced by the business community and offering insights for progress.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office at ext. 7205 should you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director

WASSP Committee

From: Michelle Santos <Michelle.Santos@co.maui.hi.us>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2024 3:20 PM
To: WASSP Committee
Cc: Cynthia Sasada; Josiah Nishita; Pili Nahooikaika
Subject: MT#10722 Maui Wildfire Exposure Cohort Study
Attachments: MT#10722-WASSP Committee.pdf

NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT FORWARD MY EMAIL TO ANYONE OUTSIDE OF THE COUNTY OF MAUI. YOU MAY CLICK ON THE ATTACHMENT ITSELF AND CREATE YOUR OWN EMAIL TO FORWARD THE DOCUMENT TO ANOTHER PERSON OUTSIDE OF THE COUNTY.

Michelle L. Santos

Office Operations Assistant

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