

June 15, 2016

Save West Maui's Coastline Coalition  
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PC-22: Written Testimony

Dear Maui Planning Committee and Council Members,

On Maui, shoreline hardening projects such as seawalls have resulted in the loss of approximately **5-miles** of the island's beaches since 1949. Two (2) such projects are planned by the State Department of Transportation both north and south of Olowalu. Breaking ground in August, a boulder revetment is planned north of Olowalu near the famous surf break and just south of Olowalu between Mile Markers 13 and 15 a seawall is being planned. We may be too late to stop the boulder revetment north of Olowalu but we are not too late to stop the destruction of the shoreline south of Olowalu. This wall is planned along the coast bordering a priority "Mother Reef" and world renown snorkeling spot commonly referred to as "Mile Marker 14". **Seawalls are known to accelerate the erosion of land and beach fronting the wall as well as move erosion down shore begetting the need for more walls.** By changing sediment transport regimes seawalls also threaten to smother our nearshore reefs as was the case in 2012 when the Ukumehame Seawall was built carelessly and plumes of suspended sediment from construction smothered the reef for hundreds of meters off shore.

We are writing to ask you to consider more natural "soft engineering" alternatives to the extensive shoreline armoring projects that are currently occurring over an 8 mile stretch along West Maui. **Once built, seawalls inhibit public coastal access and threaten health and safety** when they fail allowing waves and debris to crash over the wall onto the highway. Of particular alarm is the fact that Honoapiilani Highway represents the only major corridor into and out of West Maui. Should Honoapiilani Highway ever be shut down for an extended period of time, West Maui communities could be in serious trouble.

Maui needs to seriously consider alternatives to shoreline armoring. Seawalls are a temporary, ill-sighted solution to a chronic, long-term problem. **ALTERNATIVES TO SEAWALLS EXIST!** Soft engineering solutions also known as green infrastructure, are alternatives that work with nature to protect infrastructure. These "soft" solutions dissipate wave energy lessening coastal erosion while in contrast, hard structures force wave energy downward leading to further scouring and erosion of the foreshore. For example, sand dune stabilization using native vegetation such as *pili grass* and *naupaka* creates a "living wall" that is aesthetically pleasing, supports the natural ecosystem and attenuates and blocks storm surge from reaching subject infrastructure. The issue with utilizing this technique and other non-traditional engineering solutions is the fact that there is no or limited precedent for substituting soft engineering techniques for "hard" traditional engineering structures in Maui County. The permitting process needs to be improved to incentivize these types of alternatives over seawalls and other coastal armoring projects. **Improved land use policy and planning could be utilized to help "cut the bureaucratic tape" for the permitting of innovative, "soft engineering" and "green" infrastructure alternatives to seawalls.**

Specifically, we ask you to adopt a *proactive* approach to addressing West Maui's chronic shoreline erosion issue. A proactive, holistic approach includes:

1. **Look for innovative alternatives to planned shoreline armoring North and South of Olowalu** –Soft engineering solutions such as vegetative walls using native *hau* and anchoring sand dunes where appropriate are such alternatives to seawalls that may be considered in the short and mid-term. Other interim solutions may include collaboration with local landowners in the area to utilize cane haul roads and private roads.

Reference: PC-22

RECEIVED AT PC MEETING ON JUN 16 2016

2. **Get the "Honoapiilani Highway Problem" back on SDOT's Planning Horizons** – Encourage SDOT to reinstate a volunteer task force that will evaluate alternatives to coastal hardening solutions with regards to the "Honoapiilani Highway Problem".
3. **Envision 8+ miles of coastal park from Puamana Beach Park to Papalaua Wayside Park**- A world class coastal park would be made possible should the regional transportation corridor be separated and moved inland from the coastal access road. Residents and visitors alike would flock to recreate within the miles and miles of Hawaiian beach parks, nature reserves and open spaces.

We implore you to create a lasting legacy along West Maui's coastline, one that meets the community's needs in a manner that is forward thinking and sustainable. It is absolutely heartbreaking to hear that the County Council is backing out of its commitment to purchase **over a mile of coastline** at Launiupoko--37 acres of active coastal park land from Makila Land Company. While we understand that budgeting is very difficult and we applaud your efforts, **coastal park land is priceless**. Without the purchase of this mile of land, the subject coastal land will be privately controlled! This will also preclude public use of the currently private subdivision road mauka of the subject land for coastal access ultimately requiring more seawalls to be built preserve coastal access via the Honoapi'ilani Highway between Puamana and Launiupoko. Please, look ahead, reconsider the purchase of this invaluable stretch of coastline and avoid the need to waste future taxpayer dollars armoring and destroying West Maui's shoreline!

Sincerely,



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