

8-12-89

NEWSWATCH HSB

Airline sued over fatal Big Isle crash

The families of two women killed in the June crash of a tour plane on the Big Island are suing the airline company for \$10 million.

Eleven people were killed, including the pilot, when the Scenic Air Tours plane crashed in Waimanu Valley.

The families of Nicole Beland and Sylvie Martel, both of Canada, filed the class-action suit in federal court on behalf of their daughters and all other passengers.

The suit, against Lani Bird Inc., the parent company of Scenic Air, was filed by attorney Stephen Whittaker and California attorney John Coale.

Waters off Kualoa Park are polluted

The waters off Kualoa Regional Park, which is widely used by the city Parks and Recreation Summer Fun program, are polluted with fecal material, according to the state Department of Health.

The beach park was posted with signs warning of pollution yesterday.

The pollution has been detected over the past month. Bacteria levels were within the state's current standards for recreation waters, but health officials believed a warning was in order.

Cesspools and cruise ships have been investigated as possible sources of the pollution, said Dr. John Lewin, state health director. Health officials and the state Harbors Division are continuing the investigation.

Water pollution signs posted at Kualoa

By David Stroup
Advertiser Staff Writer

8-12-1989

THA

The state Department of Health has posted signs warning the public that the water at Kualoa Regional Park is polluted, although it is probably not a health risk.

According to John Lewin, health director, there have been reports of fecal matter in the water along the park's shoreline during the past month. The posting of warning signs was described as a precautionary measure.

Lewin described it as "a very disgusting situation, but probably not a great health risk." He said the pollution would probably be carried away by tides within 48 hours.

He said the situation is "safe, but it may be undesirable for other reasons. People could step in it. It's disgusting."

Lewin said the department has been unable to find the origin of the pollution. Cesspools at the park were tested with dye, but none proved to be leaking.

The feces may have been discharged from cruise ships operating along Kaneohe Bay. That possibility is still under investigation, the department said.

Lewin said that sort of dumping is common among cruise boats and recreational boaters. Boaters are supposed to go out beyond three miles before discharging their toilet tanks, but he said they often do not.

Lewin said the state may have to build special facilities for boaters to empty their tanks. He said the pollution may also have come from cesspools further up the beach, which were not tested.

Water tests from Kualoa Beach Park have shown that bacteria levels in the area are within the state's current standards for recreational waters. Lewin said that bacteria levels were probably dangerously high while the material was being carried in, but that they have dropped with time.

Further tests will be run on a weekly basis, the department said, until the source of the pollution is found and the situation is resolved.

Roger Fujio ka = Tel. 948. 8071 Water Resources Research Center 8-12-89 Hono. Adven.

Hanauma Bay bacteria probed

By Barbara Hastings
Advertiser Science Writer

The water in Hanauma Bay routinely measures levels of a bacteria that, while not harmful in itself, may exceed federal water quality standards.

The popular swimming and snorkeling beach on Oahu's southeast shore has water contaminated by a fecal enterococci, an intestinal bacteria health officials measure to determine sewage content and water quality.

Fecal enterococci itself isn't disease-producing. But its presence is used as an indicator that other, more harmful human bacteria and viruses may be in the water. The most common problem caused by contact with contaminated water is gastroenteritis, which can cause flu-like symptoms.

The Environmental Protection Agency standard of 35 parts per 100 milliliters of water is supposed to be based on an average of at least five samples within a month. But the state Health Department has been taking only one sample a month, so it's unclear whether the federal standard has been violated.

The count at Hanauma Bay has peaked at 510 parts per 100 milliliters, said Bruce Anderson, the department's deputy director.

"But there's no report of illness associated with swimming in those waters," Anderson said.



Bruce Anderson
"There's no report of illness"

The Health Department, therefore, has not ordered the swimming beach, which draws more than 8,000 people a day, many of them tourists, to be closed.

It may be that the contamination at Hanauma Bay is not caused by human fecal matter. Enterococci is found in all warm-blooded animals — Anderson said.

Humans tend to get sick from human-borne viruses and bacteria, but are not generally susceptible to germs from other mammals. So if the bacteria is from animals, it isn't necessarily

Leptospira?

a health hazard to humans, both Anderson and Roger Fujio, a University of Hawaii researcher, said.

The federal standard is used to determine if water quality is compromised by sewage outfalls.

But in Hawaii, where heavy rains wash huge volumes of water from inland streams into the ocean, the enterococci may be from other sources. High levels of enterococci are sometimes found in Hawaii coastal waters near streams after rains, presumably from bird and animal wastes and cesspools, Anderson and Fujio said.

Hanauma Bay doesn't fit that pattern, however. No streams feed into the bay, Anderson said. Studies are under way to determine the cause. Under investigation are restroom facilities and runoff from the parking lot as well as possible bird contamination.

Runoff, he said, may carry rat, mongoose and domestic animal wastes into the bay waters.

Fujio questions whether the enterococci is an appropriate measure for tropical areas anyway. It was studied in three mainland environments prior to EPA recommending its use for water quality testing. Fujio believes the bacteria behave very differently in tropical areas.

Fujio said he is finding levels of the bacteria in the soil. He

wonders, but hasn't proved it yet, whether it's possible that the bacteria can live and reproduce in tropical soils.

If that's the case, it would explain high levels of the bacteria washing into coastal areas. Anderson said tests of the sand below the cliff at Hanauma showed presence of the bacteria.

But while there is question of whether enterococci is an appropriate test for presence of disease-causing human germs in tropical waters, the Health Department is trying to tighten the standard anyway.

In proposed revisions to its water quality standards rules, the department announced it wants to lower the acceptable average level of enterococci from 35 per 100 milliliters of water to 7 per 100 milliliter after five separate tests.

But the existing standard has yet to be enforced.

The state has been monitoring coastal waters and has tested for enterococci since late 1986, but the data have been collected to establish a baseline, Anderson said, and not for enforcement. So even though high levels of enterococci have been found, further sampling within 30 days, as specified by the EPA, were not taken to establish the average level.

Pigeons targeted in pollution puzzle at Hanauma Bay

□ The park's cesspool is not
the prime suspect anymore

By Mary Adamski

Star-Bulletin

HSB 8/16/89

Picnic-fed pigeons are among the suspects in the mysterious polluting of Hanauma Bay, but the main suspect, the park cesspool, has been cleared.

City and state investigations into contamination at the popular beach were a practical example discussed last night on the general subject of anti-pollution standards for Hawaii streams and coastline.

Some 25 people attended the Department of Health informational meeting on proposed revisions to state water quality standards. A public hearing on the proposals will be held at 7 p.m. Aug. 29 at Washington Intermediate School.

"It's still an enigma why the levels are so high" at Hanauma, said Bruce Anderson, deputy director for environmental health.

The department has found fecal enterococci, an intestinal bacteria, at that and other beach parks. It isn't a disease-causing organism, but its presence signals that other, more harmful bacteria may be in the water. Enterococci are found in all warm-blooded animals.

There has been no report of illness caused by swimming in the bay, and the state has not ordered the busy beach closed. The most common effect on humans is gastroenteritis with cramps and diarrhea.

"The cesspool is not the problem. It is pumped out twice a month and hasn't overflowed in years," said Robin Bond of the city Parks Department.

"We're looking at other sources such as pigeons. There's a lot of them," said Roger Fujioka, University of

Hawaii microbiologist. The droppings of other creatures, mongooses in the wild and dogs that are walked in the area, could be washed from the soil by heavy rain runoff, he said.

The state is proposing that the federal Environmental Protection Agency standard of accepting contamination at no more than 35 parts per 100 milliliters of water be reduced to 7 parts per 100, said hearing officer Andy Lincoff, a Health Department environmental engineer.

There are proposed standards for 97 other toxic pollutants in the water quality revisions. They measure the effect of the chemicals on marine life and on humans who eat the marine life.

"In Hawaii, people tend to eat more fish. That's why the standards are three times as stringent as the national standards," Lincoff said.

"We have known certain chemicals have been in the surface waters for 10 years or more. What has changed is the political decision on what to do about it," said Fred Madlener of Life of the Land.

"Stop anointing these things and saying, at this level it's OK. Aren't they (standards) essentially economic rather than scientific, based on political decisions?" said Robert Hall of the Hawaii Institute for Biosocial Research. "The rules protect the polluters."

He said the toxicology standards focus on cancer-causing factors while 98 percent of the problems humans suffer from contaminants involve damage to the immune system, such as increase in allergies.

“
It's still an
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(bacteria)
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”

Bruce Anderson
Department of Health

State wants tougher water pollution guards

By Peter Wagner
Star-Bulletin

Prompted by past discoveries of contaminated fish in Manoa Stream, heavy metals in Ala Wai Canal and a nasty toxic called tributyltin in Hilo Harbor, the state Health Department is seeking tough new standards to protect recreational waters.

The regulations would lower the allowable limit of enterococci, a disease-causing bacteria commonly associated with human feces, and set up limits for 97 toxic pollutants that now are not monitored.

The proposed enterococci standard, lowered from 35 to seven enterococci bacteria per 100 milliliters of water, would be the most stringent in the nation. And the list of toxics, ranging from acenaphthene to zinc, would call on unprecedented monitoring programs.

But most who spoke at a public hearing last night, the first in a statewide series, said the proposals don't go far enough.

"If you've ever experienced it, I'm sure you would agree we should take all steps possible to protect ourselves, our children, and our visitors from being that one in a hundred to suffer severe gastroenteritis," said Bonnie Heim,

chairman of the Kailua Neighborhood Board. Reports of the disease, believed caused by bacteria from human feces, are on the rise, officials say.

The state now closes swimming areas when enterococci levels exceed 35 bacteria per 100 milliliters of water — about equal to a glass of water. But after reviewing studies that indicate nearly two swimmers out of 100 stand to get a gastrointestinal disease at that level, the Health Department decided to lower the limit to seven enterococci per 100 milliliters. That means out to about 0.1 case per 100 swimmers.

Roger Fujioka, a professor of public health at the University of Hawaii and a microbiologist at the university's Water Resources Research Center, challenged the state's concern over enterococci.

"Since there are many environmental sources of enterococci and other indicator bacteria in Hawaii's environment, the detection of these bacteria in the waters of Hawaii does not necessarily mean that the water has been contaminated with human fecal wastes," he said.

Stephen Holmes, executive director of Hawaii's Thousand Friends, recommended looking beyond enterococci to viruses, which he said are far tougher to control.



Bonnie Heim

Stephen Holmes

"We should be working towards the adoption of viral pathogen standards to better protect public health," he said. "Arizona has viral pathogen standards now."

Holmes endorsed the state's proposals, but suggested extending monitoring limits from 1,000 feet to a mile off shore.

Robert Hall, of the non-profit Hawaii Institute for Biosocial Research, said the standards are too lax to protect people and aquatic life.

"The numeric standards proposed will permit toxins to bioaccumulate through the food chain," he said. "The enterococci standards are also too high to protect human health in the manner the public expects to be protected."

The Health Department was chided in testimony by the envi-

ronmental group Life of the Land for taking a "cost-effective" approach to health problems. "I don't know if you can set a value on health," said James Morrow, who read the testimony.

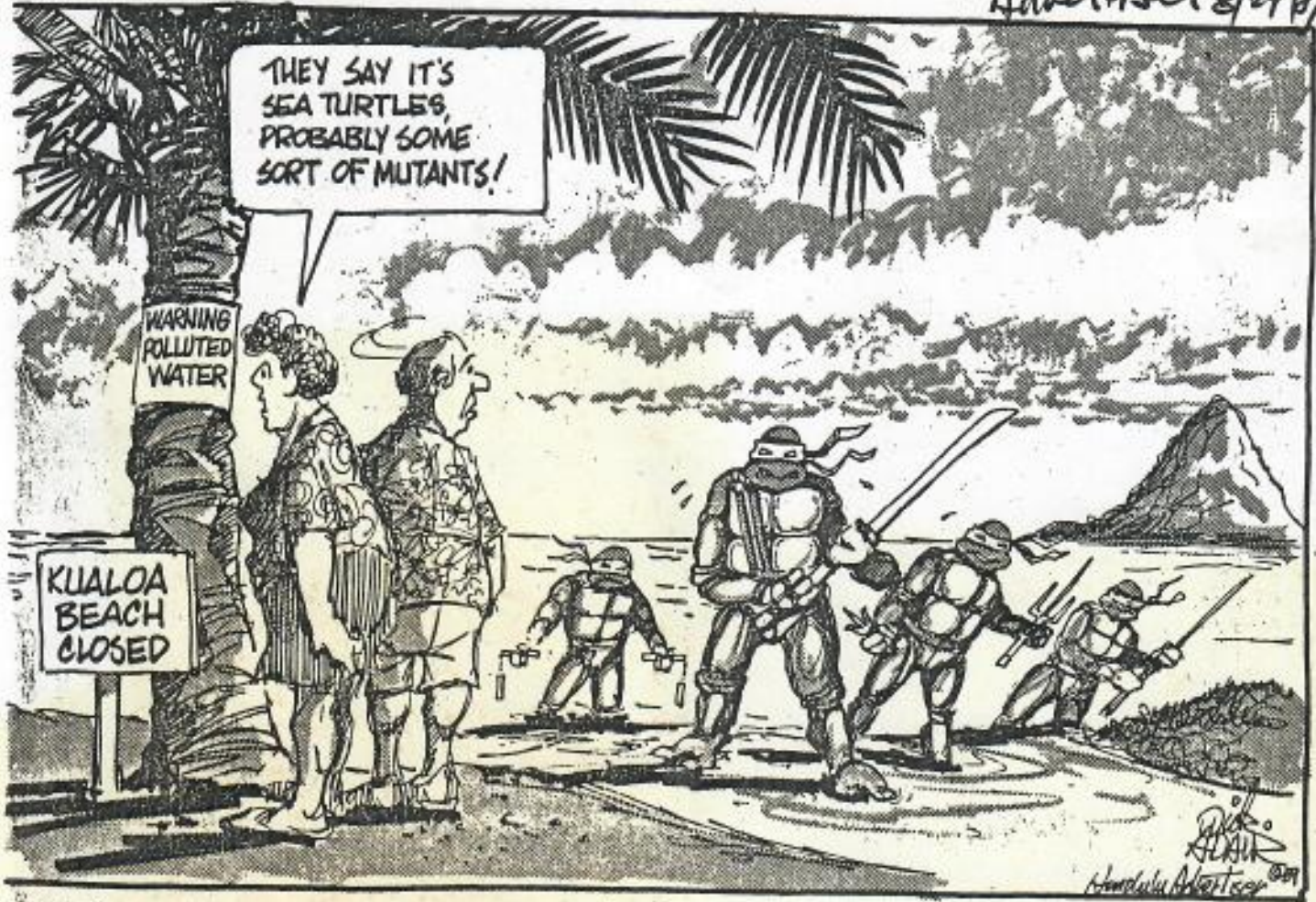
But Bruce Anderson, deputy health director in charge of environmental programs, said money problems are real. The Health Department got only half the funding it asked of the state Legislature this year, he said, and public health problems are pressing on many fronts.

To extend monitoring to a mile offshore, he said, would be tough to justify. "It's a question of resources to some extent," he said. "You have to focus your resources where you expect the problems to be."

And water contamination, Anderson said, is mostly likely to be found mostly near its shoreline source.

Anderson conceded many questions about the proposed standards are legitimate. "These might not be the most ideal standards, but they're the best we've got," he said. "Until researchers can come up with something better, why not use them?"

Hearings are scheduled tonight on Kauai, tomorrow on Maui and Sept. 6 on the Big Island.



Larry Price

The Right Price

Humbling A Keen Mind



Jumping to conclusions can be so much fun sometimes! But it can also be a very humbling experience.

A case in point is the closing of Kualoa Beach Park by the state Health Department.

Health officials had found the waters off the Windward Oahu park polluted by animal waste. Subsequent monitoring of the water quality indicated that the problem was probably being caused by pig feces!

Pig feces!! I couldn't believe it. There aren't any pigs around that area. There certainly are no members of the pig family living on Chinaman's Hat, the island just off the coast of Kualoa Beach Park.

I thought to myself, "How can the state Health Department be so far off-base?" The obvious culprits are right down the highway. Right across from the entrance to Kualoa Ranch, there has been an invasion of tourists assaulting a very narrow strip of coral-infested beach.

In another year, someone is likely to demand a crosswalk across Kamehameha Highway to protect the tourists from homeward-bound workers, and then a traffic light at the Old Sugar Mill crosswalk!

The conclusion I jumped to when I heard that Kualoa Beach Park had been closed because of floating feces was based on a simple observation: There are no obvious restroom facilities for the patrons of the budding Kualoa commercial ventures.

I assumed that the tourists were responsible. Let's face it, in the absence of any pig farms in the area, it was a natural mistake to make.

I almost died laughing when an unnamed federal pollution researcher hypothesized that the pollution of the water that the pollution of the water at Kualoa was not from pigs, but from green sea turtles!

It is as difficult to find

large numbers of green sea turtles off Kualoa as it is to find black pearls on Waikiki Beach! For someone to suggest that there were enough of the endangered species to pollute an entire beach is almost absurd.

I was still sure it was the tourists. It was so much easier to blame the obvious.

The whole investigation took on new meaning to me when officials at the state Health Department announced that they would have to ship the unknown fecal material discovered at Kualoa all the way to Ames, Iowa, for analysis!

Good grief, I thought. The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly just received a whopping raise, but researchers there can't be trusted with a multiple-choice question about feces?

Well guess what? I was wrong — dead wrong. Let the record show that a lab in Ames, Iowa, has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that the pollution of Kualoa Beach Park was caused by an herbivore that appears to be the green sea turtle.

Whoever said, "It takes a keen mind to delve into the obvious" was absolutely right. Maybe.

Kualoa beach reopens after 40-day ban

Kualoa Regional Park beach ward Oahu beach has been reopened.

Signs warning that the water was polluted were removed yesterday by the state Department of Health, more than 40 days after they were posted.

The warning signs went up Aug. 11 because fecal matter kept washing up on the Wind-

ward Oahu beach. But analysis found the feces are from marine animals, most likely sea turtles, and thus aren't a significant threat to humans, said Bruce Anderson, deputy health director.

Some feces still wash up on the beach, he said, but not as great a quantity as before.

The Honolulu Advertiser Friday, September 22, 1989 A-7

The Honolulu Advertiser Thursday, November 21, 1991 A9

Kailua turtle waste called harmless

Turtle excrement was continuing to wash up this week on Kailua Beach, which the state Department of Health came close to closing last week after lifeguards mistook the waste for human feces, a department official said.

"(Green sea turtle excrement) looks almost identical to human feces, except when it's crushed there's a green powdery texture," said Bruce Anderson, deputy director for environmental health. "Otherwise they're identical, and we were also fooled."

Although "unsightly and possibly a nuisance," feces from the endangered turtles do not present a public health threat because turtles transmit few, if any, diseases to humans, Anderson said.

Sewage treatment plant filters would prevent human feces from being discharged into the ocean, he said.

In 1989, Kualoa Beach was closed for several weeks until officials determined that fecal matter washing ashore there came from turtles.

Tests point to probable turtle origin for feces in Kualoa waters

By Barbara Hastings
Advertiser Science Writer

The signs warning of polluted water are still up at Kualoa Regional Park, but a state health official says the feces washing up while unpleasant, should not hold too much of a human health hazard.

Tests done by a Mainland laboratory on the fecal contamination at the

Windward Oahu park showed that it usually attacks only a human host, was "non-human and non-domestic." Turtle germs tend to attack turtles. There are exceptions, Anderson said.

Director. That means it's not from cats, dogs, pigs, cattle or horses. The data point to marine animals; turtles are most likely," he said.

Generally, any disease-causing viruses or bacteria in any species preys only on that species, Anderson said.

That means if it's a human bacteria, it peering now and were not reported

before," Anderson said. He said he talked with people long familiar with the area and they couldn't recall this type of contamination before. It might be a shift in the migratory patterns of the green sea turtle, Anderson said.

George Balazs, a green sea turtle specialist with the federal NOAA Fisheries, said last month he was fairly certain the feces were from turtles.

At the time, Balazs said he, too, wondered why the sudden influx of feces at Kualoa.

Balazs said Kaneohe Bay is the preferred habitat for many of the turtles, but a tumor-causing disease is spreading among the animals. Balazs said it's possible that the tumors, causing obstructed vision and swimming abilities, are causing a change in migration patterns.

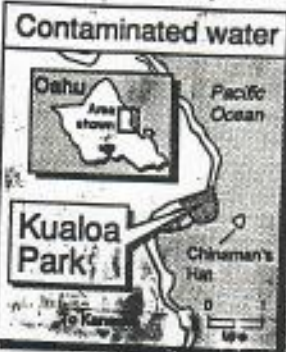
The Honolulu Advertiser

Thursday, September 3, 1988

Officials fear Kualoa pollution is dangerous, keep beach closed

By Barbara Hastings
Advertiser Science Writer

Kualoa Regional Park on Oahu's Windward coast remained closed yesterday as feces — apparently from animals — continued to wash up on the



sand. Health officials, who posted warning signs about the fecal contamination Aug. 11, said they are now concerned that contact with the wastes could make humans sick. At the time of the warning 1½ weeks ago, officials said the contamination probably posed no health risk.

The feces, pellets of various sizes that could be mistaken for human excrement, have been washing up at the Windward Oahu beach for about six weeks, according to health officials.

The beach has been posted and tape has been stretched across the area to keep people from the water and beach near the surf.

The Health Department plans to keep the beach closed on the chance that humans could

Kualoa pollution feared dangerous

From Page One

be susceptible to parasites found in the waste.

Where the feces come from remains "a total mystery," but Eugene Akazawa of the water quality monitoring branch of the Health Department said researchers believe it is animal rather than human waste. Investigation so far has centered around pigs.

However, a researcher from the federal NOAA Fisheries believes the pellets may come from green sea turtles, which live in offshore water.

The wash-up reached a peak last week, when in a single day more than 400 pellets were collected, Akazawa said. This week, there have been considerably fewer.

City and county workers are monitoring the beach daily, Akazawa said, and state health officials are testing water quality twice a week. Despite the fecal pellets on the beach, he said, the bacteria levels, which are used to determine pollution, remain low in the water.

Analysis of the feces has found five parasites, Akazawa said.

"There are some very peculiar parasites in there," said Dr. Robert Desowitz, a human parasitologist at the University of Hawaii's Leahi Hospital branch. One, he said, is very similar to a parasite that causes amoebic dysentery in humans. "But they just resemble them," Desowitz said. "I don't know if they are the same species or not."

Desowitz doesn't think the feces come from domestic animals. "It's very strange, whatever it is," he said. "It has a large number of parasites."

Health officials say researchers



Advertiser photo by Gregory Yamanaka

The water and beach near the surf at Kualoa is closed to public.

are not responsible.

"They've also looked for pig farms because early indications were the feces might be from pigs. However, the only piggeries in the area are small-scale operations that wouldn't have enough swine to be responsible for the fecal pellets on the beach, researchers said.

The animals producing the feces all apparently eat the

same kind of food.

Samples have been sent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture labs on the Mainland to determine what kind of animal is involved.

But George Balazs, a green sea turtle specialist with the federal NOAA Fisheries, said he's fairly certain they are sea turtle wastes. He collected some for analysis, he said,

when he went to the beach recently to study a dead sea turtle that had washed up there.

Balazs said he "can make a high-degree reliable conclusion (the wastes) are from the green sea turtle."

"To the untrained eye, they could look like dog or even human" feces, he said, "and they can be smelly."

"We do know that green turtles have a lot of parasites," Balazs said.

"If the wastes are from green sea turtles, why is there so much, so suddenly?"

Balazs said nearby Kaneohe Bay is a preferred habitat for the green sea turtles. Right now, a disease is spreading rampant through the turtle population. One explanation of the fecal wash-up could be that tumor disease is causing the animals to move a bit north to Kualoa.

Currents tend to pull floating material into Kualoa Bay, several researchers said.

About half of the green turtles in the Kaneohe Bay area have tumors, Balazs estimated. He said he couldn't even guess at the total numbers, but when pressed, said there are hundreds.

The "hideous" tumors obstruct the turtles' vision and their ability to swim properly, Balazs said, "so they could affect their behavior and their foraging patterns."

So far, marine researchers don't know what's causing the tumors, although it might be a circulatory parasite or a virus.

The tumors are showing up on sea turtles off Florida and Hawaii, Balazs said, and haven't been reported anywhere else. That leads some researchers to wonder if some pollutant in near-shore waters is affecting the turtles' immune systems, Balazs said.

BRIEFLY

WINDWARD SUN PRESS



Deborah Booker photo

A recently posted pollution sign stands near Kaelepulu Stream at Kailua Beach Park to warn the public of possibly contaminated water in the stream. The state Department of Health posted this and another sign along the stream in response to community concerns that waders and swimmers were not being adequately warned about the bacterial contamination. According to deputy health director Bruce Anderson, the two signs will be relocated closer to the stream to make them easier to read, and a larger sign with the same message will be posted on the makai side of the Kaelepulu Bridge.

7/19-25/90

Turtle pellets

WINDWARD — The state Department of Health has reported that turtle pellets have been washing up at Kualoa Beach Park recently.

Health officials say the fecal material is from green sea turtles in nearby Kaneohe Bay and may be easily mistaken for human excrement. The same material covered the beach early last August.

Health officials were concerned last summer and closed down the beach when the pellets first began washing up.

So far the quantity of pellets is not as extensive as last year, and no health problems have been reported. However, water quality is being tested routinely by the department to insure the safety of swimmers at the beach.

Signs have not been posted because no public health risk is associated with the material, according to state officials.

WINDWARD SUN PRESS

THA 9-9-89



Advertiser photo by Ron Jett
Rinsing out a turtleneck
A tourist gives his turtle a shower after a workout at Waikiki Beach the other day.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1991

HONOLULU STAR-BULLETIN

UPDATE

Sign of the times—troubled waters



By Dean Sensus, Star-Bulletin

The Ala Wai Canal was put off limits after a sewage manhole overflowed Wednesday, dumping about 5,000 gallons into storm drains at Kuhio and Kanekapalei streets. Warning signs like this, at the Kopahulu end of the canal, were to be removed when city tests show the canal has cleared up.

The Sunday Star-Bulletin & Advertiser Honolulu, February 17, 1991 A39

NEWS

teen-age boy was selling the tickets in Hawaii Kai.

Warning posted: State health officials posted pollution warning signs Friday along Inoaole Stream in Waimanalo after bacteria was found in the stream.

The stream flows past Waimanalo Dairy and through Bellows Air Force Station.

The public is warned not to wade or swim in the stream, which receives run-off and drainage from the dairy's wastewater treatment and irrigation systems.

Study of ocean pollution says Isle waters still OK

By Alicia Brooks
States News Service

WASHINGTON — Shellfish and ground-feeding fish at two ocean sites in Hawaii showed somewhat higher-than normal concentration of certain contaminants, according to a federal study released last week.

However, federal scientists said the higher levels do not pose any apparent health danger.

Fish in Honolulu Harbor showed significant levels of silver while a high hydrocarbon level showed up in samples collected off Barbers Point, according to the report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The tests were part of a study of nearly 300 American ocean sites.

The study generally showed contaminant levels were staying the same, or decreasing, around the country, said Brian Gorman, a NOAA spokesman.

Gorman said the levels found in Hawaiian shellfish and ground-feeding fish at Honolulu Harbor and Barbers Point were below those considered dangerous by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

"We were looking at the general health of the water, rather than determining secondary effects on fish and people," said Gorman. However, fish are a good indicator of water quality in a given area, he said.

NOAA's five-year study tested waters for roughly a dozen contaminants, only two of

which showed up in Hawaii. Gorman said the overall picture around the country seemed to indicate tougher water laws of the 1980s had improved water quality from a decade earlier.

Gorman said silver might come from industrial chemicals, such as those used for photo production, or from jewelry manufacturing.



Anderson

The hydrocarbons like those found at Barbers Point, can occur naturally. They can also result from the burning of fossil fuels, like coal, or from garbage incineration, he said.

Dr. Bruce Anderson, deputy director of the state Department of Health said he had not seen the report, but would look into the findings.

"We are, of course, concerned, even if there is no threat to public health," said Anderson, who noted Hawaii overall has "excellent water quality." The department routinely tests its waters at 200 sites around the islands.

Anderson said ship-repair sites at Honolulu Harbor could be a source of silver, or the metal could occur naturally in Hawaiian fish, as mercury does.

At Barbers Point, recent oil spills such as the the Exxon Houston spill, could contribute to the elevated levels of hydrocarbon.

The study said contaminant levels were highest in urban areas on the Mainland.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA

TURTLES

