

Watershed Management Plans Objectives

GOAL: The overall goal of the O’ahu Watershed Plans is: *“To formulate an environmentally holistic, community-based, and economically viable watershed management plan that will provide a balance between: (1) the preservation and management of O’ahu’s watersheds, and (2) sustainable ground water and surface water use and development to serve present users and future generations.*

OBJECTIVES: The watershed objectives were derived from an extensive stakeholder consultation process and reflect the community’s values and thinking about water resources. These values and thinking were consolidated into 5 broad objectives that apply island-wide, providing the overall guidance, balance, and consistency for each of the eight regional watershed plans.

1. Promote Sustainable Watersheds

Sustainable watersheds are biologically diverse, renewable, and resource-productive land and water ecosystems that stretch from the mountains to the coral reefs. Sustainable watersheds can be achieved by emphasizing habitat and native-species preservation, active forestry management practices, invasive species and pollution controls, resource-conservation and demand-side management programs, low-impact development concepts, recycling that reduces use of natural resources, and climate change adaptation.

2. Protect and Enhance Water Quality and Quantity

Water is essential to human life and to the health of the environment. In a healthy environment, water quality and quantity protects public health and supports a rich and varied community of organisms. Water quality and quantity is enhanced by source and watershed-protection programs, regulatory testing, resource monitoring, and sustainable ground-water and surface-water management.

3. Protect Native Hawaiian Water Rights and Traditional and Customary Practices

Native Hawaiian water rights are set forth in the state constitution, providing water for the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, customary gathering rights, and appurtenant water rights of kuleana and taro lands. Support of these rights requires setting measurable instream flow standards, applying public trust and precautionary principles, restoring streams through conservation, and recycling water to reduce the need for surface-water diversions.

4. Facilitate Public Participation, Education, and Project Implementation

Planning and managing O’ahu’s water resources impacts a vast and diverse group of stakeholders. Their engagement in a collaborative process has many benefits, including capturing local knowledge, gathering diverse perspectives, and driving innovative planning and project implementation. Future generations will have greater knowledge of and respect for water resources, developed through directed water-resource school curricula.

5. Meet Water Demands at a Reasonable Cost

Providing for O’ahu’s current and future water demands and water resources requires a balance of needs and costs. To address needs, conservation has become a way of life. Steps are taken to align land use and water planning. Diversifying water supplies creates additional supply that meets urban and agricultural demands with high quality water for drinking and lower quality water for irrigation and industrial purposes. Attention is paid to efficiency in capital improvements, operations, and maintenance, to contain costs and avoid an unreasonable burden on water rate payers. New technologies are leveraged for their potential to add diversified, drought-proof, cost-effective water supplies by developing groundwater, surface water, recycled water, brackish water, and seawater sources, with consideration of renewable energy options.