

March 3, 2022

The Honorable Tom Carper  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment  
and Public Works  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment  
and Public Works  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and  
Related Agencies  
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment  
and Related Agencies  
125 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Carper and Merkley and Ranking Members Capito and Murkowski:

I write to make you aware of an ongoing drinking water contamination crisis in Hawaii and request that you exercise your authorities as chairs and ranking members of your respective authorizing and appropriating committees to ensure the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has the resources necessary to respond to this crisis.

The U.S. Navy operates the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility (“Red Hill”) on Oahu. This World War II-era facility can store up to 250 million gallons of fuel for the military and sits 100 feet above an aquifer that supplies the majority of Oahu residents’ drinking water. In 2014, Red Hill leaked 27,000 gallons of fuel, resulting in the Navy and Defense Logistics Agency, EPA, and Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) entering into an enforceable administrative order of consent (AOC). The AOC’s purpose was to ensure that the Navy operates Red Hill in a way that minimizes risk to public health and the environment.

In November 2021, Red Hill leaked 14,000 gallons of fuel, contaminating the Navy’s drinking water system for families both on base and in surrounding communities serviced by the Navy’s drinking water. Approximately 100,000 residents have been impacted, almost 4,000 military families have been displaced, numerous businesses have had to temporarily close, and all of the schools and child development centers using the Navy water system have had to adjust operations to supply students with bottled water.

On December 6, 2021, HDOH issued an emergency order to the Navy to suspend operations at Red Hill, take measures to treat contaminated drinking water at the Red Hill shaft, and safely remove fuel from the 20 underground storage tanks at Red Hill. The emergency order was contested by the Navy in late December. The emergency order was affirmed by HDOH in its final decision and order on January 3, 2022.

In response to this crisis, Congress included in H.R.6617, the short-term Fiscal Year 2022 Continuing Resolution, \$250 million to the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force to cover expenses related to drinking water contamination and \$100 million for the Department of Defense to begin complying with the State of Hawaii's emergency order related to the improvement of infrastructure and removal of fuel from Red Hill.

I appreciate the resources EPA has provided to date to respond to this crisis, including assisting with water sampling collection and providing additional laboratory capacity, data analysis, and flushing expertise as a party to the Interagency Drinking Water System Team. I also appreciate the attention that EPA is providing to this matter, exhibited by the recent announcement by EPA of inspections at Red Hill, as well as recent visits made by the EPA Administrator and Deputy Administrator, as well as the Region 9 Administrator and Deputy Administrator. However, additional resources will be necessary to continue responding to the Red Hill crisis. This includes continued engagement on drinking water sampling and data analysis until HDOH advises all impacted families that it is safe to return to their homes, and analysis to ensure that in complying with HDOH's emergency order, the Red Hill tanks are defueled in a way that does not threaten public health and the environment.

The State of Hawaii has the power to determine the future of Red Hill, which I support. It will be essential that EPA has the resources necessary to respond to this ongoing crisis. Therefore, I ask your assistance to work with me to ensure that Congress provides the requisite authorities and funds to allow EPA to ensure that Hawaii's drinking water is safe.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator