

Pollution Protest Taken to Waikiki

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Swimmers at Waikiki beaches received a dismal greeting over the weekend from a group of women.

"YOU SWIM IN YOUR SEWAGE," said several hundred handbills distributed by the women stationed from Ft. DeRussy to the Queen's Surf.

The handbill said 55 million gallons of raw sewage are dumped daily off Anuenue (Rainbow Island) only three miles from Waikiki.

THE HANDBILLS chided the City government for spending \$800,000 for a study of the problem instead of immediately building a complete sewage treatment facility.

And it urged the State to provide better sewage inspection.

Mrs. Benni Hodges, spokesman for the group of about a dozen women, said the group is composed of residents concerned about pollution but is not formally organized.

"We felt we would get more reaction if we handed the literature out in Waikiki so the tourists would see it," she said.

"Tourists tend to get more excited about things like this."

One of those handing out the bill yesterday said most beachgoers read it with interest.

THE HANDBILL urged swimmers to complain to the Mayor, the City Council and to the State Legislature about the sewage problem.

Shinji Soneda, executive officer and chief sanitary engineer of the Environmental Health Division of the Health Department, said today, however: "All of our studies and our own samplings on the waters of Waikiki do not show any reason

for this kind of concern - the kind expressed in the handbill.

"We agree that a sewage plant is needed at Sand Island. The quicker the better.

"But there must be some study," he added. "While we would like them (the City) to go ahead as soon as possible, I don't think anybody would like them to go ahead without some kind of feasibility study to back up a rather expensive undertaking of this sort."

Mayor Frank F. Fasi has ordered work to start at once on plans for a sewage treatment plant on Anuenue without waiting for results of the \$800,000 study.

The deputy director of the City-County Public Works Department Friday asked the House Public Health, Youth and General Welfare Committee not to appropriate \$10 million this fiscal year for the development of the plant.

Lorenzo Fruto testified before the committee on a House bill which stipulated the money be allocated for City and County sewage projects and for the construction of the plant on or before December 31, 1971.

FRUTO SAID that Fasi "has just authorized" the \$800,000 study.

He said that according to the Mayor's timetable, the study will be started in April and construction on the plant will not be started until May, 1972.

The City could not meet the legislative deadline if the bill was passed this year, Fruto said, and asked that it be deferred until the next Legislature.

He said, however, this request should not "preclude the City and County from requesting funds for other sewer projects."

SONEDA, the State officer, said that, depending on the treatment provided, the Anuenue Island plant "could be about as expensive as the original price tag on the stadium - about \$20 million."

Soneda said if any beach is affected by the sewage from Sand Island, "more often than not it's the so-called airport beach by Keehi Lagoon. It's seldom used, fortunately."

He said the Health Department has only one water sample collector "but we also have on our staff three engineers, on a "staff level and many, many sanitarians in the department."

HE SAID samples are taken regularly along the whole stretch of Waikiki Beach and the water quality - deemed safe for swimming - hasn't changed for the past 10 or 20 years.

"It goes up and down, up and down, but there's no detectable trend. It's fairly constant."

The handbill notes that the federal government rejected Hawai'i's 1970 Pollution Control Program "because it provided no indication of dealing with present problems, no plan for adequate inspection, no staff for enforcement, and little or no organized public information activity."

Soneda said it's true that the program has been rejected. "They wanted more information and we submitted it and they rejected it again. So we are supplying more details on some points."

He said, however, "I understand they're doing this to everybody and not just picking on us."