

Chevron Oil Spill (1996)

At 1:30 a.m. on May 14, 1996, a Chevron Products Company (Chevron) pipeline ruptured at a thin spot caused by external erosion and began discharging No. 6 bunker fuel oil adjacent to the Hawaiian Electric Company (HECO) Waiiau Power Plant in Pearl City, Oahu, Hawaii. An estimated 41,244 gallons oil gushed into Waiawa Stream. The oil, being heavier than the stream water, sank, poisoning fauna and flora. Waiiau Stream empties into the 10-acre Waiawa Marsh, bordering the East Loch of Pearl Harbor. The submerged areas of the marsh was contaminated with "pools of submerged oil". Entering Pearl harbor, the oil surfaced, since the oil is lighter than salt water. The action further poisoned water-based life forms.

The pipeline transports both power plant fuel oil and bunker fuel oil for ships. Typically, the oil in the pipeline is heated to reduce its viscosity and facilitate the transportation. The oldest sections of this pipeline were installed in 1958 (Chevron 1996).

For nearly two weeks after the initial pipeline breach, spilled oil continued to be mobilized from Waiiau Stream and released into Pearl Harbor. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) reported that pockets of residual oil up to 24-inches deep in Waiiau Stream and the marsh were warmed by the hot afternoon sun, mobilized to neutral buoyancy in the fresh water and then floated downstream just below the water's surface in basketball-sized "globs." These floating oil globs did not resurface and become readily visible until reaching the denser salt water of Pearl Harbor some 200-feet to 400-feet from the mouth of Waiiau Stream, depending on the strength of the ebb tide and the amount of freshwater flow from the stream (USCG 1996j).

The spill created a sheen of floating oil throughout East Loch, covering approximately 2,290 acres (90,000,000 square feet) of open water during the first six days of the spill event (Gundlach 1997).

Oil spill three times larger than reported: The Arizona Memorial is closed for a second day By Gregg K. Kakesako, Rod Ohira and Alan Matsuoka. *Oil coats the surface of Pearl Harbor*. The 24.5 acres at Middle Loch's Waiawa unit and 36.5 acres at West Loch's Honouliuli unit have an endangered species population of about 80 to 85 Hawaiian coots, 20 Hawaiian stilts and 10 Hawaiian moorhens, said biologist Mike Silbernagle. The stilts are breeding. (Star-Bulletin 5/15/96)