

**2026 DEPARTMENT OF WAR ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY – NON-INDUSTRIAL INSTALLATION
MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAI‘I**

INTRODUCTION

Marine Corps Base Hawai‘i (MCBH), established in 1994, is a critical power projection platform in the Indo-Pacific. The installation consists of the 2,951-acre Mōkapu Peninsula (MCBH Kāne‘ohe Bay); the 220-acre Camp H. M. Smith; 137-acre Pu‘uloa Range Training Facility (PRTF); the 27-acre Pearl City Warehouse Annex; the 63-acre Manana Housing Area; the 187-acre Waikane Valley, and the 1,074-acre Marine Corps Training Area-Bellows (MCTAB), all on the Island of O‘ahu. On Moloka‘i, MCBH controls a 12-acre training facility. This diverse landscape is the backdrop for MCBH's vital mission: to sustain combat readiness for its operating forces while providing for the well-being of its nearly 18,000 personnel, including service members, their families, and dedicated civilian employees. The base's



MCBH Kāne‘ohe Bay. In the foreground, Ulupa‘u Crater Live Fire Range; Kāne‘ohe Bay lies in the background separating the MCBH peninsula from the cities of Kāne‘ohe and Kailua.

strategic location, combined with its unique operational environment of dramatic tropical landscapes and sensitive ecosystems, necessitates a profound commitment to environmental stewardship as a core component of mission success.

The Mōkapu Peninsula, where MCBH Kāne‘ohe Bay is located, is a place of immense cultural and historical significance, rich with archaeological sites and sacred to Native Hawaiians. This context, coupled with the presence of numerous threatened and endangered species and the increasing challenges of climate change, demands a delicate balance between a high operational tempo and the preservation of the natural and cultural resources entrusted to the installation’s care. MCBH has embraced this responsibility by developing a forward-thinking, integrated approach to environmental management that recognizes the deep, intrinsic connection between the health of the environment, community partnerships, and the sustainment of the military mission.

BACKGROUND

Within this complex tapestry, the MCBH Environmental Compliance & Protection Division (ECPD) stands as a pillar of environmental responsibility. ECPD comprises a dedicated team of professionals united by a shared commitment to protecting the island's ecological treasures and



MCBH Commanding Officer, Col Jeremy Beaven, addresses ECPD personnel during an awards ceremony where he honored an ECPD employee with a Civilian of the Quarter Award.

safeguarding human health while providing the most efficient and effective support for MCBH operations.

Military operations throughout Hawai‘i for all service branches have faced significant regulatory and public perception challenges since the 2021 petroleum release from the Red Hill storage facility. That incident significantly eroded public trust, resulting in intense scrutiny of all Department of Defense operations and future projects. It was within this climate of heightened sensitivity that the ultimate test of MCBH’s environmental program occurred. In late 2023, a mishap involving a U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon aircraft in

Kāne‘ohe Bay placed MCBH under an intense national spotlight, threatening a catastrophic environmental disaster.

In this moment of crisis, the ECPD’s years of investment in expertise, planning, and building partnerships were put to the test. Their textbook execution of emergency response protocols and seamless inter-agency collaboration turned a potential disaster into a nationally recognized model for environmental crisis management. This single event powerfully demonstrated that the ECPD’s daily work in environmental stewardship directly translates into the resilience and assurance required to sustain the warfighting mission, even under the most challenging circumstances imaginable.

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The MCBH ECPD’s accomplishments during this award cycle have been nothing short of extraordinary. Their proactive and strategic approach has directly enhanced mission readiness, protected irreplaceable resources, and fortified community trust. In every action, they have demonstrated a profound understanding that their role is not merely enforcement, but a critical component of mission assurance that directly supports the installation's core warfighting function.

Spill Response Program: The P-8A Poseidon Mishap

The defining event of this award period was the command’s exemplary response to the P-8A Poseidon aircraft mishap. The ECPD’s performance under immense pressure was the culmination of years of preparation and planning, directly supporting mission readiness at a critical juncture.



MCBH Waterfront Operations personnel deploy environmental containment booms around a downed U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon.

ECPD responded with immediate, decisive action: Within the critical first hour of the incident, the ECPD immediately activated the MCBH Integrated Contingency Plan and directed the deployment of pre-staged spill containment boom. This rapid encirclement of the aircraft, a testament to the team's foresight, prevented any potential fuel release from impacting the bay, containing the threat at its source before it could escalate and negatively affect mission readiness.

- **Environmental Oversight:** Throughout the complex, multi-week salvage operation, the ECPD served as the command's on-scene environmental conscience, ensuring no long-term environmental liabilities could hinder future training and warfighting operations. They provided 24/7 technical oversight to ensure salvage methods minimized damage to the fragile coral reef substrate, protecting the long-term viability of the installation's marine training areas.
- **Seamless Inter-Agency Collaboration:** Leveraging years of trust-building, the ECPD Director served as the key environmental liaison, masterfully coordinating with senior leaders from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Hawai'i Department of Health (HDOH), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This partnership approach, born from consistent professionalism, was essential for de-escalating regulatory tensions and building a unified command structure, thereby enabling the operational response to proceed without friction.
- **Mission Assurance:** The ECPD's swift and effective management of the environmental response was a critical factor in supporting mission readiness. By containing the environmental risks, they enabled the complex salvage operation to proceed efficiently, minimizing downtime for a strategic runway essential to the warfighting effort and ensuring MCBH could return to its full operational status without undue delay.

Outreach and Education: Building a Culture of Stewardship

The ECPD recognizes that true environmental excellence is a shared responsibility. Their outreach and education program is a strategic imperative, creating a force multiplier effect where every service member and family member becomes a partner in supporting mission readiness by preventing environmental incidents that could halt training.

- **Weed Warriors Program:** This flagship volunteer program, with thousands of volunteer hours in FY24-25, is an immersive educational experience. Service members and their families work alongside resource specialists to remove invasive species from the Nu'upia Ponds Wildlife Management Area. This direct action improves habitat for endangered species, demonstrating a commitment to conservation that is foundational to supporting mission readiness by maintaining access to training lands.
- **Operation Clean Water 'Ohana:** This community event makes a direct connection between individual actions and the health of Kāne'ohe Bay. By organizing volunteers to label installation storm drains, the ECPD reinforces the maxim that pollution prevention starts at home, a key behavior that prevents environmental issues that could otherwise impact the warfighting mission by causing regulatory violations and operational stand-downs.
- **Youth and Community Engagement:** By making a long-term investment in the next generation, the ECPD fosters a base-wide culture of compliance. Their engaging, hands-on participation

at on-base school STEM nights and other events inspires a passion for conservation, ensuring that the families of our warfighters are active partners in protecting the environment where they live and train.

Environmental Support for the 2025 Kāne‘ohe Bay Air Show

The ECPD provided the environmental backbone for the 2025 Kāne‘ohe Bay Air Show, one of the largest public events in Hawai‘i. The team took the lead in obtaining all necessary environmental



MCBH ECPD Air Quality Engineers worked with Hawaii State regulators to obtain the necessary open burning permits for the “Wall of Fire” demonstration at the 2025 Kāne‘ohe Bay Air Show.

permits, most critically securing a complex air quality permit from the HDOH Clean Air Branch that allowed for the full spectrum of aerial performances. Beyond permits, they developed and managed comprehensive plans for solid waste, recycling, and spill prevention. Their flawless planning and oversight ensured the massive event was executed with zero environmental violations, representing a major community relations victory that directly supports mission readiness by strengthening the public support essential for the base's long term warfighting mission.

One Water Program

The ECPD's success in protecting Hawai‘i's precious water resources is guided by its mature "One Water" philosophy. This innovative framework, developed and refined over years, transforms fragmented, reactive programs into a single, cohesive, and proactive system. Recognizing that MCBH operates in one of the world's most sensitive ecological regions and under intense regulatory scrutiny, the ECPD moved beyond a conventional, siloed approach to water management. By managing the entire water cycle—from drinking water to stormwater and wastewater—with a unified vision, the "One Water" program proactively safeguards the resources that sustain base personnel and the surrounding ecosystem, ensuring that environmental compliance never becomes a limiting factor for the warfighting mission.

- **Wastewater Program:** The ECPD turned a significant regulatory challenge into a model of high-visibility success and regulatory partnership. Following the 2022 Notice of Violation from the HDOH, the team masterfully collaborated with regulators to not only settle the issue but to position MCBH as a leader. The centerpiece of this effort is the new, state-of-the-art Water Reclamation Facility, a \$300M+ project currently being designed and to be awarded in FY26. The ECPD was instrumental in securing a Finding of No Significant Impact regarding the project’s design, clearing the final hurdle for this critical infrastructure.

- **Stormwater Program:** The stormwater program, once a compliance liability, is now a nationally recognized model of sustainability, using the 2022 Federal Facilities Compliance Agreement as a blueprint for a complete overhaul. The ECPD has fully integrated its comprehensive Storm Water Management Plan across the installation, making it a living part of base operations. Routine, data-driven inspections utilizing a GIS-based management system, coupled with consistent training for over 300 Environmental Compliance Coordinators (ECC), have become standard practice, leading to zero critical deficiencies in consecutive third-party audits. This level of proactive management is critical to supporting mission readiness, preventing polluted runoff from degrading marine training areas and avoiding regulatory interventions that could restrict construction, maintenance, and operational activities vital to the installation’s warfighting mission.



MCBH ECPD staff members, Ms. Katherine Smith (left) and Ms. Mary Kerber (right), survey critical stormwater outfalls along the Kāne'ohē Bay shoreline.

Strategic Management of Pu‘uloa Range Investigation

- A sterling example of the ECPD’s leadership is its ownership of the lead sampling initiative at the PRTE, a high-visibility initiative carrying both Indo-Pacific Command- and Assistant Secretary of the Navy-level interest. Understanding the immense public and regulatory sensitivity surrounding the issue, the ECPD team took charge of developing a path forward. They worked closely with and nurtured a positive relationship with HDOH, engaging in several iterations of technical writing and conferencing to create a Sampling and Analysis Plan that would satisfy all parties. Their expert negotiation and technical credibility resulted in a testing plan that was formally approved by HDOH—a significant achievement and a major community relations win in the face of intense scrutiny. In 2025, the team saw the project through to completion, authoring the final Site Investigation Report, developing a site risk assessment, and capping off the transparent process by participating in a community open house to present the findings directly to the public. This masterful handling of a complex issue guaranteed the continued availability of this critical live-fire range, directly supporting warfighter readiness.



MCBH ECPD staff member, Mr. Lolani Coleman, collects a soil sample from the shoreline of the Pu‘uloa Range Training Facility.

Environmental Management and Compliance

- The installation's commitment to self-assessment remains unwavering, with a continued decrease in adverse findings in the Environmental Compliance Evaluation program. This positive trend is a direct result of the ECPD's diligent training of unit-level ECCs, embedding a culture of proactive compliance that is a foundational element for overall mission readiness. A compliant force is a ready force, free from environmental constraints.

CONCLUSION

MCBH provides forward-based, sustainable, and secure training and operational support to enable Operational Forces to accomplish their mission. Nowhere was the ECPD's role in this mission more evident than in the command's exemplary response to the P-8A Poseidon mishap. The ECPD's leadership during this crisis turned a potential environmental and public relations catastrophe into a nationally recognized model of effective, transparent, and environmentally conscious crisis management. This achievement, built upon a foundation of sustained excellence across all environmental programs, proves that a deep commitment to stewardship is not separate from the mission—it is essential to it.

MCBH is dedicated to meeting and exceeding expectations. They continue to improve both their mission support and their commitment to environmental stewardship. We appreciate the opportunity to share these accomplishments with you. Mahalo.