No Be Lolo!
Get the Facts

As the community pursues legal action to restore the flow to Nā Wai ʻEhā streams, it's meeting a corporate campaign of misinformation and scare tactics. Wailuku Water Company (WWC) and Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar (HC&S), a division of Alexander & Baldwin, Inc. (A&B), don't want to let go of their monopoly over stream water. Now they're resorting to fiction to support their stand.

Here are the facts, including admissions the two companies made during legal proceedings.

---

1. Fiction: This case is about jobs and the economy.

Fact: This case is about who controls Maui's water future.

Water is a public trust resource that belongs to all, including generations yet unborn—not the property and profit source of these two private companies. WWC contributes nothing to the economy, but simply seeks to skim a profit off of public water. HC&S/A&B could and should use practicable alternatives. Instead, it seeks to hoard Nā Wai ʻEhā water for sale to the public while reserving use for its future development projects. This case will decide whether the future of Nā Wai ʻEhā and Maui belongs to these companies, or all the people of Maui.

2. Fiction: WWC and HC&S say they are using every drop of stream water they divert.

Fact: Water is available for sale.

In a 2005 letter to its shareholders, WWC declared that after HC&S, kuleana users, and existing WWC customers, "27.5 million gallons a day (mgd) would be available to new customers." HC&S/A&B and WWC now want to sell 9 mgd of Nā Wai ʻEhā water to the County of Maui for a surface water treatment plant.

3. Fiction: WWC and HC&S say no stream water is being wasted.

Fact: There are numerous examples of waste and dumping.

Water Dumping: WWC gave Maui Cattle Company up to a million gallons a day to spray into the air over a dry pasture in Māʻalaea all day, every day, through the heat of summer. For years, HC&S dumped outrageous volumes of water—up to 14,000 gallons per acre per day (gad), more than twice the amount needed for sugar—onto sandy, unproductive land slated for development. The companies committed this dumping even after the community brought legal action to stop the waste and restore stream flows.

Water Wasting: HC&S admitted that its unlined Waiʻale Reservoir, which receives water from Waiheʻe and Spreckels Ditches, loses 6 to 8 mgd through leakage. Another 3 to 4 mgd is lost in other parts of its ditch system. This accounts for more than 25 percent of the water that is actually delivered to the reservoir. (To put this in perspective, the ʻĪao Aquifer, Maui's main source of drinking water, has a total capacity of less than 20 mgd.)

4. Fiction: HC&S says it has no other affordable water sources except from Nā Wai ʻEhā streams.

Fact: Reasonable alternatives are available.

HC&S has used Well No. 7 in Central Maui for more than six decades to produce more than 20 mgd of non-potable agricultural water. But it prefers to use

the "free" Nā Wai ʻEhā water so it can avoid running the well and instead sell its internally generated electricity to Maui Electric for windfall profits.

HC&S also should take the initiative to use the more than 5 mgd of reclaimed water from the Wailuku-Kahului wastewater treatment plant that is now dumped in injection wells, degrading nearshore waters.

5. Fiction: HC&S will be forced to go out of business if Nā Wai ʻEhā streams are restored.

Fact: HC&S is only banking WWC's "Surplus" and can afford to share.

Historically, the former Wailuku Sugar plantation used most of the water diverted from Nā Wai ʻEhā, and HC&S used only about one-third. Now, Wailuku Sugar has turned into a "water company," and HC&S is simply helping WWC to bank its unused "share"—but only for now. HC&S admitted that, as WWC finds more "customers," the water will no longer be available to HC&S. Thus, unless HC&S is willing to rest its future in WWC's hands, HC&S's future does not depend on Nā Wai ʻEhā water.

With very modest investments, HC&S can show community responsibility, stop wasting water from its leaky system, and make good use of its non-potable ground water supplies. But HC&S wants to keep taking—and wasting—public stream water for free, while the streams run dry and households are asked to cut back their use.

6. Fiction: Stream restoration is detrimental to agriculture.

Fact: Restoration will support agriculture.

Scores of family farmers from Waikapū to Waiheʻe support restored stream flows to farm their kuleanas, grow food for their families and communities, and live their culture. Nā Wai ʻEhā was Maui's breadbasket in ancient times, and its rich lands could regain their productivity with more water.

A&B seeks to develop agricultural land. Even while claiming HC&S cannot lose any substantial acreage without going out of business, A&B is busy planning to urbanize thousands of acres of plantation land. A&B has already received approval from the state Land Use Commission to reduce its Maui agricultural lands by 25 percent, with 10,000 acres slated for future development.

7. Fiction: Stream restoration impairs the ability to provide water to existing and new homes.

Fact: Stream flow recharges public aquifers.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) estimates that the companies' stream diversions deprive the ʻĪao Aquifer, Maui's main drinking water source, of more than 12 mgd of recharge. This exceeds 60% of the current 20 mgd capacity of the aquifer and could provide clean, affordable ground water for thousands of affordable homes via the county's system.

8. Fiction: Stream restoration is detrimental to Maui's economy.

Fact: A healthy environment is the economy.

Maui's economy and way of life depend on a balanced ecosystem. Over a century of draining Nā Wai ʻEhā watersheds has taken a toll on the ability of the ʻāina to maintain a healthy cycle in our streams, oceans, and aquifers. These companies can show community responsibility by adopting economically feasible alternatives and restoring water to the public. Instead, they prefer to hoard the water for their exclusive profit. It's time to restore balance.

The Companies' Waiʻale proposal is a raw deal. The Waiʻale treatment plant WWC and A&B propose to the County requires the public to bear the plant costs and pay the companies for the water. Meanwhile, A&B would reserve half of the water for its own developments. The County's own analysis concludes that the price WWC proposes to charge for water makes the Waiʻale plant unfeasible. Instead of supporting water profiteers, the County needs to adopt aggressive conservation measures, which its analysis concludes is the most feasible alternative.