

Some Businesses Reimbursed After Honolulu Spill

HONOLULU (AP) — The shipping company that spilled molasses into Honolulu Harbor last month is reimbursing some businesses affected by the incident. Fly-fishing tour company Bonefish Honolulu, which books tours in Keehi Lagoon told *Hawaii News Now* that Matson, Inc. has resolved its claims. The company said its bookings plummeted after a Matson pipe leaked more than 230,000 gallons of molasses into the harbor, or enough to fill about seven rail cars. The spill killed more than 20,000 fish and other marine life. The spill shut down Keehi Lagoon and much of Honolulu Harbor for nearly two weeks.

Matson spokesman Jeff Hull said in an email Tuesday that the shipping company has received about 20 claims regarding the spill. The settlement process began a few weeks ago and is continuing, he said. Bonefish Honolulu's Joaquin DeNolfo runs the company with his father, Louie "The Fish" DeNolfo. He said they settled with Matson so they would have something to fall back on if bookings don't come through. The settlement terms are confidential, the DeNolfos said.

Their business is now starting to pick up, just as the wildlife and water quality at Keehi Lagoon have improved, but they say there is still a long way to go. "Still singing the blues because the fish are still affected," Joaquin DeNolfo said. "But you think in time they should come back. It should get better." Legal experts say a quick resolution of the civil claims favors Matson.

"They have every reason to settle as many claims as they can as quickly as possible, as quietly as possible and as confidentially as possible," attorney Victor Bakke said. The longer it drags on, the more legal fees Matson will incur, Bakke said. Federal and state agencies are investigating the spill, discovered September 9 in the harbor in an industrial area west of downtown, where Matson loads molasses and other goods for shipping.

Last week, Matson said it had been subpoenaed by a federal grand jury for documents relating to the spill. It has also received written requests for information from two state agencies and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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