



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Agencies and NGOs Coordinate Actions on Invasive Species**

In the face of the worst economic times Hawai'i has seen in decades, agencies and organizations continue to coordinate their efforts to protect Hawai'i from invasive species. Federal and State Agencies and NGO participants in the Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) worked to collaboratively produce a ten-point Vision and Action Plan for Hawai'i, which was finalized in December, 2009.

CGAPS first formed in 1995 in response to two studies which reported that Hawai'i had the worst alien pest problem in the nation due to large gaps in invasive species programs and laws, and a lack of inter- and intra-agency communication and cooperation (TNC/NRDC 1992; U.S. OTA 1994). The first collaboratively written CGAPS Action Plan was produced in 1995. Since then, the group has continued to meet and work on the goals set forth in the plan, although most current CGAPS participants are either new or have replaced original members who have retired.

The first section of the Vision and Action Plan documents the strides made in Hawai'i over the past 15 years, as suggested by CGAPS founding member Alan Holt.

"It was rewarding to look back at the old Action Plan and see what has been accomplished," said CGAPS participant Earl Campbell (U.S. Fish and Wildlife). "Just about every success that has been achieved is due to effective partnerships and working together."

"The collaborative process of examining Hawai'i's invasive species prevention and control programs, setting goals and objectives through a common vision, and prioritizing immediate needs has taken a long time, but it is important to have these discussions and make actionable decisions," said CGAPS participant Carol Okada (Hawai'i Department of Agriculture). "We are all limited by the mandates and jurisdictions of our respective agencies and groups. Unless we know exactly where the gaps are and work together to fill them, we're not going to have the biosecurity system we need to protect Hawai'i's natural resources, economy and human health."

The CGAPS Vision and Action plan provides a new look at the top ten issues that continue to stymie efforts to protect Hawai'i from invasive species. Each of the 10 points provides background information on the issue, a vision of what would constitute success in addressing the issue, some long-term needs for correcting existing protection gaps, and a short list of immediate actions that CGAPS participants can accomplish in the next three years.

"It is important that we identify the actions that can and should be worked on in the short-term," said 2009-2010 CGAPS Chair Fred Kraus (Bishop Museum). "This allows CGAPS participants to understand the priorities of other agencies and where they can best help each

other, as well as their own duties and responsibilities to furthering the goals and objectives of CGAPS. Through these actions, we can all better monitor our progress.”

Some of the needs are as follows:

- The building of joint Federal/State inspection and quarantine facilities at ports on each island (most importantly at Honolulu International Airport, which receives more than 90% of incoming cargo), including an efficient and comprehensive inter-island inspection system, and treatment/destruction facilities for intercepted pests. A permanent and reliable funding system for cargo inspection and quarantine with measures to assure compliance.
- A comprehensive national policy to protect Hawai‘i from pests arriving via domestic pathways, and a mandate for federal agencies to search for both federally listed pests and actionable State pests.
- A program with funding to inspect incoming First Class mail and parcels, a major source of smuggled species.
- A proactive, comprehensive risk-management procedure (using the Hawai‘i Weed Risk Assessment and other tools) for reviewing the potential invasiveness of plant imports before they are allowed into the state.
- An improved communication protocol for sharing early warning pest alerts among relevant agencies, and the authority for Hawai‘i-based inspection agencies to apply appropriate prevention, port-inspection, and early detection measures to prevent additional invasions.
- A Federal law that requires inspection of all cargo and conveyances leaving Guam for brown treesnakes, and dedicated, sufficient funding for brown-treesnake interdiction efforts by USDA/Wildlife Services from both the military and civilian sectors. Also, a reinstatement of the State canine inspection program which serves as the last line of defense from brown treesnakes.
- State authority and capacity to protect against aquatic invasive species via hull fouling, along with the development of a State system to verify ballast water exchange or sterilization for all incoming vessels.
- A dedicated invasive species emergency rapid response fund similar to the Hurricane Relief Fund for immediate response to newly detected pests, and State authority to implement and enforce quarantine for newly discovered pests.

The top ten issues and visions of success are as follows:

#### **1. BORDER PROTECTION**

*Vision:* Hawai‘i has an effective biosecurity system that is adequately funded and staffed to prevent alien-pest species from entering the state, regardless of origin or import pathway.

#### **2. SMUGGLING OF PESTS**

*Vision:* Smuggling of invasive pest species will be treated as a serious offense by State and Federal agencies, and the risk of new species arriving illegally will be greatly reduced.

#### **3. IMPORTATION OF INVASIVE PLANTS**

*Vision:* Hawai‘i will be protected from importation of new invasive plants.

#### **4. BROWN TREESNAKE**

*Vision:* The risk of brown treesnakes arriving and becoming established in Hawai‘i is eliminated.

#### **5. AQUATIC INVASIVES**

**Vision:** Hawai‘i will have an effective biosecurity system that prevents aquatic invasive species from entering the state and spreading.

#### **6. INTERISLAND SPREAD OF PESTS**

**Vision:** Each island will be protected from alien pests present on other islands.

#### **7. ADDRESS FEDERAL LAWS THAT EXPOSE HAWAI‘I TO UNNECESSARY RISK**

**Vision:** Hawai‘i will reduce the risk posed by federal laws or agreements that do not protect Hawai‘i.

#### **8. EARLY WARNING FOR PESTS NOT PRESENT IN HAWAI‘I**

**Vision:** Hawai‘i’s early-warning system will identify threatening pests in nearby jurisdictions and effectively prevent their entry.

#### **9. EARLY DETECTION AND RAPID RESPONSE**

**Vision:** Hawai‘i will effectively detect new incursions of pest species and launch rapid-response measures while these species are still controllable or eradicable.

#### **10. CAPACITY TO CONTROL WIDESPREAD PESTS**

**Vision:** Hawai‘i will have the capacity to control the widespread pests that cause unacceptable harm to its economy and ecosystems.

For some issues, great strides can be made by working locally with non-CGAPS agencies, businesses and lawmakers. Some issues will require help from Hawai‘i’s congressional delegates, and many issues will certainly require the public’s help.

The CGAPS Steering Committee is comprised of participants from the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture (Plant Pest Control Branch and Plant Quarantine Branch), Department of Land and Natural Resources (Division of Aquatic Resources and Division of Forestry and Wildlife), U.S. Department of Agriculture/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Homeland Security/Customs and Border Protection, U.S.D.A. Forest Service/Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry, U.S. Geological Survey/Pacific Island Ecosystem Research Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy of Hawai‘i, Bishop Museum and the Invasive Species Committees of Hawai‘i. CGAPS meetings are held three times per year and are open to the public. For more information, visit [www.cgaps.org](http://www.cgaps.org).

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