



Executive Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Invasive Species Prevention and Control in the State of Hawai`i

Produced in February 2003 by CGAPS as an update for legislators and the general public; Updated in July 2003 with the passage of Act 85 of 2003 authorizing the Hawaii Invasive Species Council

Harmful invasive species negatively impact most sectors of Hawai`i's economy and natural resources directly or indirectly. No single agency (County, State, or Federal) has jurisdiction for mitigating the wide-ranging impacts of invasive species. Instead, several agencies and private organizations grapple with aspects of this issue collaboratively and individually. Unfortunately, not all agencies that have responsibility for this issue are actively involved with working toward solutions.

Responsibility for this issue falls on agencies involved with: 1) preventing the accidental arrival of invasive species, 2) regulating the pathways where potentially harmful invasive species purposefully enter the State, 3) promoting the introduction of potentially harmful non-native species into the State and 4) controlling and eradicating harmful invasive species that become established.

The most cost effective means of invasive species control is prevention. The cost and effort expended to control an invasive species once it has escaped into the wild is much higher than the cost of stopping it at ports of entry. Because it is not practical to stop the accidental or intentional introduction of all harmful invasive species, the next most cost-effective way to deal with invasive species is early detection and rapid response prior to the broad-scale establishment of a pest. If harmful invasive species become established on a broad-scale within the State of Hawai`i or on an individual island, funds will be need to be expended to reduce its spread or mitigate its impacts on a long-term basis. The cost of invasive species prevention, early detection, control, and eradication is not shared by all beneficiaries. In particular, specific agencies within the State of Hawai`i bear the cost for the management of harmful invasive species accidentally or intentionally released through transportation and trade.

Over the past decade, numerous plans and studies have been completed for specific priority invasive species (e.g., brown treesnakes, red imported fire ants) as well as for overall programmatic capacity needs. It has become increasingly clear to agencies, entities, and individuals working on invasive species issues in Hawai`i that a more comprehensive approach is needed to reduce the negative impact of harmful invasive species on a departmental level within state government.

Three basic issues related to this need will be discussed in this document.

These issues are leadership and commitment, dedicated funding, and inter-agency cooperation and coordination. This document and a copy of an independent review of this issue mandated by the State Legislature and produced by the Legislative Reference Bureau are provided for review.

1. Leadership and Commitment

Executive Order (EO) 2002-03 created the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council to encourage statewide leadership. Together, State agencies may find new ways to provide public input, and work in partnership with county and federal governments as well as private agencies.

Findings:

- Hawai'i's current invasive species control programs are not adequate.
- The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) works well at the staff level as a voluntary partnership, but CGAPS lacks the cabinet-level participation needed to make key administrative and budgetary decisions.
- There are gaps in existing rules and agency mandates that prevent effective response to new threats to Hawai'i's economy and ecosystems should be addressed.
- Counties play a key role in the management of invasive species for each island

Recommendations:

- Department Chairs and the Governor's office should coordinate the response to invasive alien species on a statewide level.
- Gaps in existing rules and unclear or conflicting agency mandates that prevent effective response to new threats should be addressed.
- All relevant department Chairs need to integrate invasive species management issues into their missions – solutions cannot be left HDOA and DLNR at their current funding levels.
- Leadership at the County and island levels needs to commit to supporting the issue.
- Increasing mandates for invasive species prevention and control will create conflicting mandates. A process for dispute resolution between departments is needed.

2. Dedicated Funding

Lack of adequate, sustainable funding is the single greatest problem that State, Federal, and private agencies face in the fight to protect Hawai'i from harmful invasive species (2002 LRB).

Findings:

- Prevention is the most cost effective and effective method of controlling invasive species.

- Early detection and control mandates are severely under-funded. To address this, grassroots partnerships have arisen to help fill this gap, but funding for partnerships like the island Invasive Species Committees is not dedicated.
- Funding for harmful invasive species prevention, early detection, and control programs is not being shared by all beneficiaries of these services.
- In the future, agencies may compete for funding on a departmental level.

Recommendations:

- Increased and dedicated funding is needed for HDOA to conduct adequate inspection services at ports of entry.
- Ensure funding for early detection and control capabilities.
- Institute fees to fund protection services for all residents and visitors as beneficiaries of these services. Additional fees should be developed for relevant sectors that use invasive species prevention or control programs more often than the average person, such as importers.
- Explore and develop additional sources of funding for invasive species measures. In particular, identify all Federal and private funds available to the State to fight invasive species and advise and assist State Departments in acquiring these funds.
- Agencies need to coordinate planning funding requests for dealing with invasive species on a department level annually. Agencies should coordinate and provide a proposed crosscut budget for State agency expenditures concerning invasive species.

3. Inter-Agency Cooperation and Coordination

As mentioned previously, authority for preventing and controlling invasive species is spread across State and federal agencies, making close coordination of activities among these agencies imperative. An alliance of environmental, health, industrial, agricultural, and other resource-based sectors of society such as travel and tourism is important to the success of the effort.

Findings:

- Executive Order 2002-03 (EO) states that the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council shall be a joint effort between State agencies with invited participation from county and federal governments, as well as the profit and not-for-profit sectors, with public input and participation.
- Counties play a key role in the management of invasive species for each island.
- Broad public outreach presented cooperatively between agencies will ensure public support for invasive species programs.

Recommendations:

- Through the leadership of the Hawai`i Invasive Species Council, all relevant departments need to integrate invasive species prevention and control issues into their mission. Solutions cannot be left to the under-funded HDOA and DLNR – who represent less than 1.5% of the State’s budget.
- When appropriate, the Council and its staff will draw on various existing organizations for coordination and leadership. These include Federal and County agencies, regional organizations, statewide coordinating groups, and island Invasive Species Committees, as well representatives from the profit and not-for-profit sectors.
- Counties should play a key role in the management of invasive species for each island, and capacity and capability at the County and island levels to coordinate, detect, and respond to invasive species is needed.
- The State needs to work through its Congressional delegation to ensure that Hawai`i’s special susceptibility to alien species is recognized in federal legislation that protects Hawai`i from mainland pests as well as other species that are of no consequence to mainland agriculture and ecosystems.
- Invasive alien species issues and solutions should be incorporated into the curriculum of K-12 and university programs
- Widespread public awareness of the issue should be addressed through the media.

Conclusion

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species welcomes the formation of the Hawai`i Invasive Species Council. We hope that the Hawai`i Invasive Species Council will provide leadership and commitment, dedicated funding, and inter-agency cooperation and coordination for all State agencies on this issue. We hope that the Hawai`i Invasive Species Council will meet and collaboratively determine measurable goals and accomplish demonstrable successes dealing with invasive species management in the State of Hawai`i. In the end, this issue can only be dealt with if State agencies work in collaboration with Federal and County agencies and private entities to reach mutual goals.