

CGAPS Invasive Species Prevention Benchmarks

CGAPS is honored to continue our work with Hau‘oli Mau Loa Foundation to help meet the Foundation’s environmental mission of enhancing stewardship, preservation, and protection of the environment. We accomplish this through our collaborative work preventing the introduction and establishment of invasive species and the subsequent harm they cause. The three benchmarks below were presented to Foundation Directors and will function as measures for each of the next five years. The benchmarks were selected because achieving them entails addressing key actions in the 2025 HISC & CGAPS Joint Strategy.

Benchmark 1: Prevent the arrival and establishment of priority invasive species (Strategy 1 is terrestrial-focused, 3 which is aquatic-focused, & parts of 2 which is interisland-focused).

Background: Prevention is difficult to measure. During the 2025 strategic planning process, CGAPS and HISC agreed to the idea of creating and using a SHORT list of representative invasive species that would serve as proxies to 1) think through our laws, programs, and capacity to prevent or detect it and similar species so that we can focus on the gaps; and 2) to serve as an annual measure of sorts, even knowing that the absence of a priority species at year’s end may be a measure of our efforts, or, it may simply be due to luck. One additional issue has come up since the creation of the list. The prevention list now consists of more than one hundred species because there is no single list of prevention priorities for the state and this was seen as the only available opportunity to house a list that, while “non-regulatory”, is housed on a state website. There is an additional barrier to reporting because CGAPS staff cannot easily get the necessary information (for example, we absolutely can’t get access to interception data from foreign sources due to US trade protection and other laws).

Understanding these caveats, CGAPS will prevent the arrival and/or establishment of the following species:

1. **Asian longhorned beetle** – this species is representative of wood-boring beetles that can arrive in wood. This benchmark requires multiple actions including passing a rule to address the importation of untreated firewood, raising capacity, and possibly additional work to ensure the listing of this and similar commodities on manifests.
2. **Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA)** – this species can arrive from foreign or domestic sources, on or with a variety of conveyances. This benchmark requires maintaining the federal Hawai‘i Ant Policy, communicating these priorities to DOD facilities in Hawai‘i, raising state capacity to assess and mitigate domestic importation risk, and



Asian Longhorned Beetle



Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA)

supporting early detection & rapid response capacity, including increasing public awareness.

3. **Pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*)** – this species is present in very small numbers on some islands and is an eradication target for the Invasive Species Committees where present. Because it is not listed as a Noxious Weed, it can arrive on purpose as an ornamental. This benchmark requires passing one or more rules to update the Noxious Weed list and/or a revised restricted plant rule and list.
4. **Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) pathogen** – Although no causal agent has been isolated and identified, the pathogen/s can arrive via ballast water and possibly via biofouling as well. Preventing SCTLD would require passing a rule to reduce the risk of arriving via vessel ballast and biofouling, raising capacity to enforce this and new federal standards when the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA) comes into force, and other work such as preparing an emergency response plan.
5. **Pulse coral (*Unomia stolonifera*, an octocoral)** – This species is present and the subject of a rapid response. Although it is already on the state “restricted” list, it has shown up as a popular (but illegal) aquarium species and several additional aquarium trade species have also been detected. This benchmark would require assessing and implementing communication needs to prevent additional illegal importations and aquarium releases, coordination of multi-agency work to eradicate the known infestation, and early detection/rapid response planning to detect and respond to new infestations.



Pampas grass (*C. selloana*)



Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease



Pulse coral (*Unomia stolonifera*)

Benchmark 2: Engagement

CGAPS continues to conduct periodic public awareness and opinion surveys which can be used as a benchmark.

Although polls are not conducted annually, we propose using the existing numeric benchmark for Strategy 7 which is to raise or maintain strong awareness and support (70%+ in polls) for key invasive species issues.

	2022	2017
Respondents that have heard of “alien pest species” or “invasive species”:	97%	72%
Respondents that said that invasive species is a “somewhat” or “very” serious problem in Hawai‘i:	93%	87%
Have heard of “‘ōhi‘a” or “‘ōhi‘a lehua”:	89%	68%
Have heard of “Rapid ‘Ōhi‘a Death” or “ROD”:	80%	48%

Benchmark 3: Support

The Strategy 10 objective is to “Secure committed consistent annual contributions from CGAPS partners to provide core support for two staff and core operations (est. \$250K per year, not including project funds).” CGAPS core support has hovered around \$500K/year (not including ROD funding or grants that did not support CGAPS staff) for the past several years, which has allowed us to meet core support needs as well as the Legal Fellows program and project funds. This benchmark would be to increase the regular level of support from an existing partner or to gain the regular support of at least one new partner.

