

HAWAII ALIEN SPECIES ACTION PLAN

A Multi-Agency Commitment

October 19, 1994*

The silent invasion of Hawaii by harmful alien species--disease organisms, weeds, predators, pest insects, etc.--has far-reaching consequences for the State's people, economy, and natural environment. Pest species already established in Hawaii are responsible for large losses of agricultural and horticultural crops. These pests thwart the shipment of local produce to mainland markets, damage native forests, streams, and watersheds, compete with and cause extinctions of native flora and fauna, and carry diseases that affect native species, agricultural crops, livestock and humans.

Hawaii has been actively involved in alien pest prevention and control for a century. Today, at least 20 state, federal, and private organizations spend over \$50 million each year to address this complex and growing problem. In spite of this effort, new pests continue to invade Hawaii at an alarming and increasing rate, and control efforts for established pests are often insufficient to prevent localized pest problems from expanding. The damage caused by pests greatly exceeds the current costs of prevention and control programs. As this problem grows, additional sectors of Hawaii's ecology and economy are increasingly vulnerable. This is especially true for Hawaii's visitor industry, which is founded on the state's international image as a paradise free of venomous snakes, tropical diseases, and other threats.

The ASAP Project

For the past seven months, over 80 professionals from government, non-profit, and private agencies, organizations, and businesses have collaborated as the Alien Species Action Plan (ASAP) Working Group to produce a strategy to strengthen Hawaii's protection against this pest invasion. This Working Group was supported with funding provided by the State legislature through the Governor's Agriculture Coordinating Committee (GACC), together with donated staff support from The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii (TNCH), the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), and the University of Hawaii Department of Urban and Regional Planning. A 1992 report prepared by The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii (TNCH) and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and entitled The Alien Pest Species Invasion in Hawaii: Background Study and Recommendations for Interagency Planning provided a starting point for the ASAP Group's work.

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The ASAP Working Group is composed of three parts. The majority of its members served on one of four Topic Groups, which are multi-interest teams focused on particular aspects of the alien pest problem (e.g., port-of-entry inspections). A smaller Oversight Committee is made up of leaders of key agencies and organizations involved in the project, and served as the decision-making body for the actions that appear in this final plan. Finally, the day-to-day operations of the project were coordinated by the Steering Committee. A full list of the participants in each of these parts of the Working Group team is provided in Attachment 1.

Between April and July of 1994, ASAP Working Group members met in four Topic Groups to identify problem areas and develop specific actions to address them. A plenary session in April launched the project and organized the Topic Groups. Each group then met separately for at least four work sessions, and individual members or subcommittees devoted additional hours to refine a set of recommended actions within each topic area. These were then reviewed by all Topic Groups, and refined further into a set of 31 recommended actions.

A subcommittee of the Oversight Committee then met for three half-day sessions to recommend a first set of actions which all parties to the Working Group will undertake to improve pest prevention and control for Hawaii. These recommendations were adopted by the Oversight Committee and are presented in this plan.

Many other ideas and proposed actions were discussed by the Working Group via the Topic Group sessions; those presented in this plan mark the beginning of a multiagency, collaborative effort that is expected to address a larger scope of work in the coming years. All of the ideas generated by the Topic Groups have been documented and will serve as fuel for the ongoing work described below.

Key Findings

1. The Working Group confirms that the alien pest problem is growing rapidly, and that existing programs for prevention and control will fail to protect Hawaii without significant improvements.
2. Working Group members acknowledge that significant improvements depend, in large part, on improving the coordination among public and private organizations. No one organization can solve this problem; we must work together to devise a more complete and integrated protection system. The actions in this plan reflect a multi-layered protection system, from prevention of pests before they reach Hawaii, through effective control operations for those pests that are already well-established here.
3. Although many improvements will require additional funding and/or strengthened authorities, the Working Group agrees that important progress can be made through innovation and teamwork within existing resources and mandates. No body currently

exists to direct this collaborative effort, and the Working Group regards formation of such a body as its first priority.

4. The Working Group recognizes that significant improvements in pest prevention and control will require widespread public support and political leadership of the highest order. These do not exist at this time. It is a central strategy of the Group to develop this public and political support by a) launching a multi-agency public awareness campaign and b) undertaking a first set of actions that demonstrates the Group's ability to make the best possible use of any resources given them by lawmakers.
5. The Working Group recognizes that its work to date is only a beginning, and that additional actions will be planned each year toward the ultimate goal of providing Hawaii with the best pest protection possible in balance with other societal needs. However, because of the severity of the present problem and the high opportunity costs of delayed action, the Group agrees that slow, incremental improvements will not suffice; dramatic gains must be made during the next four years.

Immediate Priorities

The Working Group will undertake the following actions immediately, attempting to accomplish them without additional funding or legal authority.

1. FORM A COORDINATING GROUP ON ALIEN PEST SPECIES.

Problem Statement

Many of the current difficulties in implementing pest prevention and control strategies are compounded by the lack of interagency coordination, lack of consensus on priorities, and lack of an effective mechanism to set priorities, respond to contingency or emergency situations or to address and resolve jurisdictional disputes and questions. This is the single greatest obstacle to improving the effectiveness of pest programs.

Proposed Action

A Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species will be formed effective immediately. At least initially, it will be held together and driven by the voluntary efforts and "enlightened self-interest" of its members rather than by any formal authority.

It will not be an additional layer of review or "hoop" for approval of alien species actions, although it may be used to replace or do away with review or approval functions currently conducted by other entities if the Coordinating Group is found to be a more efficient mechanism for this work. The Group will serve to expedite communications, problem-solving, and decision-making for more effective implementation of pest prevention and control work.

Its members will include representatives of any agency or organization which wishes to contribute to the above purpose; each representative will be someone who will advocate within their agency or organization on matters of resource allocation, work priorities, etc.

For agencies, these will typically be career leaders (e.g., State division or branch heads) rather than political appointees or elected officials to ensure continuity through changes of political administration.

The group will adopt its own operating procedures and structure. It will meet quarterly, with additional meetings as needed, especially at the outset, to meet its goals.

Resources Needed

During calendar 1995, Coordinating Group meetings will include staff from The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii and its partners in the ASAP Project. Projects of the Group will be funded out of existing budgets. A major goal of the Group will be to develop coordinated funding requests for priorities requiring new resources.

Lead Responsibility

The Chairman's office of the Hawaii Department of Agriculture will host the Coordinating Group for administrative purposes. Staff from participating agencies, organizations and private enterprises will work with the Chairman's office.

Milestones

All organizations represented on the ASAP Oversight Committee commit to full participation on the Coordinating Group by November 16, 1994.

Group adopts a detailed workplan for improvement of rapid response systems by June 30, 1995.

Group oversees implementation of other priority actions (below).

2. **IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS OF INSPECTIONS THROUGH COORDINATION OF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, U.S. POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE, U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE, HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND MILITARY CUSTOMS INSPECTION PROGRAM INSPECTORS.**

Problem Statement

Inspectors are unable to check all passengers and material entering Hawaii for possible pest species. They must be highly selective, and must, therefore, target their inspections based on the best available information. The effectiveness of inspections of incoming cargo, vessels, and visitors can be enhanced by interagency sharing of inspection findings

and profiles of suspect materials, and coordination of staffing, planning, and sample inspections. No reliable mechanism currently exists for this coordination.

Proposed Action

Ernest Mayer of USFWS-LE will convene a first meeting of inspectors from the above-named agencies. This group will establish goals and a workplan, and will determine how/if it should function as part of the Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (item 1 above) or as an independent group.

Lead Responsibility

USFWS-LE.

Milestones

First meeting held to establish goals by January 1, 1995.

Workplan completed by March 1, 1995.

3. MAKE FULL USE OF THE EXISTING AIRLINE VIDEO ON ALIEN SPECIES.

Problem Statement

Although an excellent video has been completed to make incoming airline passengers aware of the importance of complying with pest prevention regulations, it is screened only on a small portion of incoming flights. Some airlines have been reluctant to make use of the video in a way that will maximize its benefit to Hawaii.

Proposed Action

Oversight Committee will prepare a letter for signature by the new Governor and all members of the Hawaii Congressional delegation to the CEO's of all relevant airlines, requesting their help in showing the video.

Lead Responsibility

Mike Buck of DOFAW, with assistance from Glenn Hinsdale of USDA-APHIS, Larry Nakahara from HDOA-PQ, and Alan Holt of TNCH.

Milestones

Letter signed and delivered by January 31, 1995.

Meeting with airline representatives to identify any obstacles to viewing the video by April 1, 1995.

Full use of the video for English-speaking flights by June 30, 1995.

Full use for all incoming flights (includes foreign language editing) by June 30, 1996.

4. RESOLVE THE USE OF PROHIBITED/ALLOWABLE LISTS AS A PRINCIPAL REGULATORY STRATEGY.

Problem Statement

A central element of any pest prevention or control strategy is defining which species are to be treated as pests or potential pests. In Hawaii and the U.S., government agencies are generally allowed to take action only on species officially listed as pests, in spite of the fact that the pest potential of most species is currently unknown. On the one hand, this system minimizes regulatory impact on commerce and travel and could be used further to reduce the paperwork load of agencies mandated with permit processing duties. On the other hand, some feel that the use of these lists invites new problems by stifling proactive prevention measures. This issue has not been adequately discussed in the ASAP Working Group.

HDOA will propose changes in the regulations regarding prohibited and allowable non-domestic animals and microorganisms which would allow species which are not now known to have pest potential to enter the state through a simplified import review process.

This is being proposed to free limited technical staff of a burdensome permit review task in order to dedicate their time to work that has a greater chance of stopping pest species.

Proposed Action

All interested groups will take advantage of the legislative hearings and public review process for the HDOA proposals to debate and resolve the issue of the best strategy for listing of pest species. The Coordinating Group will track these discussions and facilitate decision-making where appropriate.

Lead Responsibility

HDOA-PQ will submit the proposed listing changes and administer the legislative and public review process. All interested parties will take responsibility for engaging in this important debate.

Milestones

HDOA proposal submitted for legislature by January 1, 1995.

Discussions completed by June 30, 1995.

5. MAP PRIORITY PESTS.

Problem Statement

No alien pest species in Hawaii is adequately mapped. Many species are not mapped at all. There is no systematic effort to gather, compile or map information on pest infestations, threatened resource values, and threat levels on an island or statewide scale. The existing, localized mapping and data compilation efforts are not well-coordinated. This, in turn, prevents good planning, priority-setting, and implementation of effective containment or eradication strategies.

Proposed Action

Promote the timely and well-organized completion of the funded National Biological Survey (NBS) Ecosystem Initiative project on alien pest mapping. Encourage the use of the State Geographic Information System (GIS) as the computer "platform" for this project and future mapping of pest species in Hawaii. Develop the highest level of compatibility and data sharing between this platform and the relevant databases and GIS of The Nature Conservancy's Heritage system and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Encourage agencies to gather infestation location data in a uniform and compatible manner for a priority list of to-be-mapped species. Design into the NBS project a process to allow re-mapping of pests for monitoring purposes, and the ability to overlay resource values and other economic, social, and physical values as an aid for decision-making.

Lead Responsibility

National Biological Survey, with focused support from the Coordinating Group described in Action #1 above.

Milestones

Establish a special task force of the Coordinating Group to support the NBS project by January 30, 1995.

Complete the project's first (1-2 year) phase according to the schedule developed by NBS and in a fashion that garners continued funding by the Secretary of the Interior for successive phases.

6. ASSESS THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL INTERNATIONAL TRADE "PRE-EMPTION PROVISION" ON HAWAII PROTECTION FROM ALIEN PEST SPECIES.

Problem Statement

As an adjunct to the North American Free Trade Act and the impending expansions of other global trade agreements, the federal government has adopted provisions to prevent state laws from pre-empting these international pacts. These provisions have already been

invoked to override State of Hawaii complaints against the importation of ivy gourd (*Coccinea grandis*), a known pest, into the U.S.. Promotion of trade is expected to expose Hawaii to further pest traffic from international sources.

Proposed Action

With assistance from our Congressional delegation, we will investigate this issue and adopt appropriate responses via the Coordinating Group.

Lead Responsibility

Susan Miller, former NRDC staff member, will request the assistance of Senator Akaka's office.

Milestones

Assessment completed by January 1, 1995.

Coordinating Group determines appropriate next steps by March 1, 1995.

7. RETAIN MILITARY CUSTOMS INSPECTION INVOLVEMENT IN GUAM BROWN TREE SNAKE CONTROL.

Problem Statement

The Brown Tree Snake is one of the most serious threats to Hawaii. Its most likely avenue of introduction to Hawaii is via aircraft from Guam where it has severely impacted the island's economy and ecology. Military Customs Inspection Program (MCIP) officers are a major part of current programs on Guam to pre-inspect cargo for snakes before loading onto outbound flights. As part of the Department of Defense budget reductions, MCIP may be abolished or severely reduced in the immediate future. This would significantly increase the threat to Hawaii of Brown Tree Snake invasion from Guam unless these inspectors are retained for this special purpose or replaced somehow.

Proposed Action

Secure the continuation of inspection activities by the military on Guam through the actions of our Congressional delegation and Governor.

Lead Responsibility

HDOA-PQ (Larry Nakahara) will draft a letter to the Governor and our Congressional delegation for signature by the Oversight Committee members. Members will follow up with the Congressional offices and the military as necessary to secure continued military inspections on Guam.

Milestones

Letter signed by November 16, 1994.

Military confirms uninterrupted snake control operations on Guam.

8. ENSURE CONTINUED INSPECTION OF INCOMING FOREIGN MAIL BY THE U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE.

Problem Statement

Foreign mail arriving in Honolulu is currently examined by Customs inspectors to assess dutiability and to check for possible contraband or pest traffic. (The mail is one of the primary avenues of pest introduction to Hawaii and the U.S.) A recent raising of the exemptions on collection of duty significantly reduces the percentage of parcels requiring written entries for duty charges. The percentage of parcels requiring examination, however, remains the same, and it is important that the Customs Service be aware of this to avoid any reductions in inspection staff at the Honolulu mail facility.

Proposed Action

Alan Holt of The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii will draft a letter for signature by selected members of the Oversight Committee requesting the assistance of our Congressional delegation in ensuring the continuation of current inspection staffing at the Honolulu mail facility of the U.S. Customs Service. The Coordinating Group will track this issue.

Lead Responsibility

Alan Holt (TNCH).

Milestones

Letter ready for signature by November 16, 1994.

U.S. Customs confirms continued inspections.

9. ESTABLISH THE FOUNDATION OF A CENTRAL PEST REPORTING SYSTEM.

Problem Statement

There is no clear mechanism for the public to report new pest infestations. Several information lines or "hot lines" exist, but these do not provide consistent or comprehensive service for pest reports, and there is incomplete information on how much or how effectively these lines are used. Rather than reports being handled for the caller with prompt response by the appropriate agency, most calls are referred to another number.

The public is generally inadequately informed about which pests to report and how to report them. Most agencies have not developed this information, and are not currently prepared to handle the anticipated increase in reporting traffic that would occur if a central reporting mechanism was established.

Proposed Action

Complete the assessment of needs and design of a central reporting system (perhaps a limited, first phase system to be expanded to a broader range of pests later) in coordination with the ASK-2000 public information program.

Lead Responsibility

Subcommittee of the Coordinating Group, to be appointed.

Milestones

Subcommittee appointed and funds for assessment and design identified by Coordinating Groups by March 1, 1995.

Workplan for assessment and design completed by May 1, 1995.

Assessment and design completed and implementation scheduled by July 1, 1995.

10. LAUNCH PUBLIC AWARENESS/TARGETED EDUCATION CAMPAIGN.

Problem Statement

The general public and community leaders are largely unaware of the severity of the alien pest problem. This includes some groups who, if better informed, could greatly aid the overall improvement of pest prevention and control programs by assisting in surveillance for pests (e.g., stevedores, airline employees) or supporting critical legislation. Existing public awareness efforts are uncoordinated and incomplete, and no agency has significant funds available for a major information campaign.

Proposed Action

Take fullest advantage of existing capabilities in public education to 1) heighten general public awareness of the need to protect Hawaii against pests, and 2) enlist targeted groups. Public information specialists from Oversight Committee organizations will recruit other private sector professionals to work on this project with them as a community service. This group will develop a campaign plan and assist the Coordinating Group in launching it within available resources.

Lead Responsibility

The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii (Maria Naehu) and HDOA (Tish Uyehara).

Milestones

Campaign strategy completed by December 1, 1994.

Strategy implemented according to its own timetable.

Priorities Requiring New Resources and/or Authorities

The ASAP Working Group developed problem statements and proposed actions for 20 topics in addition to those listed above. Many of these describe needs for significant new funding, personnel, equipment, facilities, or regulatory authorities. Others require further problem identification before solutions can be formulated. The Coordinating Group described in the priority actions above will use these materials to help guide their work.

Among the major needs described by the Working Group are five which merit highlighting as priorities:

a. First Class Mail inspection

In spite of an act of Congress calling for a two-year trial inspection of Hawaii-bound domestic First Class Mail for potential pests, a special task force convened to implement the act has encountered jurisdictional and legal obstacles which have brought this important work to a halt. No mail has been inspected, and quarantine officials continue to believe that this pathway accounts for as much as 20 percent of the alien species entering the state each year. The ASAP Working Group was unable to reach consensus on a solution to this problem. It merits the highest attention of Senator Akaka's staff and the designated First Class Mail task force agencies.

b. Surveillance and monitoring systems

It was the Working Group's desire to establish a quantifiable goal for improvement of pest prevention and control systems (e.g., "Reduce the number of pest species entering Hawaii by 50 percent by the year 2000"). The Group failed to do this, largely because 1) there is no reliable measure of the current total number of pest species entering the state, and 2) surveillance and monitoring systems for detecting and tracking pest infestations are woefully inadequate. Reliable surveillance and monitoring are essential to the long-term success of prevention and control programs, and will be a priority topic for the new Coordinating Group as they develop plans for future improvements.

- c. Inspection and quarantine facilities
The current configuration of airports, harbor warehouses, and pest control research facilities is a significant impediment to improved pest prevention and control. More thorough cargo inspections, for example, are thwarted by the lack of adequate staging areas at the harbor and a general trend toward getting cargo out of the limited dock space quickly. This and other facilities problems will require a commitment to an overarching policy of state and federal government that places pest prevention and control as a top priority.
- d. Permanent staffing for agency coordination and public education
The Coordinating Group described above as the hub of agency problem-solving will require a small but permanent staff and discretionary resources beyond current agency budgets in order to address the greatest needs of the state for pest prevention and control. The Coordinating Group will get underway with volunteer and shared resources, and will build its case for increased support through its track record of accomplishment.
- e. Conflicting federal-state regulations and policies
As implied in the priority item on preemption of state obstacles to international trade, and in the First Class Mail inspection issue, there is a growing set of issues where Hawaii may need special recognition by the federal government. The Coordinating Group will work on the idea of packaging these into a comprehensive proposal for Congressional consideration.

Attachment 1: ASAP Working Group Participants

The Hawaii Alien Species Action Plan is the product of the two committees and four topic groups of the ASAP Working Group:

- Oversight Committee
- Steering Committee
- Pre-Entry Prevention Strategies
- Port-of-Entry Sampling & Inspection
- Statewide Control Strategies for Selected Established Pests
- Rapid Response Strategy

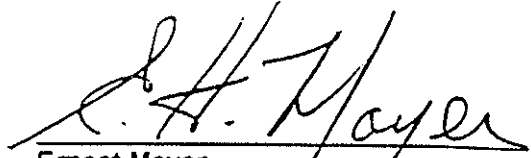
This collaborative effort is the first of its kind involving the following agencies, organizations, and private enterprises, represented by individuals who gave their time and expertise to form its conclusions and who are committed to its implementation.

ALIEN SPECIES ACTION PLAN

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE



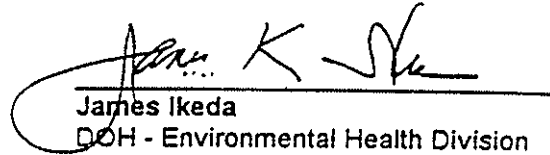
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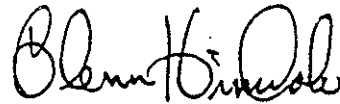
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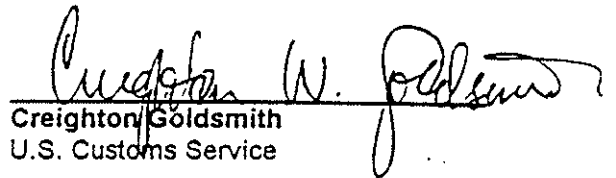
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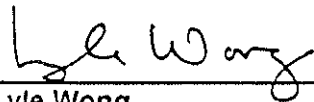
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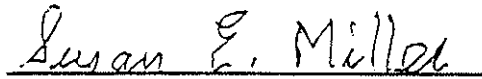
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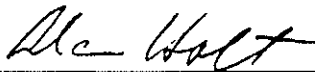
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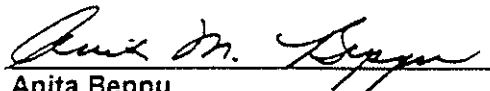
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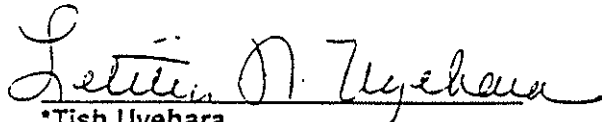


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