HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL
Prevention Working Group Meeting Minutes
August 2, 2005

Dr. Neil Reimer, Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Plant Quarantine Branch, chairperson of the meeting, called the meeting to order at 9:10am.

I. Minutes of Prior Meetings

The minutes of the August 6, 2004 and September 15, 2004 meetings were unanimously approved.

Regarding the existence of a set membership for the Working Group, it was stated that there is no official membership list; the procedure has been to reach consensus among the attendees at the meeting.

II. 2004-2005 HISC Prevention Projects

In 2004-2005, the HISC Prevention Working Group provided funding for various projects to the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Plant Quarantine Branch (DOA-PQ), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services (USDA-WS), the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Aquatic Resources (DLNR-DAR), and the Hawaii Department of Health, Vector Control Branch (DOH-VC). Each agency reported on the status of the projects:

DOA-PQ

The status of DOA-PQ's Maritime Study, Risk Assessments, Nursery Pest Movement Study, and RCUH Hires was reported. (See HISC Prevention Projects Status report, August 2, 2005.)

It was clarified that the purpose of the maritime study was to determine how to identify shipping containers from RIFA states and what to do about it; how to mitigate risk at Port of Entry inspection or where staged, e.g. Biloxi Gulfport.

The scope of the risk assessment was 100% inspection; 10-12 inspectors were deployed, compared to only one inspector typically. Some commodities previously considered low-risk were found to be infested despite being covered with pesticide. For example, live insects were found on domestic shipments of heavily treated cut flowers and plants shipped from California and Florida but originating from Central and South America and pre-cleared by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol. Also, shipping manifests are required to identify product, but there is no standard for the level of detail that must be provided. DOA-PQ is looking into new legislation to require more information, as well as electronic manifests. Pest identification remains a hindering factor. An entomologist has been hired for the Little Fire Ant project, but two entomologists are insufficient.

The intent of the nursery pest movement study is to identify nurseries where the coqui frog and other pests are a problem. DOA-PQ is working with Bill Durston and others on a hot water treatment container. However, while this is effective against the coqui and other bugs, it does not kill ants and other pests. DOA-PQ will also be looking into vapor treatment to deal with these and other pests. The goal is to develop treatments so that the revised rules and coqui protocol can be implemented and nurseries will be able to treat their products and ship inter-island. *Comment:* Wildlife Services has been funded for an island-wide ant survey on Kauai, and concern is that there is no coordination between this effort and DOA-PQ's nursery survey. *Response*: It was noted out that the Kauai island-wide survey was done with DOA staff, and there was agreement that there should be better coordination and sharing of information by both agencies.

USDA-WS

An oral presentation of the project status was given; a written report will be submitted. A study of Brown Tree Snake inspections on Guam by canine teams was conducted to establish the time and effort required. Electronic log forms and physical inspection protocol were developed. Two dog teams conducted inspections at four warehouses; all surface cargo, some bound for Hawaii, was inspected. The time expended was categorized as follows: 37% maintenance/administration, 29% inspection, 10% travel, 6% training, and 18% miscellaneous. The process was time consuming, and there was significant down time as inspectors waited for consignments to arrive at the warehouses, and these are only four out of over 30 warehouses. Also, goods can be added after consignments leave the warehouse. USDA-WS is considering ways to make the inspection process more efficient, and is evaluating conducting inspections at staging areas prior to loading at the port instead of at the warehouse.

Comment: The idea was to work with shippers and gather data in order to determine the usefulness and practicality of pre-departure inspections. This was an ideal situation where shippers cooperated, and show that certification for 20% of the trade, but did the study provide answers? *Comment:* The lack of information on the cost to the shipper and cost of certification killed legislation. The information gained on cost for inspecting four warehouses can be extrapolated to estimate cost of inspecting the rest. So now we have an idea of how much it cost USDA-WS to inspect, and can respond to the Legislature. *Comment:* Report should contain a breakdown of staff time, especially the dog team, and the number of goods inspected. A daily inspection schedule, optimum and realistic, should also be included. The Department of Defense will ask for this.

DLNR – DAR

The status of DLNR-DAR's Electronic Communication Link, National Ballast Water Information Clearinghouse's Pilot, and Outreach Material projects was reported (see Prevention Projects for the Division of Aquatic Resources handout).

Comment: If DAR is establishing mandatory ballast water reporting requirement for ships, there should also be requirements for liability and responsibility, e.g. oil spills.

Comment: Concerned that hurdles remain with the electronic communication link, and urge DOT-HAR to work with DLNR-DAR on this. Also concerned that $40,000 to $60,000 for the project could not be spent, and had to be redirected to other needs in order to encumber the funds. *Response:* The money was budgeted for technical assistance with the database, but since access was not allowed due to confidentiality concerns, there was no need for technical assistance. Also the funding is on an annual basis, and this is too short a time frame when dealing with personnel; will take a different approach next year.

DOH–VC
DOH-VC reported on its purchase of surveillance equipment/supplies, response equipment/supplies, and computer hardware/software regarding the West Nile Virus (WNV) (see HISC Fund Accomplishment Report, FY 2005 Preliminary Report For HISC Preventing Working Group).

Funding from HISC had a significant impact on West Nile Virus issue:
- DOH-VC now has a ground-based response in place;
- stockpile of larvacides and adulticides; and
- computer hardware/software for mosquito geographic information system.

Q: Was all funds spent? *A:* Yes, and received an additional $25,000, but only could encumber $8,000. Some went towards DOH-VC and some for the State Lab. DOH-VC ran out of money for lab tests at the end of the year. The remaining $17,000 of the additional $25,000 went back to HISC.

III. Prevention Priorities and Potential Projects

Funding proposals from DOA-PQ and DOH-VC were presented and discussed. It was noted that HISC funds cannot be used to create new State positions or to fill positions that already exist but are vacant. They can be used to pay overtime costs because overtime is not considered a personnel cost.

DOA-PQ (Plant Quarantine Branch Budget Proposal, August 2, 2005)
The development of molecular markers for the identification of noxious weeds will be done by a researcher, contracted with the University of Hawaii. This is for research and development, not implementation. The researcher will collect genetic material and develop a develop prototype. DOA-PQ does not have a botanist, and may never have one; the development of molecular markers would be a tool to identify organisms to species in order to take action. The technology is well known, but not for the specific plant species on the existing noxious weed list. Once the markers are developed, DOA-PQ would purchase the equipment and be able to identify in-house. The current turnaround time for outside analysis is too long for DOA-PQ's purpose. Initially, the project will start with 30 weeds.

DOH-VC (Request for funds for West Nile Virus surveillance, prevention and response) DOH-VC has lost its West Nile Virus coordinator, and will lose a data manager and an inspector in a year. (*Comment:* The Outreach Working Group has its own funds, up to $100,000 for outreach.) Proposed project will maintain DOH-VC's effort against WNV, with some increase. Communication between DOH-VC and DOA-PQ is important. Links between agency databases is necessary, DOH-VC, DOA, the Federal EPA exchange network, otherwise we are building separate systems. There is a need for common standards, common formats. Also, there is a question of whether Environmental Assessments will be necessary.

Comment: Aerial response component is not in the budget. Aerial spraying is the only way to fully respond to WNV. The other things DOH-VC are asking funding for are adjunct items, and a comprehensive solution has to include both approaches. Aerial spray is the only way to eradicate WNV. It's never been tried before since there is no point to try to eradicate it on the Mainland. But in Hawaii, it may be possible to stop establishment since a find would be an initial point source.

Response: An aerial response component of the type necessary would cost an estimated $2 million. This would include a month of spray, twice/week. And a special plane and aerial spray specialist would be required. There is no such aircraft in Hawaii, and DOH-VC would need two pilots for safety reasons since it has to be night flights. The cost of having a plane on the ground from June through October would be $250,000 (includes plane and stockpile of pesticides for one week of spraying). And there is no guarantee that a find of WNV would be eradicated since wind conditions can blow the spray in the wrong direction. But before a response can be mounted, surveillance is needed, and the current system needs significant upgrading. Approximately, 1,800 mosquitoes per week would need to be collected and tested, a lot more dead birds. (*Comment:* USDA-WS is adding more bird traps at the airports and will work with DOH-VC.) This would result in a substantial cost. The project budget does not reflect the surveillance level needed to justify having aerial response capability.

Comment: Several interdiction systems are needed. Agree that there is no point in aerial response capability if surveillance is not up to required level. For example, there is a six-week turnaround for lab testing at the current time. The resources needed are beyond HISC. This proposal keeps us where we are right now, and no one believes this will keep Hawaii WNV-free. *Response:* A plan for supplemental State budget is needed.

Q: Will there be a discussion of current agency databases and what information is available? *A:* Discussion will take place after fiscal planning phase. *Comment:* We should at least ensure that layers are compatible. *Comment:* Different groups, e.g. Pacific Basin Action Node, NOAA, etc., discuss coordinating databases; it would be good to have natural resources linked. *Comment:* PBAN is active in providing information on coordination.

It was decided that discussion of prevention priorities and potential projects, as well as approval of a budget for HISC Prevention Projects for FY 2005-2006 would continue at

the next Prevention Working Group meeting when funding proposals from DLNR-DAR and USDA-WS would also be available.

In order to meet the deadline for submitting a budget for the HISC to consider at it's August 18, 2005 meeting, and to meet the six-day public notice requirement, it was decided that the Prevention Working Group would meet again on Monday, August 8, 2005, 9am, in the DOA-PQ conference room. The six-day notice will be issued today, August 2, 2005. Proposals should be submitted DOA-PQ for distribution by Thursday, August 5, 2005.

IV. Public Testimony

Email Comment: Inter-island transport needs to be examined, e.g. miconia. *Response:* DOA-PQ plans to address inter-island transport.

Email Comment: The flow of nursery items from Florida and Asia is increasing because of their lower cost to consumers, but there is a greater risk of disease and invasive species. Also the quarantine on commercial crops, orchids and bromeliads, should be extended to koa to deal with rust. *Response:* DOA-PQ will work on the plant reports. The current rule protects agriculture, but it should mandate natural resources as well.

Email Comment: The ant coordinator position should be filled and implemented for RIFA. The nurseries have requested a Risk Assessment to be contracted with the Bishop Museum or PCSU. *Q:* Would a research proposal be more appropriate? *A:* It's been a research project for 7 years now. We need to go beyond this. This is a tool for RA, and needs to be adopted by someone.

Comment: WNV is one problem. Also, DOA-PQ is trying to keep out NKO's. DLNR-DAR and USDA-WS have different kinds of projects. Agree WNV needs separate and large pot of money. If WNV arrives in Hawaii, money has to be made available. HISC seems to lack a strategic plan on how to approach various issues, how to decide on project funding. How much direction is there in HISC? What role does the Working Group play in the HISC, e.g., regarding strategic mitigation? For example, there needs to be a policy statement regarding WNV if there's a find. *Response:* HISC has goals, and key goals have not changed. The Working Group identifies issues and brings these to HISC for discussion.