

Title: O'ahu Island Invasive Species Public Education and Outreach
Organization: O'ahu Invasive Species Committee
Award: \$35,000



Introduction: The O'ahu Invasive Species Committee was founded by a group of volunteers concerned about the spread of miconia and fountain grass on O'ahu. These pests had already wreaked havoc on other islands' ecosystems, but were only just beginning to do damage on O'ahu. OISC realized early on that outreach is essential to all field operations. Since OISC's mission depends on getting voluntary permission from private property owners for OISC field crews to survey their lands, outreach is key. Also, the public can report OISC target species and assist OISC's mission by making the right choices when choosing plants. HISC funds supported 32% of OISC's overall budget and 75% of the budget for the outreach program.

Achievements in FY12

Built support for invasive species work in the communities where OISC field crews operate through work with landowners and neighborhood community groups:

In the first six months of 2012, the outreach specialist built support and secured property access from 45 landowners, constituting 96% success out of all landowners contacted. Contacts with landowners yielded conversations about OISC target species and invasive species in general.

The Mānoa Neighborhood Board has asked OISC to present information about invasive species at their monthly board meetings. This has been a great opportunity to speak about current HISC initiatives as well as OISC activities. Presentations have been given on using the Hawai'i Pacific Weed Risk Assessment, the importance of buying local cut flowers to protect against myrtle rust, OISC's miconia control program in Mānoa Valley and little fire ant. Neighborhood board meetings are re-broadcast on 'Ōlelo community television.

OISC has been in constant communication with the Wai'anae Neighborhood Board regarding a joint spray operation between OISC and the O'ahu Army Natural Resources Program for fountain grass in Wai'anae. The board has been supportive of the operation and understands that this is a priority species because fountain grass infestations can cause more frequent and more destructive brush fires. At the neighborhood board meeting where this information was presented, Cynthia Rezentes, a prominent Wai'anae community member, stood up and publicly thanked OISC for the work we do and for protecting Wai'anae from this pest.

OISC also presented invasive species information to the Honolulu Sunset Rotary Club and to GIS professionals at the Hawai'i Pacific GIS conference. Both these events were particularly valuable because they reached audiences outside the traditional conservation sphere.

Worked with the HISC Communications Coordinator and the Public Outreach Working Group to implement statewide priority public outreach campaigns:

The OISC outreach specialist worked with CGAPS and the Public Outreach Working Group to present invasive species information at a legislative briefing in January of 2012. Although only four legislators attended, the event was well covered in the media and segments were broadcast by KITV and HPR. The outreach specialist has attended all POWG meetings.

Incorporated information about biocontrol into OISC outreach activities:

As part of the basic information it presents to schools and community groups, OISC discusses the importance of using natural enemies to restore balance to areas infested with established invasive pests.

Worked with HDOA, the landscape industry and other ISC outreach specialists to create and disseminate best management practices to prevent high-priority pests from establishing on O'ahu:

The outreach specialist co-wrote an article with HDOA staff for the landscape industry magazine, *Landscape Hawai'i*, about the status of coqui frogs on O'ahu and outlining the best management practices for landscapers and nursery owners to follow.



Students at the OISC outreach booth

Presented invasive species information to schools and cooperated with educators on invasive species projects:

The outreach specialist gave a total of 11 presentations to students ranging from intermediate to university level. OISC field crew participated in career days at Nanakuli and Wai'anae High Schools. The OISC outreach specialist was invited to participate in Mililani High School's annual Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics event to expose students to science applications in everyday life. OISC participated in the first annual Hawaii Environmental Education Symposium and shared OISC outreach materials with educators.

In addition, the OISC outreach specialist wrote articles about coqui frogs for *Landscape Hawai'i* and *Green* magazine, a free publication that focuses on sustainability issues. Although sustainability advocates may not seem like a new audience, the sustainability conversation has not involved invasive species very much and has sometimes clashed over such issues as feral ungulates and the use of pesticides to control invasive plants. Therefore, working within this community is still important.

The OISC outreach specialist also partnered with DNLR/DOFAW to accompany media representatives to Mt. Ka'ala to show them the importance of native forests to water production and provided quotes in an article that was printed on the importance of native forests. Articles about OISC's work were also printed in the Conservation Council for Hawaii's newsletter and in *Honolulu* magazine. For The Great Race Eco-Challenge Hawaii event website, the outreach specialist wrote several short articles focused on the threats of invasive species to different types of native plant communities through which race participants will trek during the races.

The activities listed above resulted in conversations about invasive species with 1,528 people including educators, students and their parents, and community leaders. Based on circulation and viewership data for KITV, HPR and the print media outlets mentioned above, OISC's media work resulted in outreach to another 384,712 people.

For more information, please contact:

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