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JAMES R. AIONA
Lieutenant Governor



Hawai'i Invasive Species Council

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July 9, 2008

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Hawaii Invasive Species Council
State of Hawaii

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SUBJECT: Briefing on current issues with biological control including proposed control of strawberry guava.

Biological control is an important tool for controlling alien invasive species that cause harm to Hawaii's economy and environment. Effective control of many harmful pests cannot be achieved with traditional mechanical or chemical tools because of their abundance and large extent. In these severe cases biological control is the only option for long-term, cost-effective control. Biocontrol never eliminates a species entirely but reduces the damage caused by the pest.

Classical biological control begins with exploring the natural enemies of the target pest in its native range. Potential candidate agents are studied for host range, impact on target host, and amenability to rearing in the laboratory. When this process identifies a promising candidate it is studied more intensely in local containment facilities to document host specificity and other important biological characteristics.

Permitting agencies (USDA APHIS and HDOA) must approve science-based applications before a biocontrol agent is released into the environment. Since this regulatory process was put into place in the 1970's no harmful impacts have been caused by biocontrol introductions, while successful control has been achieved for many targeted pests.

The above process takes many years. Currently a lack of facility space severely limits the development of biocontrol agents in Hawaii. The Department of Agriculture and the USDA Forest Service are the only entities possessing certified containment facilities to conduct the necessary studies, and these facilities is insufficient to meet the current demand for research space.

The introduction of an insect to control waiwi or strawberry guava (*Psidium cattleianum*) has recently been proposed by the USDA Forest Service. Waiwi is an invasive tree introduced in 1825 that has taken over large areas of Hawaii's watersheds and threatens remaining native forests. This insect shows promise for slowing the spread of waiwi and making it easier to control using chemical and mechanical means. The necessary release permits have been issued and an Environmental Assessment is being

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conducted. Several individuals and groups have expressed concern about this introduction. The State is conducting additional outreach to improve public understanding of this important project.

Recommend: That the council issue a statement of support for biocontrol as a tool for combating invasive species.