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## HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

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January 17, 2017

### SUBMITTAL

TO: Co-chairs and Members  
Hawaii Invasive Species Council  
State of Hawaii

FROM: Rob Hauff, Control Working Group Chair  
Forestry Protection Program Manager  
Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife

SUBJECT: Requesting a resolution recognizing the Rapid Ohia Death Response  
organizational structure and supporting close collaboration with the Hawaii  
Invasive Species Council and its staff.

### Background

Rapid Ohia Death (ROD) has the ability to quickly kill Hawaii's most important forest tree, threatening the state's water supply, native ecosystems, cultural heritage, and visitor industry. Caused by an introduced fungal pathogen, ROD could be the most damaging invasive species to Hawaii's natural resources to date. Much remains to be learned about the disease, but government agencies are working together to manage the disease based on best available knowledge. Scientists from the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), USDA Forest Service (USFS), and USDA Agriculture Research Service (ARS) have been at the forefront of investigating the disease and communicating information to natural resource managers and the public.

### Discussion

Shortly after the cause of ROD was discovered, a working group was created to facilitate exchange of information about ROD. Under USFS leadership, the working group meets every month and is open to any interested party. The purpose of the ROD Working Group is to facilitate inclusive ongoing discussions and communication on all issues related to ROD and to share knowledge on a regular basis. Other subject area groups have formed around specific issues such as outreach and education, research, early detection and rapid response, as well as island-based working groups to address island specific measures that can be taken to protect their forests from ROD. All of these ad hoc groups meet on regular basis as well. The formation of these groups has occurred in a bottom-up, organic manner, and their success can be attributed to the undisputed importance of ohia and the collaborative nature of natural resource management in Hawai'i.

In November 2016, a Rapid Ohia Death Summit was hosted by Governor Ige at the state capitol to provide the current state of knowledge on the disease, update decision makers on

management actions, and introduce the ROD Strategic Response Plan (SRP) written by a sub-committee of the ROD Working Group. The SRP expressed the need to move from a reactive emergency response to a more organized and sustained strategic response. Among the steps identified to accomplish this was the need to formalize a structure for decision-making to inform the response in a representative and transparent manner while providing oversight and accountability to grantors and government officials.

The strategic planning committee that wrote the SRP continues to meet to discuss feedback from the ROD Summit and the next steps needed to implement the plan. Committee members have discussed at length how best to address this leadership body and have reviewed examples from other organized responses to biological incursions. Important factors the committee has considered include avoiding the creation of additional bureaucracy and redundancy with existing invasive species groups. No legal authority or non-profit status appears necessary for this group to operate successfully. The committee concludes that the best path forward is to formalize the existing organizational structure and designate the existing strategic planning committee the ROD Response Team. Recognition of this team and the overall ROD response structure by the HISC would lend legitimacy to what has been to date an informal process.

This group currently includes representation from Department of Land and Natural Resources, University of Hawaii (CTAHR and Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit), USDA Forest Service, USDA ARS, and the Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species. Additional groups to be considered for inclusion are Hawaii Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Interior.

The strategic planning committee recommends to the HISC that a ROD Response Team be recognized and that:

- The team includes designated representatives of core agencies listed above.
- The HISC Program Supervisor act as a representative of the HISC on the Team and coordinates ROD matters with the HISC.
- The Team makes decisions by consensus and provides updates at monthly ROD Working Group calls.
- A chairperson be selected to lead the group.
- Team members continue to participate in subject matter groups to keep the Team informed on all ROD-related activities occurring statewide.
- The Team represents the ROD response nationally and internationally.

#### Legal Authority

- HRS 194-2 authorizes the HISC to advise and coordinate invasive species-related efforts with and between state, federal, international, and private programs.

#### Recommendations

That the Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC) adopt a resolution, recognizing the Rapid Ohia Death Response Team as the lead entity for the Rapid Ohia Death response and supporting close collaboration between the HISC and the ROD response at all levels. The HISC also requests that the Response Team identify agency representatives for the agencies discussed in the submittal.

#### Attachments

- Draft Resolution 17-3: Recognizing the Rapid Ohia Death Response Team as the lead entity for the Rapid Ohia Death response and supporting close collaboration between the Hawaii Invasive Species Council and the Rapid Ohia Death response at all levels.
- ROD Strategic Response Plan

**Attachment 1: Draft HISC Resolution 17-3: Recognizing the Rapid Ohia Death Response Team as the lead entity for the Rapid Ohia Death response and supporting close collaboration between the Hawaii Invasive Species Council and the Rapid Ohia Death response at all levels.**

**DRAFT RESOLUTION 17-3**

RECOGNIZING THE RAPID OHIA DEATH RESPONSE TEAM AS THE LEAD ENTITY FOR THE RAPID OHIA DEATH RESPONSE AND SUPPORTING CLOSE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL AND THE RAPID OHIA DEATH RESPONSE AT ALL LEVELS

WHEREAS, the disease known as Rapid Ohia Death, caused by fungal pathogens in the *Ceratocystis* genus, poses a substantial threat to Hawaii's ohia trees and native forests; and

WHEREAS, a collaborative, multi-agency approach is the most appropriate response to this complex problem; and

WHEREAS, prevention and mitigation strategies have been developed by an ad-hoc, multi-agency Rapid Ohia Death Response Team, including staff from the US Forest Service, US Department of Agriculture, University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, and the Department of Land and Natural Resources; and

WHEREAS, formal recognition of this ad-hoc team as the lead entity for the Rapid Ohia Death response may aid in obtaining resources and appropriate response authorities; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 194, Hawaii Revised Statutes, authorizes the Hawaii Invasive Species Council to advise and coordinate invasive species-related efforts with and between state, federal, international, and private programs, and to coordinate the State's position on issues regarding invasive species; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Hawaii Invasive Species Council recognizes the Rapid Ohia Death Response Team including but not limited to the US Forest Service, US Department of Agriculture, University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, and Department of Land and Natural Resources as the lead entity for the Rapid Ohia Death Response; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Hawaii Invasive Species Council supports close collaboration between the Council and the Rapid Ohia Death Response Team at all levels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Governor of Hawaii, the President of the State Senate, the Speaker of the State House of Representatives, and to the directors or chairpersons of each HISC agency.

Adopted by the Hawaii Invasive Species Council on the following date: January 17, 2017

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Suzanne D. Case, Department of Land & Natural

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Scott Enright, Department of Agriculture

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Resources

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Keith Kawaoka, Department of Health

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David Rodriguez, Department of  
Transportation

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Leo Asuncion, Office of Planning, Department  
of Business, Economic Development, and  
Tourism

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Rachel Novotny, Ph.D., University of Hawaii