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## HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

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JUNE 9, 2021

### SUBMITTAL

TO: CO-CHAIRS AND MEMBERS  
HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL  
STATE OF HAWAII

FROM: CHELSEA ARNOTT  
PLANNER, HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

SUBJECT: REQUESTING A RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE PLANNING,  
CONSTRUCTION & OPERATION OF PACIFIC REGIONAL BIOLOGICAL CONTROL  
FACILITIES IN HAWAII AND COMMITTING AGENCY ENGAGEMENT

### BACKGROUND

Classical biological control (biocontrol) is the selection and introduction of a natural enemy of an invasive plant or insect pest which suppresses that pest in its home range. Biocontrol is a cost-effective and sustainable tool that has been successfully employed across the globe for long-term management of some of the world's worst pests and weeds. For certain types of invasive species that have spread beyond the ability to physically control, biocontrol is often the only viable option for reducing the impacts of invasive species.

Hawaii has a long history of safely and effectively using biocontrol to reduce pest populations and their impacts for the benefit of the islands' forests, rangelands, farms, nurseries, and people. Hawaii also is at the forefront of understanding potential unintended impacts of biocontrol on native species and has worked successfully to avoid such risks in the last 50 years. Although Hawaii enjoys broad international respect for its long history of contributions to biocontrol, in recent decades our capacity for biocontrol research has not kept pace with the introduction and spread of invasive species.

Land managers and agricultural specialists in Hawaii have identified many dozens of invasive species as targets for biocontrol, but inadequate greenhouse capacity and limited space for expansion are preventing needed and possible work on some of the most important pests. Furthermore, the two main facilities for biocontrol research, Hawaii Department of Agriculture in Honolulu and U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA FS) on Hawaii Island, are limited by design constraints and cannot handle the smallest of insect biocontrol agents or hold pathogens that could offer the best solutions to managing some of the worst pests. The USDA FS facility in Volcanoes is also located near Kilauea volcano that has its risks and challenges, e.g., access was impacted by the recent eruption that closed area roads.

In addition to facilities, statewide attrition of biological control expertise must be addressed. In the past 20 years, over a time when the need for even more projects and hiring additional specialized staff has increased, retirements and program reductions have decreased the number of active biocontrol researchers in Hawai‘i.

## DISCUSSION

The Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture (HDOA), University of Hawai‘i, U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (FS), Agricultural Research Services (ARS) and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) together with their other Hawai‘i government, private and non-profit partners formed the Biocontrol Working Group to mobilize a coordinated effort and regularly communicate on the planning and development of new, state-of-the-art biological control facilities in Hawai‘i that can serve as a regional research center for biological control programs benefiting the mainland US and the Pacific region. A collaborative, multi-agency plan is also needed for maintaining and staffing new biocontrol facilities at a level that more adequately meets the expanding needs of Hawai‘i and the region.

The Biocontrol Working Group has been working since 2018 to identify funding assistance for the planning, construction, and eventual operation of new biological control research and development facilities on the island of O‘ahu and the island of Hawai‘i. Current biocontrol facilities are inadequate to address present and future needs due to under-sized, aging facilities and reduced staffing. New facilities and added professional staff would provide the foundation for a comprehensive multi-partner program to reduce the prevalence and impacts of tropical invasive pests and weeds to agriculture, the economy, the environment, and public health and well-being.

Hawaii’s urgent need for modern biocontrol facilities and additional researchers is recognized as a top priority in the Hawai‘i Interagency Biosecurity Plan and the Western Governors Association’s initiative on invasive species and biosecurity. The Hawai‘i State Legislature has provided initial location scoping funds for a new insect and pathogen biocontrol facility on O‘ahu.

Federal appropriations requests were submitted through Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and the Coordinating Group Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) for fiscal years 2021 and 2022 requesting USDA assistance in planning and construction of facilities on O‘ahu and Hawai‘i Island.

## LEGAL AUTHORITY

- HRS 194-2 (a): Establishes the HISC for the purpose of cabinet-level coordination and planning among state departments, federal agencies, and international and local initiatives
- HRS 194-2 (a)(2): Advise, consult, and coordinate invasive species-related efforts with and between the departments of agriculture, land and natural resources, health, and transportation, as well as state, federal, international, and privately organized programs and policies.

## RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the HISC adopt a resolution, substantially similar to the attached draft resolution, in order to:

- a. Recognize the need for new regional biological control research facilities to collaboratively conduct and develop safe and effective biocontrol agents for priority agricultural and environmental pests and weeds that threaten Hawai‘i, the Pacific region, and the continental U.S;
- b. Recognize Hawaii’s need for modern biocontrol facilities and additional researchers is a top priority in the Hawai‘i Interagency Biosecurity Plan and the Western Governors Association’s initiative on biosecurity and invasive species; and
- c. Support the efforts of the Biocontrol Working Group to identify and pursue funding assistance toward planning and development of new, state-of-the-art biological control facilities in Hawai‘i that can serve as a regional research center for biological control programs.

Attachments:

1. Draft HISC Resolution 21-1: Supporting the Planning, Construction, & Operation of Pacific Regional Biocontrol Facilities and Committing Agency Engagement