Prevention/EDRR Working Group

Quarterly Meeting Notes

January 12, 2022  1:30 to 3:30pm

**Participants:** Helmuth Rogg (HDOA), Mike Melzer (UH-CTAHR), Helen Sofaer (USGS), Rebecca Chong (CBP), Dorothy Alontaga (APHIS), Cheryl Young (APHIS), Springer Kaye (BIISC), Forest & Kim Starr (MISC), Chuck Chimera (HPWRA), Elizabeth Speith (MISC/HISC), Tiffani Keanini (KISC), Chelsea Arnott (HISC), Jonathan Ho (HDOA), Chris Kishimoto (HDOA), Darcy Oishi (HDOA), James Aut Fleming (HDOA), Janet Ashman (HI Farm Bureau), Tim Gallaher (Bishop Museum), Koki Atcheson (CRB Response), Kaili Kosaka (CRB Response), Keith Weiser (CRB Response), Mike Richardson (USFWS), Eric Tanouye (HI Floriculture & Nursery Assoc), Leyla Kaufman (HISC), Stephanie Easley (CGAPS)

**Meeting Notes:**

1. **Introductions:** Co-chair Helmuth Rogg welcomed the Prevention/EDRR Working Group (WG). We did introductions.

2. **Regulatory Updates.**

a. Rebecca Chong provided an update on appropriate recent CBP and HIRAC activities.

b. Dorothy Alontaga provided an APHIS update, including:

- APHIS continues to clear items from foreign countries.

- She noted during pre-departure quarantine APHIS sometimes detects things that are not recorded as present in Hawaii. APHIS plant inspection provides that information to HDOA.

c.  Jonathan Ho and Chris Kishimoto provided an update from HDOA-PQB, including:

- PQB has lost a number of staff, mostly due to retirements. This has resulted in the work load shifting as people cover for the staff losses. For example, currently plant permitting is moving slower.

- The Kupono database continues to be rolled out and the import component is now available for everyone.  The permitting component still has some hiccups but is mostly done.  Other phases (export, interisland, Phyto, and pest hotline) continue to be transferred to the new database.  It is a lot of work but is creating efficiencies for HDOA and users.

- The Christmas tree operation was conducted with CBP over a 5 week period (beginning of November to December). The operation covered a lot of inspections, including154 containers inspected.  Three of those containers had to be treated for slugs that are not known to occur in Hawaii.

- HDOA conducts inspections, responds to Pest Hotline reports, and conducts animal collections, captures, and confiscations.  Recently PQB has: collected an iguana in Kalihi; intercepted a hitchhiker frog; confiscated illegal pet trade species (fish and shrimp); and trapped a mongoose in Kauai harbor.  PQB is continuing trapping in Kauai to ensure there aren't any others.  Tiffani noted that only 4 live mongoose have ever been intercepted in Kauai.

3. **Speaker: Eric Tanouye, President of Green Point Nurseries and of Hawaii Floriculture & Nursery Association.** Mr. Tanouye provided the group with an interesting and informative talk on the floriculture and nursery industry in Hawaii, including the importance of this industry to Hawaii and how invasive pests, climate change, workforce succession, and other challenges impact it.  The Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association (HFNA) is composed of more than 300 members, primarily family businesses.  Its purposes are: (1) to enhance its members' business success through enactment of laws to advance the common business interests of the members, education, marketing, research, and services; (2) to encourage and promote the betterment of conditions that will create and sustain an economically viable flower and plant industry; and (3) to promote the growing and exporting of Hawaii flowers and plants.

Mr. Tanouye described the competitive U.S. market and discussed a 2018 study done by the Wholesale Florist & Florist Supplier Association. The full study is attached to the email sending out these notes.  The study found that in the United States during 2017:

- 80% of the cut flowers were imported from foreign countries.  Of those imports, 65% were from Columbia, 20% from Ecuador, and the remainder from a variety of other countries.  There has been a lot of consolidation in growers in South America.

- Only 20% of the cut flowers were grown domestically.  By far, California was the largest producer, with 78% of the domestically grown total.  Washington State was the second highest producer with 6%. Hawaii produced 4%.  Mr. Tanouye noted that this leaves a lot of room for industry growth in Hawaii.

Mr. Tanouye described how the domestic market for Hawaii grown flowers has shifted from traditional wholesalers to nontraditional markets, which growers access through FedEx shipment.  This shift was caused in part by grocery stores beginning to sell cut flowers.  Grocery store sales caused prices to tumble significantly and put out of business many local cut flower producers.  He provided information about marketing efforts, including that no matter what is going on in the world or the country, Hawaii keeps marketing its cut flower industry and the U.S. cut flower market has recovered from the pandemic.  As markets grow, there is a bright future for Hawaii's cut flower industry.  He stressed that the way forward is through representatives of industry, the State Legislature, Hawaii's congressional delegation, NGOs, the private sector, and others working cooperatively to keep the industry thriving in Hawaii.  He closed by noting that a strong biosecurity program helps agriculture and the environment and that a strong agricultural base is critical to keep Hawaii strong.

During his presentation, Mr. Tanouye mentioned a video about second generation orchid growers. The full video may be viewed here <https://vimeo.com/644970762/34e185015a>.

4. **On-going Tasks:**

a. CRB Task: Keith and Helmuth provided an update on this task. This is a newer task to support HDOA's efforts to prevent the intra- and inter-island spread of Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB). In December, the Advisory Committee on Plants and Animals approved an interim rule which would require transporters and processors of CRB host material to operate under the terms of a compliance agreement. Keith explained that CRB response and HDOA are working on those agreements now. Once CRB Response has developed a preliminary draft, they will consult with industry representatives to ensure that the agreement terms are reasonable and will work for operators. The CRB interim rule will be in effect for 1 year after it is approved by HDOA.

b. Firewood Pathway: Helmuth provided an update on this task. HDOA is continuing to move forward with a chapter 70 Hawaii Administrative Rule for firewood. Currently, Helmuth is working on draft rule language to prevent the importation into Hawaii of firewood that has not been treated to kill pests or that is not properly labeled. It is important to get firewood producers and importers included in the process. Mike is continuing to look at firewood available for sale to identify pests in the wood. He found pests in firewood for sale and was able to successfully advise the store on how to treat the wood so it is safe to sell. The task group is still collecting photos of firewood for sale in Hawaii and is looking for people who supply locally-sourced firewood. That information can be sent to Stephanie. Hawaii Invasive Species Awareness Month will include a talk by Leigh Greenwood from [dontmovefirewood.org](https://www.dontmovefirewood.org/).

c. Pathways of Introduction: Helen Sofaer provided an update on this task. Helen is working on some suggestions from the group, such as adding information about if a species is present on the mainland and the current capacity for diagnostics. They have also added a few new species to the list that are of concern to human health. HDOA is coordinating with USDA on adding interception data, which can be very valuable. After the group is done with the prevention list, they plan to do a similar exercise with the limited distribution list.

5. **New Tasks/Discussion:**

Springer asked if any intervention is planned to prevent the spread of the Acacia whitefly, which was highlighted in a HDOA New Pest Alert in December 2021. Darcy said that this whitefly is already well established and fairly widespread on Oahu. PQB does not have any plans at this time to create an interim rule or other mechanism to further regulate interisland movement of material to limit the spread of this whitefly.

There was discussion of having a review of the HISC/CGAPS strategies and tasks that the WG is intended to carry out and tracking our progress to date. This would help the group identify areas where we would like to focus our efforts this year. The WG chairs will review the tracking document prepared by HISC and CGAPS and this can be an item that the whole group can review at the next quarterly meeting.

Darcy suggested a communication task to educate people about state and federal regulations that prohibit or regulate purchases through the internet to prevent the spread of invasive species. Helmuth noted that as well as the public, large internet companies have compliance officers that we can contact to set out what these rules are with respect to Hawaii.

6**. Next meeting:** Helmuth wrapped up the meeting, thanked participants, and indicated we will set a date for the next quarterly meeting which will be in April 2022.