

Prevention/EDRR Working Group
Meeting Notes January 8, 2024, 1:30 to 3:30pm

Participants: Dexter Kishida (HDOA), Mike Melzer (UH-CTAHR), Sheldon Arakawa (USDA/APHIS), Rebecca Chong (CBP), Cheryl Young (USDA/APHIS), Kevin Faccenda (UH graduate student), Chris Kishimoto (HDOA), Christy Martin (CGAPS), Helen Sofaer (USGS), Kailee Lefebvre (CGAPS), Tim Gallaher (Bishop Museum – Botany Dept.), Elizabeth Speith (HISC), Chelsea Arnott (HISC), Tiffani Keanini (KISC), Franny Brewer (BISC), Darcy Oishi (HDOA), Janis Matsunaga (HDOA), Janet Ashman (Hawaii Farm Bureau), Chuck Chimera (HISC), Ellie Montgomery (HISC), Roshan Manandhar (UH-CTAHR), Rob Taylor (USFWS), Leyla Kaufman (HISC), Stephanie Easley (CGAPS)

Meeting Notes:

1. **Introductions:** Co-chair Mike Melzer welcomed the Prevention/EDRR Working Group and we did introductions.

2. **Regulatory Updates.**

a. HIRAC/CBP: Rebecca Chong provided an update on recent CBP and Hawaii Risk Assessment Committee (HIRAC) activities, as follows:

- During the first quarter of fiscal 2024 (Oct, Nov, & Dec 2023), CBP worked with HDOA to inspect Christmas trees imported in Hawaii. This was the second year in a row for this joint effort and the first time in 11 years none of the containers of trees were rejected.
- For the second quarter of fiscal 2024, CBP plans to work at one of their express consignment facilities to inspect imports.

b. APHIS: Cheryl Young provided an APHIS/PPQ update, including:

- APHIS is continuing to monitor for box tree moth (BTM) (*Cydalima perspectalis* (Walker, 1859)). According to the USDA National Invasive Species Information Center, BTM was first introduced into the continental U.S. in 2021 on nursery plants shipped from Canada. It is a serious pest of boxwood plants (*Buxus* spp.) and curry leaf (*Murraya* spp.) APHIS has modified some of its quarantines and requirements to prevent its introduction into Hawaii. APHIS considers boxwood as NAPPRA (not authorized pending pest risk analysis) from all countries except Canada. Curry leaf is NAPPRA from all countries. To address BTM, APHIS is requiring boxwood plants for plantings produced in Canada be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate and an additional declaration stating that the boxwood was produced in a pest-free area for BTM. Mike noted that there is a new disease of boxwood being reported as well.

- If the government shuts because Congress does not pass appropriations bills or another continuing resolution, USDA will shut down at 12:01 am on January 20, 2024. A shut down will impact USDA's ability to respond to emergencies or other situations.

- Chelsea Arnott asked about the status of CGAPS NAPPRA petitions and about expanding the Myrtaceae NAPPRA for Hawaii to include plant parts in addition to plants for planting. Christy Martin responded that CGAPS hired a contractor to submit a number of NAPPRA proposals for

plants that could be invasive if imported into Hawaii. APHIS is unlikely to approve those proposals unless Hawaii restricts the importation of those species domestically, so we have been hoping HDOA would act on CGAPS 2019 petition to begin rulemaking for a restricted plant list. So far, HDOA has not acted on that petition and USDA has not acted on the submitted NAPPRA petitions. Christy suggested revisiting the proposed list of restricted plants as so much time has passed. The request to add Myrtaceae cut flowers to NAPPRA is still pending. Christy asked Cheryl if she could check on the status of that NAPPRA request.

c. HDOA/PQB: Dexter Kishida provided an update from HDOA, Plant Industries, Plant Quarantine Branch (PQB). He noted that PQB continues its rapid response for coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB), little fire ants (LFA), and coqui frogs in agricultural areas and big box stores. According to the 2023 annual report for PQB, its inspectors were responsible for clearing 16 million parcels, which is amazing considering PQB has a staff of less than 100. He hopes they can successfully recruit more inspectors and grow the team to deal with the incredible number of parcels needing inspection.

Chris Kishimoto added that PQB worked with MoMISC and MISC to respond to a snake on Molokai. It was a gopher snake found in a container going to a hardware store. PQB has also recently responded to a possum in Hawaii Kai and worked with a ferret owner to relocate the ferret, named Buddy, to the zoo. PQB is also currently doing a rapid response for a skunk in Hilo.

Dexter further noted that last year, Plant Pest Control (PPC) branch identified approximately 24 new species found in Hawaii.

Mike asked if Plant Industries vacancies are currently being advertised. Dexter said there are inspector and PPC positions open right now. HDOA is currently advertising 55 positions out of HDOA's 111 vacancies. Mike knows some students looking for employment and will point them to the current vacancies. Mike asked if the previous SPRO's efforts to modify HDOA's position requirements were effective. Dexter said not yet.

Chelsea asked how many HDOA staff are currently trained in brown tree snake response. Dexter will check and add it to the notes. Dexter reports that currently there are 30 staff trained in BTS response and more will go for training this summer.

3. Welcomes!

a. Welcome to new Prev/EDRR WG Co-Chair Dexter Kishida: Dexter introduced himself as the acting Deputy to the Chairperson of HDOA. He is seeking confirmation this year. He shared that he is the acting SPRO while HDOA searches for a permanent Plant Industry Administrator. He shared that he came to HDOA from the City and County of Honolulu where he served as the inaugural Food Security and Sustainability Program Manager. His role was to support and strategically incorporate agriculture and food systems into the City and County's planning to determine what role it could play in supporting Oahu's food system and sustainability to establish long-term food resilience. He wanted the City to develop a system-wide approach, as opposed to just a function, to better support the whole industry. He plans to bring that systems view to his role at HDOA to meet agricultural goals such as doubling food production for consumption and export. He and the

Chairperson share the belief that biosecurity is a huge part of ensuring that Hawaii's agriculture sector is successful. Through his experiences at HDOA he believes that the Department needs to have a dual mindset with two goals, one is to support the agricultural industries, and the other is to support consumers. Dexter believes that these two goals are not mutually exclusive, as an ag industry that has pest-free product, will sell and export more product. He believes HDOA can best support industry by providing education and regulation in a balanced way to ensure the success of ag in growing the product. He has a career of experience in the restaurant sector, the non-profit sector, and government. His goal is to think and look holistically at what we do, including a deep dive into biosecurity and invasive species. He hopes to work toward this goal even with the waves of budget cuts HDOA has endured since 2009. We are grateful for Dexter's participation in the WG. Welcome Dexter!

b. Official Welcome to Prev/EDRR WG Leadership Team member Sheldon Arakawa: Sheldon has been participating in the weekly Prev/EDRR WG Leadership meetings for over a year, but this was the WG's opportunity to officially welcome him and learn more about his role at APHIS/PPQ. Sheldon serves as the Pest Survey Specialist, stepping into Cheryl Young's former role. Sheldon shared that he was born and raised on Oahu and studied biological engineering at UH-CTAHR. He started his career with APHIS as a Plant Health Safeguarding Specialist at the port of Kona as part of the APHIS pre-departure inspection program.

In his current role, Sheldon assists in managing pest surveillance within Hawaii and parts of the Pacific. This surveillance supports the first line of defense – CBP, HDOA, and other inspectors. He supports PPQ field operations to conduct pest detections at ports of entry in Hawaii on all the islands. PPQ pest detection survey targets are: (1) red palm weevil; (2) coconut rhinoceros beetle; (3) Japanese beetle; and (4) copper beetle. PPQ expands surveillance to include other pests by entering into cooperative agreements with partners who monitor those pests.

PPQ has two types of funding for cooperative agreements. First is CAPS (Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey Program) which is funded by Congress each year. CAPS funds must be used for pest detection or other very similar activities. The second type of funding is the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program, called Plant Protection Act funding or section 7721 funding. These funds are made available to applicants on a competitive basis each year to support the PPQ mission. We appreciate all the work Sheldon has done with the WG over the past year and are really looking forward to his continued help. Welcome Sheldon!

4. Presentation by Kevin Faccenda “Learning from the Past Pathways of Introduction of Flammable Grasses in Hawaii and Recent Weed Introductions Via the Nursery Trade”.

Kevin (PhD candidate UH-Manoa) presented on new invasive plant records in Hawaii at our last Working Group meeting in May 2023, and he agreed to come back and talk to us about pathways of introduction of grass species, including flammable species, in Hawaii. Kevin provided information about grass introductions in Hawaii in general, the arrival and pathways of introduction of flammable grass species, and recent naturalizations of grass species via the nursery trade and via birdseed.

Kevin noted that prior to human settlements in Hawaii, fires were rare. The first large fire in Hawaii was the Hamakua fire in 1901. It burned 30,000 acres. The amount of land burned has steadily increased. Now, Hawaii has the highest percentage of land burned each year of any state. Effectively, all fires are human caused, largely grass fueled, but there have been a few uluhe fueled fires as well.

Non-native grasses were introduced into Hawaii as part of the introduction of cattle and ranching. Ranching became significant after 1850 and European forage grasses were introduced beginning in the 1880s. Other grasses were accidentally introduced through packing material, ballast, dirt, etc. The introduction of grasses really increased with the establishment of the Hawaii Agricultural Experiment Station (HAES) in 1901. HAES conducted all kinds of experiments and imported and distributed many grass species, like buffelgrass, California grass, pangola grass, and others. HAES kept records in a “Plant Introduction Book” which Kevin is researching, along with agricultural literature, herbarium specimens, nursery catalogs, and other sources to learn about early introductions. His research also includes determining deliberate vs accidental introductions of grasses. In total, 578 species of grasses (5.2% of the world's grass flora) have been introduced into Hawaii since 1778, of those 158 were accidental introductions, and 420 were deliberate. Among the 35 common fire promoting grasses, 8 introductions were accidental and 27 were intentionally introduced as forages.

Kevin mentioned *Enneapogon cenchroides*, a flammable grass species, that he found in Makaha in 2023. It is currently a relatively small infestation of 1000 to 2000 plants. However, based on its biology it could spread significantly.

Kevin provided information on 5 species that were accidentally introduced through the nursery pathway that have naturalized over the last 10 years. Generally, those species are weedy annuals that can thrive in moist disturbed soil. He also provided information on 4 species found in Hawaii over the last 2 years that were likely introduced through people casting bird seed into the environment.

It was a great, information-packed presentation. For more information on Kevin’s research, you check out his website at <https://www2.hawaii.edu/~faccenda/grass.html> or reach him by email at faccenda@hawaii.edu.

5. On-going Tasks:

a. CRB Task: Dexter provided an update on the revision of chapter 72, HAR, which includes a permanent CRB quarantine rule to regulate the movement of CRB host material on and from Oahu. In addition to the CRB rule, the revision of chapter 72 contains quite a few other updates and changes. The next step is a public hearing scheduled for **January 30, 2024, at 6pm**. Instructions to submit testimony from HDOA’s public notice are as follows:

“All interested parties are urged to attend the hearing and to submit comments orally or in writing. Those persons desiring to submit written testimony may do so prior to the public hearing via postal mail to the Plant Quarantine Branch at 1849 Auiki Street, Honolulu, HI 96819, via FAX at (808) 832-

0584 or via e-mail at hdoa.pg.testimony@hawaii.gov. Please include the word “testimony” and the subject matter when submitting testimony by e-mail.”

Dexter also mentioned that HDOA is working on an interim rule for LFA. An interim rule must be considered by the Advisory Committee on Plants and Animals and HDOA is working on getting quorum for that Committee to meet and consider the interim rule.

He said HDOA is working on CRB control on Kauai and is providing support on Maui and Hawaii Island.

Mike summarized the CRB detections on Kauai, Maui, and Big Island since our last meeting. He noted that on Big Island and Maui only CRB larva have been detected.

b. FestPAC 2024: Christy updated the group on biosecurity planning for the Festival of the Pacific Arts and Culture (FestPAC), which is scheduled to take place in Honolulu in June 2024. The biosecurity team is meeting regularly and the larger group is meeting monthly. She noted that HDOA is working on finding a location and funding to provide fumigation, if needed. The team coordinating the canoes traveling or being shipped to Hawaii met with DLNR staff to discuss biosecurity concerns. Rebecca connected Christy with CDC and she is working on connecting with the Hawaii Department of Health to work on canoe biosecurity issues.

Dexter added that HDOA is still waiting to receive information from participating delegations on what they hope to bring to FestPAC. He is also hoping natural materials can be locally sourced here in Hawaii instead of imported. Christy noted that the official delegations will get biosecurity info and requirements but people coming to attend the festival will also arrive and bring items.

c. Ports of Entry/Exit Pest Monitoring Program: Leyla gave an update on the Port of Entry Pest Monitoring Program. The Program was originally funded with Hawaii Department of Transportation funds, which expired in 2022. Since that time, the Program has been funded by congressionally directed spending funds, which will last through August 31, 2024. This has allowed the Program to expand to seaports (except for Maui Nui). One year of REPI funds for the Program are expected to begin in 2024. The Program is sponsoring an HDOH Vector Control Conference that will focus on restructuring the port of entry monitoring for mosquitos. The Program is also sponsoring a trip to Oregon to learn about their response to Japanese beetle and hopefully create a response plan for Hawaii. Leyla is working with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to develop a response plan for Hawaii for Africanized honeybees.

6. New tasks:

a. Response Plans Task Group: Leyla and Sheldon will be creating a task group to develop pest-specific response plans for Hawaii for high priority species not currently present in the State. Sheldon will focus on species of concern to USDA, such as spotted lantern fly, Africanized honeybees, and copper beetle, though the new task group can also focus on other species that are State priorities. This is an opportunity to build on the work funded by the Port of Entry Pest Monitoring Program to develop a Japanese beetle response plan for Hawaii. Sheldon and Leyla

welcomed suggestions for species to consider. We will organize a task group meeting to get interested people together to discuss this new task.

b. Invasive Species Responsibilities Overview: Sheldon and Stephanie Easley discussed their recent efforts to prepare a document that generally sets out an overview of responsibilities for invasive species regulation, inspection, and control in Hawaii. Sheldon noted that this idea was sparked by questions about the general biosecurity framework in Hawaii and we are trying to produce a document that will be a good place to start, not a formal, legal document.

7. Other Discussion: Leyla noted that the Pathways Task is continuing by working on getting interception data from HDOA and hopes to get that data this year.

8. Wrap Up: Mike wrapped up the meeting, thanked participants, and indicated we will set a date for the next meeting. If you have a topic for the next meeting's agenda, please let us know.