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HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

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EDWIN SNIFFEN
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

AGENDA FOR THE MEETING OF THE HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

DATE: Tuesday, December 19, 2023
TIME: 1:00 PM
PLACE: In-person - Conference Room 16; Hawai'i State Capitol 415 S Beretania
St., Honolulu, HI 96813 / & Online Via Zoom Meeting ID: 854 4323
4542

AGENDA

Agenda items #3, 5, and 8 will be Council voting actions. The remaining agenda items provide status updates and information that do not require Council action.

1. Call to order

Chair Laura Kaakua called the meeting to order after 1pm.

2. Introductions of Council Members

Introductions

List of Attendees:

- Council Voting Members:
 - Laura Kaakua, Co-Chair (Department of Land and Natural Resources);
 - Dexter Kishida, Co-Chair [Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA)];
 - Tammy Lee on behalf of Ed Sniffen (Department of Transportation) (online);
 - Mary Alice Evans (Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism);
 - Matt Kurano – Department of Health (On behalf of Kathleen Ho)
- Legislative Non-Voting Members:
 - Representative Kirstin Kahaloa (District 6)
 - Representative Elle Cochran (District 14)
 - Representative Lisa Marten (District 51) (online)
 - Senator Lynn DeCoite (District 7) (online)
- Support Staff:

- Chelsea Arnott (HISC), Elizabeth Speith (HISC), Chuck Chimera (HISC), Jack Reef (HISC), Ellie Montgomery (HISC)
- Other Participants:
 - Sharon Hurd (Department of Agriculture) Kevin Lino (Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Hawai'i), Clay Trauernicht (UH Manoa); Mike Waker (Division of Forestry and Wildlife), Darcy Oishi (HDOA), Rob Hauff (Forestry and Wildlife),
- Other Attendees
 - Christy Martin (CGAPS); Liat Portner (UH Manoa), Carlton Saito (Senator Gabbard's Office)

3. **Approval of minutes from August 23, 2023 Hawai'i Invasive Species Council meeting**

Mary Alice Evans moved to approve, Dexter Kishida seconded, the motion to approved passed.

4. **Updates from Council members and Department representatives on 2024 legislative requests & policies related to biosecurity and invasive species. This is only an update.**

Staff from the Department's provided updates on this item, and their comments are summarized in items 4a-4c below:

- a. **Governor's FY25 Budget for Department of Land & Natural Resources; Division of Forestry & Wildlife & Division of Aquatic Resources funding to support statewide invasive ant research and control to be carried out by the Hawai'i Ant Lab, additional funds for fire pre-suppression, readiness, response, and post-fire restoration and rehabilitation, and funding to support forest/resource management. Internal actions regarding the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA).**
- **Forestry & Wildlife – Rob Hauff**
 - Their legislative request included \$7.5M annually recurring funding amount, and a one-time \$10M request;
 - The division's top legislative priority is their Fire program,
 - Mr. Hauff said they made a significant request which included staff overtime, and replacement of outdated equipment such as helicopters, and bulldozers used to pre-suppress hazard fuels and ease fighting fires.
 - The Division focused on restoration efforts to address the full cycle of fire and replace burnt areas with forest to prevent invasive grasses.
 - The request also included water tanks, and erosion control and vegetation management efforts on Maui.
 - Forestry & Wildlife received \$500k for the Hawai'i Ant Lab (HAL), but didn't get anything for HISC despite higher program costs statewide.
- In response to a question from Member Evans regarding Watershed partnerships mauka of urban populated areas, Mr. Hauff said that his Division is discussing the best way to address those areas, potentially using "watershed partnerships" as a model for "fire shed" a partnership.
 - Mr. Hauff clarified for Representative Cochran that private landowners were included in those discussions. Representative Cochran stated that deer are a major problem in Maui.

- Representative Marten asked about funding for HAL, including the pending furloughs which would reduce staff to 75% capacity. Chelsea Arnott stated that the Governor funded HAL at \$500k despite the Division's request for \$1M, but that efforts are being made to identify the full \$1M. Representative Marten stressed the importance of fully funding HAL at \$1M, but that is still not enough to address the issue and ensure that O'ahu is not labeled as "infested."
- Representative Marten also asked about Department of Education (DOE) lands that are not being managed, and if Forestry & Wildlife could manage those lands. Mr. Hauff said that Forestry & Wildlife could serve as a consultant to help DOE seek grants and manage high fire risk areas. Chair Kaakua said that DLNR could look into this matter. Representative Marten said many of those lands are not high fire risk, and that DOE would benefit from assistance to manage all their lands.
- Senator Decoite asked Mr. Hauff about the Axis Deer. Mr. Hauff said Forestry & Wildlife is part of a Task Force that has surveyed the land and is working on a management plan. In response to the Senator's question, Chelsea Arnott said that HISC's involvement includes having reviewed the management plan and discussed with the Maui Branch, and that a resolution has previously been discussed as a mechanism to ensure coordination amongst the agencies and partners moving forward. The Senator suggested that HISC join the Task Force.
- Representative Cochran asked about fires made worse by winds, and if power lines were being addressed as a factor in fires. Mr. Hauff responded that fuel suppression is a key action to reduce fires, as well as preventing erosion post fires which can ultimately impact coral reefs.
- Representative Kahaloa asked if other policies were addressed in Forestry & Wildlife's legislative program but not covered in Mr. Hauff's presentation. Mr. Hauff responded some other legislative bills were introduced and that he could follow-up with the Representative at a later time.
- Aquatic Resources (DAR) – Ryan Okano
 - The Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA) is a major issue. Ballast Water and Hull Fouling are the vectors. DAR, in tandem with other western pacific states (CA, WA, OR) has sent the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) a letter stating that the EPA failed to conduct adequate outreach with pacific communities, their regulations do not protect coral reefs and, do not require hull cleaning or adhere to ballast water management and previous implemented rules.
 - There are numerous invasive species issues in Pearl Harbor including angel fish and soft corals possibly caused by aquarium dumping. DAR is seeking funding to address these issues.
 - There is an invasive algae in the NW Hawaiian Islands, but it's not yet in the main Hawaiian islands. DAR is focused on removal of marine debris but that nets can spread algae. DAR is trying to conduct best practices with federal partners.
 - DAR does not have legislative bill proposals at this time.
 - Chair Kaakua asked if nets are a source of the invasive algae. Mr. Okano said nobody knows the source yet, but it's a possibility.

- Representative Marten said that the nets come from Asia, and asked if DAR advocated in Hawai'i's interest. Mr. Okano said that not all entities have a good working relationship with the State.

b. Governor's FY25 Budget for Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (DOA) includes legislation Relating to Agriculture Loans - Reduces and sets fixed interest rates for loans under the Agricultural Loan Program, Relating to Pesticides - Replaces representatives from the sugar and pineapple industries with representatives of the coffee and diversified agriculture industries, Relating to a Strategic Plan to Increase Food Production and Food Security - Requires the DOA in cooperation with the office of the governor, to establish an updated strategic plan to increase Hawaii's food production and food security. Requires DOA to submit a report to the legislature 20 days prior to the 2025 regular session. DOA is working to schedule meetings starting mid-January 2024 for rulemaking regarding Hawai'i Administrative Rules, Chapter 4-72, entitled "Plant and Non-Domestic Animal Quarantine Plant Intrastate Rules". This is only an update on next steps of the rulemaking process and not a formal hearing.

- Dexter Kishida Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA)

- Legislative package includes
 - Agricultural loans that reduce and set fixed interest rates;
 - Replacing representatives serving on pesticide committee;
 - Bill for strategic planning for food security and production; and
 - A public hearing for Chapter 72 is expected to occur in late January, which is a correction to the agenda.

c. The Hawai'i Department of Health; Vector Control Branch is working on a legislative proposal to add language to Hawai'i Revised Statute (HRS) 322-1, that clarifies that the department of health shall act when there are conditions which are dangerous or injurious to "public or environmental" health. HRS 322 is one of the core authorizing statutes that provides the DOH with powers to prevent, remove or abate invasive species which can cause sickness (disease vectors) or may be otherwise dangerous or injurious to health.

- Matt Kurano Department of Health (DOH)

- No new budget bills; and
- The Vector Control program of DOH, will submit a policy bill requesting change in statutory authorities related to abatement of nuisances dating back to kingdom law. The proposal will add words "public" and "environmental" before the word "Health" to show the agency is working on behalf of the public health.

5. Submittal Requesting HISC Program Support Staff to develop a biosecurity & invasive species legislative package for tracking and coordination purposes during the 2024 Legislative Session; and Submit HISC-specific testimony.

- a. Chelsea Arnott advised that this item is a formality, in that HISC staff annually develops a legislative packet and tracks legislation proposed during

the session. The information is posted on the HISC website, and staff may provide testimony as needed to advocate for certain bills.

In summary, Member Evans moved that the issues discussed in item #4 be included in 2024 legislative package for tracking purposes and that staff submit testimony as long as it does not conflict with HISC Council and HISC Department testimony priorities. Member Kishida seconded the Motion and it passed.

6. Informational presentation from Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Hawai'i on invasive corals discovered in the Pearl Harbor area and ongoing management efforts.

Kevin Lino from Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Hawai'i presented on this item, and a summary of the discussion is as follows:

- A soft coral invasive species was identified in Pearl Harbor. The initial acreage of the infestation was nine acres in 2022 and is now estimated at 83 acres. They are working with partners such as CGAPS, ngos, and the Bishop Museum. Other invasive species have since been found. Contracted divers in Pearl Harbor recently completed a two-week removal effort. The species is spreading rapidly, and its likely to have been in the area for at least 10 years. The geographic features of Pearl Harbor help to contain the species from expanding to reefs outside of Pearl Harbor.
- Mitigation actions have been taken to limit its spread such as smothering, wrapping in tarps, use of sandbags, and then manually removing the invasive species.
- Invasive Angel fish are on display to raise awareness. working with UH on genetics analysis.
- Chair Kaakua asked for quarterly updates regarding this issue. Mr. Lino said they would, but that they also participate in weekly and quarterly meetings with CGAPS.
- Member Kishida asked if there is a public outreach campaign to prevent aquarium dumping. Mr. Lino said outreach to military personnel occurs as well as Bishop Museum efforts. Other activities include seeking funding for outreach; the State completed a flyer that is being circulated; Press releases and community boards meetings have happened, and a lagoon was shut down to prevent harmful activities. Mr. Lino advised that despite these efforts it's not enough. Most people are not aware what is legal or illegal.
 - Member Kishida said HDOA was interested in doing an “amnesty program” that any invasive species can be turned in “no questions asked.” Mr. Lino said the Navy is interested in working with HDOA on this activity.
- Representative Kahaloa asked what was the military’s goal (control vs. eradication) and what will funding allow?
 - Mr. Lino said that an adaptive management plan is being developed with the goal of eradication. However, he stressed that it's likely that some of the species may be able to be eradicated, but the more prevalent ones might not be eradicated. Current funding was for “mitigation” within pearl harbor. The military is continuing to seek funding.
- Public Testimony- Christy Martin with CGPAS stated the following:
 - Only the military can access this area.
 - The military has limited staff capacity to address issue;
 - More funding is needed for Navy, other military, and/or civilian staff to do this work. Grants have not been successful;

- This seems to be a military issue as other agencies survey areas outside of Pearl Harbor; and
- More outreach is needed.

7. Informational presentation from University of Hawai'i Extension Specialist in Ecosystems & Fire on Wildfire in Hawai'i with particular focus on the role of invasive grasses and shrubs

- Clay Trauernicht (UH) provided an informational presentation which is summarized below.
 - Its important to understand the connection between fires and invasive species;
 - Annual State burn-area has increased since 1904;
 - From 5k acres to 20k annually, as there is variability for wet/dry years;
 - A Wili Wili forest was lost to fire and will not come back in our lifetimes
 - The three drivers of fires are climate, ignition, and vegetation;
 - Drought on windward coasts cause fire conditions, which are made worse by wet cycles of heavy rains followed by dry spells;
 - Fires are a constant threat due to human activity (99% human caused);
 - Vegetation management is the only thing people can control such as unmanaged nonnative grass and shrub lands;
 - Invasives are a mix of African grasses and shrubs that burn with ferocity. Grasses include Guinea Grass and Buffel grass which was near Lahaina;
 - About one-quarter of Hawai'i lands (1M acres) are dominated by shrubs and grasses. 85% of areas burned are in the non-native ecosystems;
 - Need to understand land use history, such as abandoned sugar cane fields;
 - Loss of farming areas in the 1960s left huge unmanaged tracts of land;
 - Many partnerships exist with government and other organizations, but staff is limited. Actions/tools have been implemented to suppress fires including: native planting, green fire break, and grazing;
 - Language used in resolutions needs to be specific;
 - San Diego buries their power lines;
 - Many actions can be taken on the individual home level;
 - Need more investment in "land care," the complexity of landscapes aligns with Forestry & Wildlife efforts; and
 - Active agriculture use would have prevented recent disaster.
- Member Kishida asked about distinction between "invasive" vs. "non-native." He said infrastructure is needed to house sheep. Mr. Trauernicht said wild ungulates are different than domesticated. Studies have shown that you need to direct animals to achieve goals, animals won't solve issues naturally
- Representative Cochran informed that Legislator Gabe Johnson wants to create a tiered taxation plan for fallowed agricultural lands to green Hawaiian lands. State and County want to clean up roadsides. Mr. Trauernicht advised that DOT has been proactive to clear roads. Need to be strategic in mowing grasses, otherwise it will just grow back. Representative Cochran said that there are ordinances on the books to address private lands. Mr. Trauernicht

advised that goats and spraying pesticides are good alternatives and prevent fires.

- Representative Marten asked if DOE had reached out to Mr. Trauernicht. He advised they had not. The Representative. stressed he should be proactive and reach out to DOE.
- Representative Marten also asked if there are bridge plantings post fires to limit fuel loads. Mr. Trauernicht said that current invasive seed banks just outcompete new plantings. More experiments are needed in heavily populated areas.
- Representative Kahaloa asked about seed banking and how to grow the banking. There are a couple active banking facilities, but we need to understand barriers to growth. He said next steps are to move toward seed production / seed farms. How to maximize genetic diversity per island. Who gets access to the seeds (capital) is a powerful tool for community groups.
- Representative Cochran said volunteerism (tourism industry) is a possible resource to help in regreening. She also stated that West Maui used to be the Venice of the Pacific with 33 free flowing streams.
- Mr. Trauernicht said assessments have been done to determine why certain houses burned and others did not.
- Public Testimony
 - Taylor Kellerman Hawaii Cattleman's Association
 - He stated: his group consider themselves stewards of 750k acres of grasslands; they have a deep care and concern; they want to be considered partners; and would like a seat at the table, as cattleman have responsibility and opportunity of local food production and fuel load control. They stand by their submitted written testimony.
- Nicole Galase (online) – Managing Director of the Hawaii Cattleman's Council.
 - Land use management is key to control fire fuel loads. She suggested that efforts should focus on the 25% of unmanaged lands, and that State leases should have management plans.

8. Submittal Requesting a Resolution Recognizing the Role of Invasive Plants as it Relates to Wildfire in Hawai'i & Supporting Recommendations for the Prevention and PostRecovery Efforts to Mitigate Future Impacts.

- Chelsea Arnott summarized the Resolution and read Council Actions to provide recommendations for fire prevention and post-recovery efforts. She advised that the action is not a management plan, it's a recommendation to reduce impact of invasive species as reviewed by partners and agencies.

- Public Testimony

- Hawaii Cattleman's Council reiterated testimony and stand by the Resolution
- CGAPS- Christy Martin – In collaboration with NRCS, she suggested that the words "whenever possible" should be added to the Council Actions that invasive species may be necessary.

- Member Evans said the words "whenever feasible" are included in the actions and address the issue raised in public comment.

- Member Evans moved the item, member Kishida seconded the Motion. The item passed.

9. Recommendations from Council members on topics for future HISC meetings and timeframe:

- Member Evans: Update from HAL on efforts to control/eradicate Little Fire Ant
- Member Cochran: Axis Deer
- Member Kahaloa – Status Update for the Biosecurity Plan
- Member Cochran – Port security efforts and funding. How to attract resources. Fed Ex would not allow inspections, yet their workload quadruples during the holidays.
- Have HISC staff coordinate the next meeting sometime after May.
- Christy Martin suggested HISC invite Joint Base HICAM commander regarding needs for invasive corals.

10. Adjournment

2:56 meeting adjourned.