

Prevention/EDRR Working Group  
Meeting Notes May 20, 2024, 1:30 to 3:30pm

**Participants:** Dexter Kishida (HDOA), Mike Melzer (UH-CTAHR), Sheldon Arakawa (USDA), Rebecca Chong (CBP), Mary Beust (USDA), Cheryl Young (USDA), Kevin Faccenda (UH graduate student), Kent Dumlao (HDOA), Christy Martin (CGAPS), Kailee Lefebvre (CGAPS), Helen Sofaer (USGS), Tim Gallaher (Bishop Museum – Botany Dept.), Franny Brewer (BIISC), Janet Ashman (Hawaii Farm Bureau), Rob Hauff (DLNR), Elizabeth Speith (HISC), Chelsea Arnott (HISC), Chuck Chimera (HISC), Ellie Montgomery (HISC), Roshan Manandhar (UH-CTAHR), Josh Fisher (USFWS), Leyla Kaufman (USFWS), Chris Frohlich (HAL), Keith Weiser (CRB Response), Elliott Parsons (Pacific RISSC), Jack Reef (HISC), Stephanie Easley (CGAPS)

**Meeting Notes:**

1. **Introductions:** Co-chairs Mike Melzer and Dexter Kishida welcomed the Prevention/EDRR Working Group and attendees introduced themselves.

2. **Regulatory Updates:**

a. **CBP/HIRAC:** Rebecca Chong provided an update on recent CBP and Hawaii Risk Assessment Committee (HIRAC) activities for the last quarter (Jan., Feb., and March) as follows:

- CBP, along with HDOA, USDA, and USFWS inspectors, carried out a joint operation “grab bag” random inspection of incoming packages at the Express Consignment Carrier. These inspections were in addition to typical daily inspections of incoming packages. A total of 45 additional packages were opened and inspected and nothing violative was found.
- CBP and FWS are working on a joint operation to inspect items that are not typically deemed high risk, i.e. pillows, clothing, etc.
- Rebecca noted that most US ports have Pest Risk Committees (PRCs) chaired by CBP and/or USDA. Some PRCs meet for information sharing purposes while others share info and conduct joint operations with other regulatory agencies. Hawaii’s PRC (HIRAC) began carrying out joint operations 4 years ago.

b. **USDA/APHIS:** Sheldon Arakawa provided information on the USDA/APHIS Plant Protection Act (PPA) funding cycle as follows:

- Under section 7721 APHIS provides up to \$63 million to fund stakeholder projects.
- The open period to submit a suggestion for funding begins in June and will last eight weeks.
- The PPA Section 7721 Fiscal Year 2025 Implementation Plan is available here: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ppa7721-fy25-implementation-plan.pdf>. The Plan provides background, guidance, and information on submitting suggestions.
- USDA will also offer webinars on the suggestion process and the six goal areas for PPA 7721 grants. The webinars will take place on June 13, 18, and 26, and July 10. More information on the PPA 7721 grant process and the webinars may be found here: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/funding/ppdmdpp/ppa7721-fy25-funding-opportunity>.

- Mike asked how the amount of PPA 7721 funds Hawaii might anticipate receiving this cycle. Sheldon replied that based on past years, an estimate could be somewhere around \$2.5 million for field operations with additional amounts for science and technology.
  - Chelsea asked if PPA 7721 suggestions need to go through HDOA prior to submission. Sheldon said that was the process under the former platform but under the new platform anyone with an account may submit a suggestion.
- c. HDOA/PQB:** Kent Dumlao provided an update from HDOA, Plant Industries, Plant Quarantine Branch (PQB), as follows:
- Staffing: PQB filled its last 2 positions for PQ Inspectors.
  - Guam Brown Tree Snake (BTS) Inspector Training: Completed inspector training on Guam for 12 PQB inspectors. The skills learned will help better our rapid response program in the future.
  - Facilitated the movement of 6 working K9 for BTS for USDA, Wildlife Services.
  - HDOA staff completed Japanese Beetle training in Oregon with Oregon Department of Agriculture and other agencies.
  - PQB staff are continuing little fire ant (LFA), coqui frog, and coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) surveys on Oahu and neighbor islands.
  - PQB inspectors intercepted 3093 cartons of fresh romaine lettuce for the disease *Microdochium* which is not yet found in Hawaii.
  - A 3.5 foot ball python was found and turned in under amnesty.
- d. New Pest Alerts/Interceptions** – Chris Frohlich provided information on the detection of a new ant species in Hawaii, as follows:
- During the November 2023, port of entry inspection survey at Honolulu Harbor, Pier 1, a species of ant unknown to be present in Hawaii was detected.
  - This new species was identified morphologically by Hawaii Ant Lab (HAL) staff as *Trichomyrmex mayri* Forel using the “Key to *Trichomyrmex*” by Dr. Ben Hoffman. Results from molecular barcoding and entry into BOLD indicated a 97.2% match to *T. mayri*. These results suggest the species detected is closely related to *T. mayri* and should be recorded as ***Trichomyrmex* sp. nr. *mayri*** until this species can be confidently identified or described.
  - This is the first detection of *Trichomyrmex* sp. nr. *mayri* on a main Hawaiian island and it is not known to be established. For that reason, a rapid response effort focused on eradication is necessary.
  - The area of Pier 1 where *T. sp. nr. mayri* was detected is reserved for foreign trade and cruise ship docking. Because HDOA and USDA-APHIS hold regulatory authorities to safeguard Hawaii from new species incursions, one or both of these agencies should act as the lead on all rapid response efforts surrounding this new species detection.
  - HAL will remain available to provide assistance as needed.
  - The HAL Report of Finding which provides more information about this detection is attached to the email providing the meeting notes.
- e. Forest Pest Prevention - Firewood quarantine update, ohia log treatment options on Big Island**  
Dexter Kishida provided an update, as follows:

- HDOA will work on the firewood quarantine rules after the chapter 72, Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR), are completed. There is no further update at this time.
- Dexter is aware of the need for a planner position. Hopefully, HDOA's new funding will allow HDOA to hire one, but until that goes through, PQB administrative rules will have to move one at a time.
- Dexter asked Rob Hauff about the ohia log issue. Rob stated that since 2016, chapter 72 HAR has required an HDOA permit to move any ohia wood, including logs, from Hawaii Island to anywhere else in the State. In order to issue the permit, HDOA requires that the logs be tested for the pathogen that causes Rapid Ohia Death (ROD). This is done by drilling holes in the logs and having the sawdust tested by a lab technician funded by DLNR. At this point, a high percentage of the samples tested in the lab, and possibly a majority of the samples being processed for the entire ROD project including field surveys and scientific research, are for the ohia log permits.
- A few years back, a research project done in consultation with HDOA, suggested heat treatment as an alternative method to ensure that ohia wood being moved off Hawaii Island is not moving ROD. Heat treating logs would ensure: (1) that fewer resources are needed to continue the ohia log sawdust testing; and (2) a higher level of confidence that ohia logs moving interisland are not spreading ROD.
- The ROD Strategic Response Plan is being updated. Rob would like to include a strategy for treating logs moving off Hawaii Island instead of utilizing lab resources for the sawdust testing. Rob wants to identify the obstacles and resources needed to implement a strategy to treat ohia logs.
- Rob invited HDOA staff to the ROD science symposium which will be held on July 18. The symposium kicks off the strategic planning process. HDOA participation would be very helpful.
- Mike noted that the vacuum steamer equipment may be available to be used to treat ohia logs.

### 3. Presentations:

#### a. **MOU for the Prevention, Rapid Response, and Control or Eradication of High Priority Pests between HDOA, DLNR, and UH** – Chelsea Arnott and Jack Reef provided an overview, as follows:

- Chelsea stated that the MOU focused on three pests - little fire ant (LFA), coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB), and coqui frog.
- The MOU was created to define roles and responsibilities for the partner agencies working to address these pests which include DLNR, HDOA, and UH (the island specific ISCs, CGAPS, Hawaii Ant Lab, and CRB Response Team).
- Challenges the MOU is designed to address include:
  - o Communication between partners;
  - o Lack of lead agency for specific actions;
  - o Public messaging;
  - o Data sharing; and
  - o Lack of resources.

- The MOU requires the partners to meet routinely to improve communication. Additionally, partners will document roles and responsibilities for each pest in a matrix, and develop response plans that detail action steps to address these pests.
  - Action Plans will be developed for each county for each pest.
  - The LFA Response Plan needs to be developed by September 2024 and the CRB and Coqui Response Plans need to be finalized by April 2025.
  - The matrices and response plans are flexible and can be updated as needed in the future.
- b. Invasive Grass in bird seed** - Kevin Faccenda provided an update on his field work, including detections of new invasive grass species that could have been introduced via birdseed containing the invasive grass seeds, as follows:
- In 2022 and 2023, Kevin and Mike Ross found *Amaranthus palmeri* growing in urban Honolulu where they found scattered populations around Kaimuki and the Kapiolani Community College (KCC) campus. The populations at KCC were found in areas where birdseed is frequently cast. It wasn't clear to Kevin if the populations he found in Kaimuki were also associated with birdseed.
  - Earlier this year, another report of *Amaranthus palmeri* came in from Kihei, Maui via iNaturalist (<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/203483364>). The reporter mailed Kevin the plant and he confirmed the identity. In the notes, the reporter mentioned that this is also from an area where birdseed was cast. The naturalization on Oahu is reported here: <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/pubs-online/pdf/op156p23-32.pdf>.
  - In his presentation, Kevin talked about how this species has been linked to bird seed before, but now having a second instance on an entirely different island leaves little doubt in Kevin's mind that this species arrived in Hawaii via bird seed. This species is an aggressive weed of agriculture, especially row crop agriculture (although it is not legally listed as a noxious weed).
  - While this is the only weed Kevin can confidently link to birdseed, he has also detected *Amaranthus albus* (same report as above) and *Setaria viridis* (<http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/pubs-online/pdf/op155p83-156.pdf>), two other aggressive weeds of row crop agriculture appearing in small quantities in urban Honolulu where it is possible they also arrived via seed.
  - The birdseed pathway is a rather direct mechanism for aggressive weeds of agriculture on the mainland to be packaged up with the crops they are infecting and then literally tossed out on the ground to sprout in Hawaii.
  - Kevin noted that It would be best to implement regulations requiring birdseed to be heat treated or otherwise sterilized if it has detectable amounts of weeds such as *Amaranthus palmeri* to protect agriculture in Hawaii.
  - Stephanie Easley noted that at this time HDOA does not regulate pet food, including bird seed at all.
  - Franny Brewer asked if there was a do-it-yourself method to prevent invasive weeds from moving via birdseed. Kevin indicated that he has heard of some methods of baking the bird seed, but he does not have a preferred method.

## 5. Other Tasks:

**a. Response Plan Task Group:** Leyla Kaufman and Sheldon Arakawa advised that this item was introduced at the last Prev/EDRR Working Group meeting in January to develop pest-specific readiness plans for pests not-yet-in Hawaii. Japanese beetle is the first pest designated to be addressed by this group and multiple agencies recently visited Oregon to learn more about how to address Japanese beetle. More pests will be added in the future. Anyone interested in joining this task group can contact Sheldon or Leyla.

### **b. CRB Task/Chapter 72 HAR:**

**CRB** – Keith Weiser summarized recent events of CRB detections including on the Big Island, and shared the status of CRB on the invasion curve for each island (Oahu containment; Hawaii and Maui eradication; Kauai control/eradication; no detections on Molokai or Lanai). Keith advised that the urban core of Honolulu has not been infested, possibly because of the development, buildings, and concrete do not offer suitable habitat for CRB. CRB Response is focusing on palm treatments and trapping on Oahu. Other islands have a rapid response activities. There was a recently released Statewide CRB Communications Plan.

**Ch. 72 HAR** – Dexter stated that HDOA is working on a chapter 72 Board submittal, but staffing challenges slow down the progress. He advised that controlling green waste management for law-breakers or those “dumping green waste on the side of the road” is a challenge for CRB control. He further stated that if Hawaii cannot control illegal dumping, then Hawaii will probably lose the fight against CRB.

- After comments and questions from Stephanie and Franny, Dexter advised that a public hearing to approve biocontrol agents for Tibuchina and Miconia is delayed because of staffing challenges. Dexter said he would consider Stephanie’s suggestion to use a process for the Board of Agriculture to place those biocontrol agents on the restricted species list pursuant to §150A-6.6 HRS. Stephanie will follow-up with Dexter.

**c. FestPAC 2024:** Christy Martin stated that the planning process is finished and Dexter added that FestPAC activity is starting. Interisland movement of people and materials is a concern for HDOA. An import replacement program has been implemented for wood carvers.

**d. Ports of Entry/Exit Pest Monitoring Program:** Chelsea stated that HISC has not yet hired a replacement for Leyla. In the meantime, the Ports of Entry/Exit Monitoring Program is continuing with HISC and partners implementing the program. Leyla said the program is fully funded through 2025.

**e. Invasive Species Responsibilities Overview:** Sheldon and Stephanie provided an update on this task that was discussed at the January meeting. They hope to put the draft Word document into a graphic outline format which will be easier to use and share with others.