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HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

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VOTING MEMBERS

DAWN CHANG
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SHARON HURD
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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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EDWIN SNIFFEN
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DRAFT MEETING NOTES

Hawai'i Invasive Species Council

May 28, 2025; 9:00 AM

Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Board Room (Rm 132) 1151
Punchbowl St, Honolulu, HI, 96813

Per Hawaii Sunshine Law guidelines, this meeting was hybrid with attendees participating virtually through a Zoom link provided by HISC Support Staff or through the HISC YouTube channel or in-person at the DLNR Board Room in the Kalanimoku Building in Honolulu, HI. Council members, legislative representatives, and HISC Resources Working Group members were provided with a Zoom link. Members of the public were able to view the meeting through the HISC YouTube Channel. A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://youtube.com/@hawaiiinvsivespeciescouncil/featured>

1. Call to order

- Chair Hurd called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

2. Introductions of Hawai'i Invasive Species Council Members

List of Attendees:

- Council Voting Members:
 - Dawn Chang, Co-Chair (Department of Land and Natural Resources [DLNR]);
 - Sharon Hurd, Co-Chair, Department of Agriculture (HDOA)];
 - Mary Alice Evans (Department of Economic Development and Tourism);
 - Dexter Kishida for Ed Sniffen – (Department of Transportation);
 - Parwinder Grewal (University of Hawaii [UH]); and
 - Matt Kurano for Kathleen Ho (Department of Health)
- Legislative Non-Voting Members:
 - Representative Kristin Kahaloa (District 6)
 - Member Evslin, (District 16)
 - Senator Lynn Decoite (District 7)
 - For Senator Gabbard – Meg Turner (District 21)
 - Rep Marten (District 51)
- Other Legislators: None.
- Support Staff:
 - Chelsea Arnott (DLNR/HISC), Mason Russo (HISC), Elizabeth Speith, Jack Reef (HISC). Jonathan Ho (HDOA).
- Other Attendees (in-person and online):

Christy Martin (CGAPS), Erin Bishop (OISC), Michelle Montgomery (HAL), Kiane Prietto (BIISC), Channy Kanaha (BIISC), Kanehi Lopez (BIISC), Thomas Griego (public), Danica Swenson (Attorney General), Nate Dube (OISC), Franny Brewer (BIISC), Patrick Chee, Serene. Seta Malyfan? (Senate)

3. Approval of minutes from March 20, 2025, Hawai'i Invasive Species Council Meeting

- Chair Chang moved to approve the draft minutes, which was approved by the Council.

4. Update to HISC members on House Bill No. 427, Relating to Biosecurity from HISC Program Support. Link to the Hawai'i State Legislature: HB 427, CD1 – Relating to Biosecurity.

- Chelsea Arnott provided a briefing which included a powerpoint presentation.
 - HB 427 passed the legislature and is awaiting Governor approval, and provisions of the bill are as follows:
 - i. Adds “biosecurity” to HDOA’s current name.
 - ii. Establishes a Deputy Chairperson of Biosecurity by 1/1/27
 - iii. Requires the development of “Pest Dashboard” by 1/1/25
 - iv. Appropriates funding for FY 26 and FY 27 to: Hawaii Ant Lab (\$500k); CRB Response (\$500K); and HISC (\$4.25M).
 - v. Transfers administration of HISC to HDOA 1/1/2030.
- Chair Hurd said there are 23 action items regarding this bill for HDOAB to carry out.

5. Hawai'i Invasive Species Council Review and Recommendations relating to Fiscal Year 2026 Funding Process

a. Presentation by HISC Program Manager, Chelsea Arnott: Overview of the HISC Funding Process & Recommendations from the HISC Resources Working Group for the Fiscal Year 2026 Funding Process

b. Discussion and Recommendations by the Hawaii Invasive Species Council members on changes, improvements, and/or issues to address for the Fiscal Year 2026 HISC Funding Process. HISC members may vote on the matter and direct the HISC Resources Working Group to incorporate any approved items.

- Chelsea provided an overview of the funding process so the HISC Council can make informed decisions.
- Since 2005 HISC has received funding to:
 - i. Expand agency capacity to work on priority issues;
 - ii. Fill gaps between agencies; and
 - iii. Advance our collective knowledge through research and development of new tools and technology.
- The pending funding increase would be the first in five years.
- HISC tracks its annual funding awards, which includes many of the same agencies over the years including the island invasive species committees (ISC).

- HISC funding is directed towards: Prevention, Control, Research, and Outreach. Chelsea noted that last year's funding requests for "research" was significantly less than previous years.
- Funding almost never fully funds a request as HISC does not have enough funds.
- If approved, HB 427 funds would be targeted towards the following:
 - i. \$1.75M towards the ISCs;
 - ii. \$864.5K for research;
 - iii. \$300K for biocontrol;
 - iv. \$300K for HISC staffing and new positions in grant management and data management; and
 - v. \$525k for interagency monitoring for high impact pests.
- Chelsea said Hawaii leans on federal agencies for biosecurity efforts.
 - i. In response to Senator Decoite Chelsea advised that funding cuts are not yet known regarding federal funding for biocontrol. In addition, Chelsea advised that HISC's Ports-of-Entry Monitoring program helped detect Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle near the Kona airport. Senator Decoite stated she had referred inquiries to HISC to ensure education/outreach messaging is consistent. Chelsea advised that the ISCs are conducting outreach and education across the State.
 - ii. Chair Chang said DLNR is working with US Fish & Wildlife to monitor the expected federal funding cuts, but the details of the cuts are unknown. Cuts will happen, just not sure how the amount. Chair Hurd said they are readying for impending cuts.
- Chelsea continued the presentation and described the HISC funding process. The process includes the release of an RFP, and evaluations of those proposals by the Working Resource Group. RWG then develops recommendations in communication with the applicants ensuring a transparent process.
 - i. Chair Hurd asked why is funding only for government agencies as a wider net of eligibility could lead to improved efforts. After lengthy discussion between the members and a RWG member (Christy Martin), Chelsea advised that they will work with the Attorney General's office and Budget staff to determine future eligibility for funds, but historically funding was used to help government agencies fund gaps in service.
 1. Chair Chang said Grants-In-Aid may be available.
 2. Chelsea in response to questions from Senator Decoite stated that:
 - a. The RFP announcement is made through the listserve;
 - b. Final reports from awardees are posted on the HISC website to track usage of awards; and
 - c. Impacts of Axis Deer and economic costs would be a good research project for HISC funding.
 3. Partnerships can be formed with government entities so that non-governmental organizations could be eligible for funding.
 4. Attorney Genral (AG) Danica Swenson advised that the statute explicitly states that HISC is given power to assist state and county government partners. The AG stated that there may be an opportunity to fund a private project, but the Statute explicitly

names county and State actions. Private entities are not mentioned. AG Swenson said that the issue of expanding funding awards to private entities could be revisited in the future if a viable private project application is received.

5. Chelsea stated, in response to a comment from Melania S. from the Ko'ala Mountains Watershed Partnership, that private entities can enter into partnerships with government entities to obtain funding from HISC. Chair Hurd underscored the value of these public / private partnerships to foment new activities. Member Grewel said that HISC could encourage partnerships.
- Representative Kahaloa asked about the timeline for the RFP relative to the Governor's pending approval of HB 427 and the new \$4.25M funding for HISC.
 - Chelsea said release of the RFP is pending the Governor's decision. RFP release likely to occur in July.
 - After discussion by the HISC Council, Chelsea stated they could review the funding process and timeline to release the RFP which could involve two RFPs (one for the current funding and the second RFP for new funding. Chelsea advised that if two RFPs occur, HISC will only need one meeting to approve the RWG funding recommendations.
 - The Council also discussed HB 427 provisions relating to administering the funds in the next two fiscal years. Clarified that it is written in the bill that FY26 HISC appropriation goes to DLNR and FY27 to HDOA. Rep Kahaloa is going to look into that. Mentioned that if HISC is not transferring to HDOA till 2030, having HISC appropriation go to HDOA does not make sense.

The meeting recessed to prepare for item #6.

6. Presentation of 2025 Hawai'i Invasive Species Awareness Month (HISAM) Award Recipients. More information on each recipient can be found at <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/hisc/news/hisam-2025-awardees/>.

- Chair Hurd reconvened the meeting at 10:17am.
- Chair Chang welcomed everyone and described HISAM and this year's theme "From Mauka to Makai." Chair Chang stated we are here to celebrate the honorees for their accomplishments and malama which inspires everyone.
- Chair Hurd stated that HISAM helps educate and celebrate individuals, business, and organizations to address invasive species. HISAM awards honorees in four categories: business; community hero; greatest hit and Island MVP.

The Awardees are as follows:

Greatest Hit - Trenton Yasui (Plant Quarantine Inspector V, Invertebrate and Aquatic Biota Specialist, Hawai'i Department of Agriculture)

Trenton Yasui was recognized with the Greatest Hit award for his rapid and professional response to a 643pest.org report involving a restricted aquatic species. Despite the report coming in on a weekend, Trenton, and two state investigators, quickly investigated, confiscated the prohibited animal within days, and followed up directly with the community member who submitted the report. His action, with support from the Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General, helped prevent the potential spread of an invasive species listed under HDOA's Prohibited Animals, while also leaving a lasting positive impression through courtesy and communication. (Jonathan Ho accepted the award on Trenton's behalf).

Business Leader - Aloha Termite and Pest Control

Award Presented by Member Evans: Aloha Termite and Pest Control (ATPC) was honored for going above and beyond to support community-based invasive species control. After receiving comprehensive training from the [Hawai'i Ant Lab](#), ATPC volunteered to treat two residential Little Fire Ant (LFA) infestations — covering 35 properties — completely free of charge. Working closely with HAL, ATPC followed detailed best practices, helped navigate sensitive community dynamics, and contributed to what are now two monitored sites on track for eradication.

Their leadership demonstrates how the private sector can play a critical role in invasive species management.

Community Hero - Haleakalā Ranch

Award presented by Chair Chang with remarks from Senator Decoite: Haleakalā Ranch received the Community Hero award for its steadfast dedication to both agriculture and conservation. The ranch plays an active role in protecting rangelands and native ecosystems from invasive species while producing local food and stewarding large open spaces on Maui.

As a partner of the [East Maui Watershed Partnership \(EMWP\)](#) and the [Uhiwai o Haleakalā](#), They demonstrate commitment to invasive species response and protection through land management and support for the efforts of the [Maui Invasive Species Committee \(MISC\)](#) in eliminating pampas grass. Their conservation program reflects a long-term vision for sustainable land use rooted in kuleana, collaboration, and cultural awareness.

O'ahu MVP - Thomas Griego (Lanikai community volunteer)

Award Presented by Erin Bishop from O'ahu Invasive Species Committee on behalf of Rep. Marten: Thomas Griego is recognized as the O'ahu MVP for his dedication to Little Fire Ant eradication efforts in Lanikai. As a committed community volunteer, Tom attended every treatment over a year-long campaign, working closely with the O'ahu Invasive Species Committee (OISC) and Hawai'i Ant Lab. His deep knowledge of the area, strong relationships with neighbors, and willingness to lead by example helped foster trust and ensure access to over 80 properties across multiple sites.

Tom's consistency and hard work were key to moving these sites into the monitoring phase—an important milestone in LFA response on O'ahu.

"Tom's knowledge and experience of the treatments allowed us to maximize the efforts of so many people and agencies throughout this year-long effort... and it paid off! Lanikai 2, 3, & 5 are now in monitoring phase. Mahalo nui loa, Tom!" — OISC

Maui Nui MVP - Mike Opgenorth (Director, [Kahanu Garden and Preserve](#), National Tropical Botanical Garden)

Award Presented by Senator Decoite: Mike Opgenorth was recognized as the Maui Nui MVP for his leadership in conservation, outreach, and invasive species response in East Maui.

As Director of Kahanu Garden in Hāna, he has expanded native plant restoration, stewarded Pi‘ilanihale Heiau, and built strong community partnerships. Opgenorth has played a key role in early detection and public education around Little Fire Ants, Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle, and Banana Bunchy Top Virus, acting quickly to share information and support control efforts. His work helps protect East Maui’s biodiversity, agriculture, and cultural heritage.

Hawai‘i Island MVP - Kiane Prietto (teacher at Kanu o ka ‘Āina)

Award presented by Rep. Kahaloa: Kiane Prietto is being recognized as the *Hawai‘i Island MVP* for her outstanding dedication to invasive species education and community outreach. As a kumu at [Kanu o ka ‘Āina](#), she integrates invasive species topics into her curriculum through project-based learning, empowering her haumāna with hands-on experiences in conservation and biodiversity monitoring.

Through her participation in the [BIORETS REACHES summer program](#) under Dr. Norine Yeung, Kumu Kiane gained expertise in native and invasive snail research. She brought that ‘ike back to her classroom by guiding student-led biodiversity surveys and fostering a deeper pilina between students and ‘āina.

Her leadership extends beyond the classroom. After discovering Little Fire Ants (LFA) in her neighborhood, she initiated a social media campaign to raise awareness and mobilize her community to take action. Kumu Kiane exemplifies innovation, kuleana, and a deep commitment to protecting Hawai‘i’s native ecosystems.

Kaua‘i MVP - Work It Out Kaua‘i (Jenny and Jasmine Kaohelaui‘i)

Their award was presented by Rep. Evslin: [Work It Out Kaua‘i \(WIO\)](#), led by sisters Jenny and Jasmine Kaohelaui‘i, has earned the *Kaua‘i MVP* award for their creative and sustained commitment to invasive species outreach through fashion, media, and community engagement. For the past three years, their “[Save the Natives, Stop the Invasives](#)” campaign has brought attention to the threats invasive species pose to Kaua‘i’s unique ecosystems. Using their platform in fashion and design, WIO has reached broader and more diverse audiences by blending storytelling, style, and science in ways that resonate across generations.

In addition to their online campaign, WIO has:

- Hosted community outreach events
- Collaborated with content creators who passionately support [KISC](#)’s efforts
- Continued to innovate outreach strategies that elevate public awareness and inspire action

Through their work, WIO reminds us that conservation messaging can be both impactful and beautiful — and that everyone has a role to play in protecting our ‘āina.

- Chair Chang reiterated congratulations to all honorees who have helped the environment.
- Chelsea described the logistics of the upcoming HISAM Award ceremony with the Governor and luncheon to be hosted by Rep. Kahaloa.

7. Public Comments

Kevin Andrews stated that he had submitted a CRB response plan and stands ready to assist in any way possible.

Chair Chang thanked everyone for their work.

8. Adjournment 10:45am.