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September 29, 2025

SUBMITTAL

TO: Co-chairs and Members
Hawaii'i Invasive Species Council
State of Hawaii'i

FROM: Chelsea Arnott, Invasive Species Coordinator
Hawaii'i Invasive Species Council

SUBJECT: Requesting Council approval for the Department of Land & Natural Resources (DLNR), as the administrative host for the HISC, to proceed with a new organizational structure for the HISC Program Support

Background:

The Hawaii'i Invasive Species Council (HISC) was created in 2003 by the State Legislature under Chapter 194 of the Hawaii'i Revised Statutes. Its establishment responded to a 2002 Legislative Reference Bureau study, which had identified significant gaps in how invasive species were being managed statewide — including insufficient coordination, funding, and capacity. The purpose was to provide policy-level leadership across state, federal, and local entities to improve prevention, early detection, rapid response, control, research, outreach, and coordination of invasive species management. The HISC voting membership is mandated as the chair, director, or designee of the Hawaii'i Departments of Land and Natural Resources, Agriculture & Biosecurity, Health, Business, Economic Development and Tourism, Transportation, and the University of Hawaii'i.

As administrative host to the HISC at the time of its creation, DLNR provided a civil service position housed within the Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) to serve the role of program manager to the HISC and support staff. This position was a Wildlife Biologist (SR-22) that served as the Statewide Invasive Species Coordinator for DOFAW. The position has since transitioned into a Natural Resource Management Specialist (NRMS) V who's primarily role is to support the Council in fulfilling its purpose and oversee the HISC Program Support Team that is currently comprised of five full-time staff members and one part-time student hire. The Council provides direction to the HISC Program Support to carry out Council directives and to administer HISC funding.

Discussion:

The HISC Program Support Team serve as the operational backbone to the Council that translates high-level policy into coordinated, on-the-ground action. While the Council itself provides strategic direction and interagency alignment, the support staff handle the day-to-day responsibilities that keep Hawaii's invasive species efforts moving forward—managing funding processes, facilitating communication across agencies and projects, organizing working groups, supporting public reporting tools like 643pest.org, and ensuring that research, prevention, and control initiatives are effectively implemented. Their specialized expertise in areas like plant risk assessment, early detection, and public outreach fills essential gaps between policy and practice, enabling HISC to respond rapidly and strategically to invasive species threats statewide.

The current Program Support Team (or “HISC Support Staff”) is currently comprised of one civil service position (program manager that is classified as a NRMS V (SR-22)) and five RCUH positions contracted by DOFAW through the UH Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit (PCSU). Those positions include:

- *Program Manager* is accomplished through the DOFAW NRMS V position (SR-22) and facilitates coordination among HISC member agencies and between HISC and its working groups,
- *HISC Planner* helps with strategy, planning, working group input, policy alignment,
- *Weed Risk Assessment Specialist* handles requests to evaluate plants for invasive risk
- *Pest Hotline Lead / Public Reporting Lead* oversees systems like 643pest.org, reporting, assisting public engagement,
- *Research & Projects Coordinator* works on specific programs like ports-of-entry monitoring and coordinating research.
- Intermittent support for programmers and administrators associated with online product development under the *Hawai'i Biodiversity Information Network* (HBIN). HBIN manages the online pest reporting system 643pest.org as well as other invasive species web-based products;

DLNR has started to work toward establishing a new organizational structure for the HISC Program Support Team under the broader administering department—rather than solely within the Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW). This is essential to strengthen institutional stability, ensure long-term program sustainability, and formalize the critical roles the staff play in statewide invasive species management. By transitioning primarily to civil service positions, including the addition of an Executive Director and dedicated administrative support, the program would gain a stronger foundation for continuity, improved staff retention, and enhanced authority to coordinate across agencies. This structure would also provide a safeguard against disruptions that can arise during changes in state administration, ensuring that current capacity, institutional knowledge, and key interagency relationships are preserved. A more centralized and resilient organizational framework will better position HISC to carry out its mandate effectively into the future.

Legal Authority:

- HRS 194-2 (a): Establishes the HISC for the purpose of cabinet-level coordination and planning among state departments, federal agencies, and international and local initiatives; and
- HRS 194-2 (a)(4): Directs the HISC to create and implement a plan for prevention, early detection, rapid response, control, enforcement, and education.

Recommendations:

- That the Hawai‘i Invasive Species Council approve the Department of Land & Natural Resources (DLNR), as the administrative host for the HISC, to proceed with a new organizational structure for the HISC Program Support.

Attachment 1:

Overview of the Current HISC Program Support Team

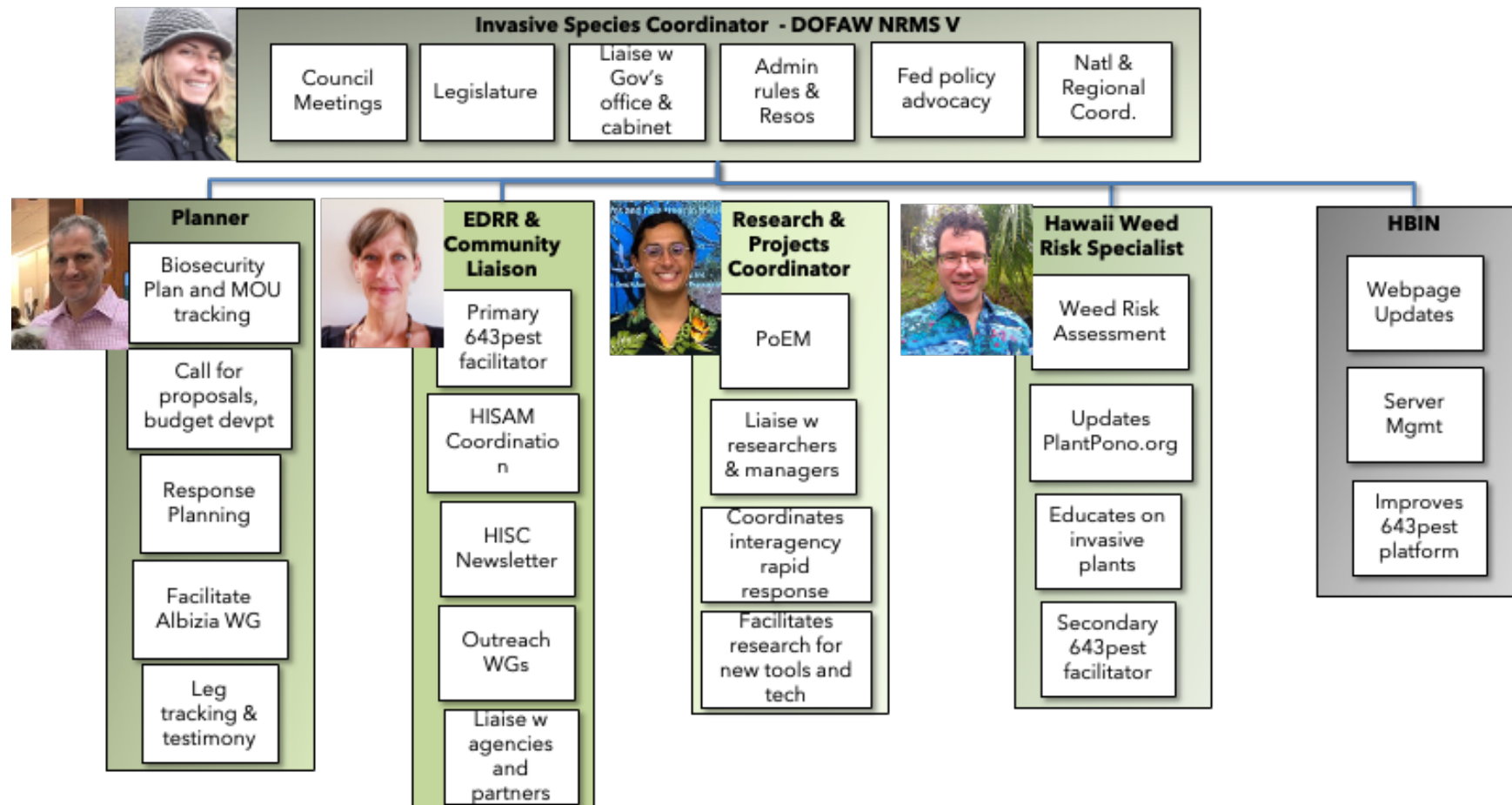
Attachment 2:

Overview of the Proposed Organizational Staff Structure for HISC Program Support

Attachment 1:

Overview of the Current HISC Program Support Team

HISC Program Support Structure Current Structure



Attachment 2:

Overview of the Proposed Organizational Staff Structure for HISC Program Support

