



Hawaii Invasive Species Council
Wednesday, November 26, 2025
1:00 pm, DLNR Board Room
Kalanimoku Building

Aloha Co-Chairs Chang and Hurd and Members of the Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on agenda item 6, submittal requesting the Council to provide guidance to the Legislature on the transfer of the Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC) to the Hawaii Department of Agriculture & Biosecurity (DAB) by January 1, 2030, under Act 236.

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) appreciates the complexity involved in transferring HISC from being administratively attached to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to DAB on January 1, 2030. We support the recommendations proposed in the submittal for this agenda item. In addition to those recommendations, we propose the following items that were discussed at the September 29, 2025 HISC meeting, for the Council's consideration.

I. HISC Organizational Structure

At the September 29, 2025 HISC meeting, the Council considered the current structure of HISC support, which is carried out by DLNR and RCUH contract staff. The Council unanimously approved pursuing a new organizational structure for HISC staff that includes an executive director position, which will require a statutory change by the Legislature.

As discussed by the Council at that meeting, the proposed new structure would provide continuity to HISC and its programs during and after HISC's transfer to DAB. To effectuate this structure, HISC would need to seek an amendment creating an executive director of HISC, proposed as follows:

Section 194-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), is amended by adding a new subsection as follows:

“() The council shall appoint an executive director who shall be exempt from chapter 76. The salary of the executive director shall be set by the council and shall not be less than the salary range for the Forestry and Wildlife Manager of the Oahu Branch of the Division of

Forestry and Wildlife of the Department of Land and Natural Resources. The executive director shall:

- (1) Have appropriate education and training in the field of biosecurity and invasive species prevention and control;
- (2) Have experience in managing and coordinating biosecurity and invasive species prevention, control, and outreach programs;
- (3) Serve as the council's chief executive officer;
- (4) Be responsible for carrying out the purposes and duties of the council, as assigned;
- (5) Serve on a full-time basis; and
- (6) Be included in any benefit program generally applicable to the officers and employees of the State.”

II. Report on HISC Recommendations

Section 194-2(a)(10) HRS requires HISC to advise the Legislature on issues regarding invasive species. As HISC begins to plan for its transfer to DAB, this Council may wish to consider proposed revisions to chapter 194 HRS, to propose removing language that does not strengthen HISC as a collaborative forum or work to prevent, control, or eradicate high-impact invasive species. We suggest the Council consider proposing the Legislature request a report from HISC that includes its findings, recommendations, and recommended legislation to:

- (1) Improve the State's administration of invasive species programs and policies; and
- (2) Ensure the responsibilities and duties of the Council continue to efficiently and effectively promote the prevention and control of invasive species in the State.

III. Clarification of Placement of HISC in DAB

We strongly support the first recommendation in the submittal:

1. HISC Administration: HISC should remain a cabinet-level, interagency council as it transfers to administrative support by DAB.

During consideration of the bills that became Act 236, the Legislature clarified that it did not intend for HISC to be overseen by any DAB employee or embedded within DAB. For example, earlier versions of the bills considered by the Legislature stated that the newly-created DAB Deputy Chairperson for Biosecurity would “oversee” programs carried out under HISC’s statutes, chapter 194 HRS (§19, SB1100 (2025)), and that HISC would “report” to the DAB Chairperson for the duration of a declared biosecurity emergency (§11, HB427 (2025)). Neither of these provisions was included in the final text of Act 236, and the HISC remains a cabinet-level Council charged with providing policy-level direction for invasive species prevention, control, and eradication.

To ensure that the Legislature’s intent is carried out, we propose that the Council suggest that the Legislature amend section 194-2(b) to read, as of January 1, 2030, as follows:

“(b) The council shall be placed within the department of [~~land and natural resources~~]
agriculture and biosecurity for administrative purposes only....”

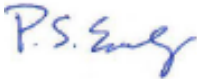
Having this amendment take effect along with the transfer of the HISC on January 1, 2030, will clarify that HISC will not be overseen by or embedded within DAB, but instead, DAB will provide the administrative support currently provided by DLNR.

Mahalo for consideration of our testimony and for the Council’s work to protect the State from the impacts of invasive species.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Martin".

Christy Martin
CGAPS Program Manager

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P.S. Easley".

Stephanie Easley
CGAPS Legal Fellow