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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

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VOTING MEMBERS

DAWN CHANG
DEPARTMENT OF LAND & NATURAL
RESOURCES

SHARON HURD
HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

KATHLEEN HO, D.Env
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PARWINDER GREWAL
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

MARY ALICE EVANS
BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &
TOURISM

EDWIN SNIFFEN
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Hawai'i Invasive Species Council

September 29, 2025; 1:00 PM

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

- Opening comments for the hybrid committee meeting were made by Co-Chair Chang starting at 1:03 am.

2. Introductions

List of Attendees:

- Council Voting Members:
 - Dawn Chang, Co-Chair (Department of Land and Natural Resources [DLNR]);
 - Richard Kim (on behalf of Sharon Hurd), Co-Chair, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB);
 - Mary Alice Evans (Department of Economic Development and Tourism);
 - Dexter Kishida – (Department of Transportation);
 - Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser (on behalf of Dean Grewal for UH); and
 - Kathleen Ho (Department of Health)
- Legislative Non-Voting Members:
 - Representative Kristin Kahaloe
 - Representative Luke Evslin
 - Senator Mike Gabbard
 - Representative Lisa MartenOther Legislative Staff: Meg Turner Sen Gabbard's office, Clare Ronquillo (Rep Kahaloe's office)
- Support Staff:
 - Chelsea Arnott (DLNR/HISC), Elizabeth Speith (HISC); Chuck Chimera (HISC), Mason Russo (HISC), Jack Reef (HISC), Danica Swenson (Attorney General)

- HISC Resources Working Group Members: Tomo Murata (DAB), Rachel Beasley (DBEDT), Christy Martin (CGAPS), JC Watson (TNC), Mike Melzer (UH)

3. Approval of minutes from May 28, 2025 meeting

- *This item was deferred to the next meeting as a result of a lack of quorum of members who had been in attendance at the May meeting.*

4. Submittal 1: Requesting Council approval for the Department of Land & Natural Resources, as the administrative host for the HISC, to proceed with a new organizational structure for the HISC Program Support. Submittal presented by Chelsea Arnott, HISC Program Manager. *Recommendation Approved*

- Chelsea described the organizational structure of HISC;
- Chelsea advised that her current position description does not cover all of the HISC duties needed to successfully perform the job
- This submittal would create a HISC “Executive Director” that had different duties than the duties of the position she currently holds;
- The organizational change can happen internally with the positions added by the legislature;
- In response to a question from Chair Chang, Rep. Kahaloa confirmed that funding for HISC would go through DAB in 2027, and that the DAB Deputy of Biosecurity would also be established in 2027. The steps to revert funding back to DLNR in the years prior to 2030 is unknown at this time;
- Chair Chang stated that the legislature will need to establish the Executive Director position because DLNR intends to keep the invasive species position Chelsea currently holds;
- Member Evans asked if the new statute language transferring HISC can ensure normal duties and powers of the HISC Ex Board such as entering into contracts. Rep Kahaloa said there are many challenges at this time and that HISC is not detached from the Department. Rep. Kahaloa raised the question if the legislature would want to create a detached HISC and then undetach (sunset) it again in 2030?
- Chelsea advised that the language in ACT 236 changes the administrative role of HISC from DLNR to DAB as HISC is not embedded into a department. Rep. Kahaloa said that clarification is needed to determine if HISC is transferred as independent or attached.
- Member Evans said some matters currently go to DLNR Board. Perhaps it makes sense to ensure HISC continues to have the powers it was originally given in statute during the period before its transferred to DAB in 2030 if they do not have them.
- Rep. Kahaloa advised that substantial change will happen in the coming year, but that the HISC Council can make a recommendation, perhaps in bill form to be introduced in the coming legislative session. Otherwise, the legislature will make its decision on its own; and

- Chair Chang said Forestry & Wildlife can currently act quickly (*to urgent matters*) because of its delegated authority from the Board to the Chair/Administration. Since the HISC board moves quarterly, how can it be ensured that HISC can respond quickly to invasive species risk.
- Approval:
 - i. At the conclusion of the discussion Mary Alice Evans moved to approve the item;
 - ii. Dexter and Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser; and
 - iii. **The Item Passed Unanimously.**

5. *Presentation on the Fiscal Year 2026 HISC Funding Process and Recommended Budget by the HISC Resources Working Group Members.*

a. Funding Process & Considerations from the HISC Resources Working Group for the drafting the Fiscal Year 2026 HISC Budget presented by Chelsea Arnott, HISC Program Manager (See submittal 2, background and discussion sections)

b. HISC FY26 Recommended Awards presented by Matt Kurano, Administrator for HDOH Environmental Health Services (See Submittal 2 Attachment 1) & Chelsea Arnott, HISC Program Manager.

- Chelsea introduced the item along with Mason Russo of HISC.
- The presentation included the funding process, a summary of input from the HISC Resources Working Group (RWG), and the actual recommended funding awards;
- Funding supports interagency processes, fills gaps and mandates, and advances knowledge;
- HISC has funding priorities that guide how applications are scored, including the HISC/CGPAS joint biosecurity plan;
- The funding award process lasts from June through September;
- RWG members are critical to identifying needs;
- HISC only funds governmental agencies (federal state counties and public universities). Private contractors are not eligible at this time, but it has been considered;
- Projects that leverage funding have an improved score;
- Applications scoring below a pre-determined threshold will not receive funding;
- Total requests this year are \$12.3M compared to \$8+M last year;
- Chelsea detailed the funds available this year \$5,661,958.62. Last year funds totaled just over \$4M;
- Chelsea said she does not know why there is a 20% reduction to HISC from the State, but that supplemental funds almost equal this reduction;
- The HISC Council met in May to provide guidance to the RWG on how the funds should be awarded, including research, biocontrol, ISC funding, POEM, and HISC capacity;
- 54 applications were received this year, many more than last year. More research proposals were received, which was a priority of HISC. Applications were

considered in larger funding categories (programmatic requests, project requests, biocontrol requests, and additional considerations for coqui);

- 50 applications scored high enough to receive funding: 14 programmatic; 32 research; and 4 biocontrol;
- Four (4) applications were removed as unviable;
- It was decided that the ISCs would not receive less funding than last year. ISCs received additional funds from ACT 236 which were considered separate from the scoring process;
- Research proposals were limited to \$200K;
- The RWG meeting lasted 6 hours in order to give each proposal equal consideration;
- After all of the awards were programmed, \$106K was remaining. This amount was reprogrammed for HISC emergency response funding if needed later in the fiscal year;
- Chelsea and Mason provided a summary of each of the individual 50 awarded applications,
 - i. Note that each project and its proposed funding award is listed in the Submittal;
- In response to a comment from Chair Chang, Chelsea advised that a detailed application proposal is used to inform the scoring and funding award process;
 - i. Chair Chang re-emphasized that there is criteria to award funds, it is not arbitrary;
- Chelsea stated, in response to a question from Chair Chang, that awardees from prior years have to submit a report with deliverables, and that these reports are a resource for RWG members during the scoring process;
- Rep Marten asked about scoring and funding distribution. In response, Chelsea stated that the HISC awards have a “formula” to determine funding. Generally programmatic requests score higher, but there was an intent this year to fund research proposals addressing coqui and little fire ant;
- Rep Kahaloa asked if consideration was given to the fact that the federal government was cutting UH funding and many of the applicants were federal entities. In response, Christy Martin, an RWG member, advised that federal agencies are one the few who can conduct biocontrol programs valuable to Hawaii. HISC funding helps the federal government execute its mandate to the State. Additionally, Mason Russo with HISC/RWG stated that some of the proposals are specific to state priorities.
- Rep Kahaloa advised staff to be prepared with a response to legislators regarding why funding federal entities is being granted while federal funds are being cut to the State;
- Mason Russo continued the presentation detailing the projects individually;
- Chelsea, Chair Chang and Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser acknowledged that application received from the UH Engineering Department signaled a new collaborative effort between UH engineering and invasive species management;
- Chair Chang and Rep Marten were informed that item #30 to trap CRB would occur on O’ahu; and

- Chair Chang requested that next year's presentation list highest scoring/highest funding awards first, a reversal of the current format.

6. *Submittal 2: Requesting approval of the Fiscal Year 2026 Hawai'i Invasive Species Council budget – Recommendation Approved*

- Chair Chang read the recommendation
- Member Evans Moved Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser
- **The Item Passed Unanimously**
- Chair Chang asked that future submittals include 1) Links to the applications; and 2) Annual reports from repeat applicants.

7. *Public Comments*

- JC Watson The Nature Conservancy:
 - i. JC thanked HISC for supporting projects including the \$300K for Biocontrol. JC advised members that there are three pending releases of biocontrol agents to target: clidemia; tibochina; and miconia. He urged DAB to expedite the permitting for the release of these biocontrol agents as it would be "game changer" for managers. JC informed HISC that critical watershed are lost daily.
- Teya Penniman (MISC) thanked HISC legislature for additional funding for the ISCs Teya extended accolades to Chelsea, and thanked her and HISC for flexibility in funding timelines. Chair Chang recognized Forestry & Wildlife's help with funding.

8. *Adjournment*

- Chelsea stated that the HISC will meet in November to discuss the upcoming legislative session and to make recommendations if desired, on the pending transfer of HISC to DAB;
- Chelsea's official last day is 10/31/25, and there may be a gap until her position is filled. Patrick Chee will serve as the interim coordinator, including regarding legislative session and procurements; and
- Chair Chang adjourned the meeting at 2:55pm