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Invasive Species in the New Year

The year 2004 should be nicknamed “The Year of the Invasive Pest”, owing to some major initiatives to help in the battle against invasive pests and a statewide media campaign set to raise public awareness about invasive pests and what everyone can do to help protect Hawaii.

First, DLNR is requesting \$5 million for the initial year of a four-year funding request to provide support for the operations of the newly created Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC) and its cooperating partners to develop and implement a comprehensive statewide invasive species control program including Federal, State, County, and private entities. All state dollars will require a 1:1 non-state match of dollars or equivalent in-kind services over four years, for a \$40 million dollar program to address invasive species through better prevention, environmental stewardship, research, technology and public outreach.

There is also a move to gain better protection from invasion by brown tree snakes (*Boiga irregularis*). In the past, the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Wildlife Services on Guam has been able to search for and remove snakes from ports of exit using snake traps, detector dogs and human surveillance. However, there is no law in place that requires shipping agencies or vessel operators to have their goods and vessels inspected for BTS prior to departure from Guam. Concerns about voluntary compliance with brown tree snake control efforts on Guam have resulted in a proposed bill which would authorize the Department of Agriculture to restrict entry into the State of Hawaii any articles originating from Guam that have not been certified as having been inspected by the USDA-WS or other approved agency prior to shipment from Guam.

Also, the new Silent Invasion media campaign will be launched in the spring of 2004, aimed at protecting Hawaii’s economy, environment and the health of residents and visitors. Three key messages were identified by Federal and State participants of the Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS), and approved by the Landscape Industry Council of Hawaii, the Hawaii

Forest Industry Association, and other groups. All three messages will be placed on television during periods of high viewership, and will run for approximately 6 months.

The messages include, “Don’t Pack a Pest,” which requests people to declare agricultural products and animals when entering the State. Focus groups conducted to test this message found that people are bringing high-risk items in without declaring them.

The second message is to “Report a Pest,” which asks people to immediately call the state pest hotline to report pests like snakes. Case studies show that most people don’t know that there is a central number to call to report pests, and many people don’t think to report pests until it’s too late—in one particular instance, a snake was reported two weeks after the sighting.

The third message is, “Don’t Plant a Pest,” which asks the public to plant non-invasives and to look for a logo and stickers identifying plants that have passed the Weed Risk Assessment when shopping for plants. Nursery lists were submitted for screening by Dr. Curt Daehler of the University of Hawaii Dept. of Botany, and results for screened plants can be found at <http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/faculty/daehler/wra/>. In focus groups, participants believed that all plants sold at nurseries or garden shops were non-invasive and pre-approved for sale by the government.

CGAPS will continue to work with the Landscape Industry Council of Hawaii, Kaulunani Urban Forestry Program, CTAHR, and the U.S. Forest Service on implementing the Weed Risk Assessment. If you or your business would like to participate in the “Don’t Plant a Pest” campaign, please contact CGAPS at (808) 722-0995 or by email at christym@rocketmail.com.

“The Year of the Invasive?” Perhaps we should make 2004 the year we turned the tide on invasive pests.

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