



PRESS RELEASE / MEDIA ALERT

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Saturday Clean-up Event to Protect the Reef from the Invasive Alien Limu “Gorilla Ogo”



A'ohē Limu`ē is holding an invasive algae clean-up from 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon on Saturday February 26, 2005 at Kaimana Beach Park (San Souci), next to the Natatorium in Waikiki. The invasive seaweed “gorilla ogo” forms dense mats over the reef, overgrowing and killing coral, and reducing habitat and food for a multitude of reef dwellers.

Volunteer snorkelers and scuba divers will remove the invasive seaweed “gorilla ogo” from the reef and transport them to shore in burlap bags floated on boogie boards and surfboards. Volunteers on shore will sort the invasive seaweed from any native seaweed and creatures, which will be returned to the reef. Specialists will be on-hand to help volunteers identify native and invasive species. The invasive seaweed will then be placed in a recycling container provided by Hawaii Earth Products, and will be carted away at the end of the day to be turned into free, mineral-rich compost.

“Volunteers are essential in protecting the reefs. Hawaii’s reefs and ocean resources are held in trust by us—by everyone today, for our children and their children tomorrow. We have to work together to protect these resources, or we all lose,” said Signe Opheim, event coordinator. “Although the deadline for signing up is Friday, we already have 90 volunteers signed up. Future events will also be held for those not able to join us this weekend.”

Gorilla ogo (*Gracilaria salicornia*) is native to the western Pacific and Indian Oceans, and it is related to Hawaii’s native ogo (*Gracilaria coronopifolia* and *G. bursapastoris*) that is commonly used in poke, although gorilla ogo forms dense mats and it is not prized as a food source. It was introduced in 1971 to several of Hawaii’s reefs for aquaculture purposes. However, use of this species was abandoned, and it was left to spread. Researchers have been able to measure the tremendous effect of this particular seaweed on Edmonson Reef, a Marine Life Conservation district next to the Natatorium. Between the years 1966 and 1973 researchers found that an
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average of 60 different species (fish, coral, crabs, snails, etc.) were present on the reef, and no single species was dominant (there was a balance of the 60 different species). In 2002 researchers found that the number of different species present on the reef had dropped to 20, and the reef was now dominated by two invasive alien seaweeds, one of which is gorilla ogo. Currently there is no technology or method to eradicate this seaweed—periodically removing the seaweed by hand is necessary for protecting reef diversity.

The event is being sponsored by the Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species and the Hawaii Tourism Authority, with the help of the University of Hawaii Department of Botany, Department of Land and Natural Resources-Division of Aquatic Resources, The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii, Hawaii Earth Products, and the Waikiki Aquarium.

Additional Information

An excellent short explanation about the severity of this issue can be found here
<http://sgnis.org/publicat/squasmith.htm>

Photos and a wealth of information
<http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/GradStud/smith/websites/ALIEN-HOME.htm>

Christy Martin is the Public Information Officer for the statewide Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS). CGAPS has recently expanded its focus from primarily terrestrial invasive species, and now includes aquatic invasive species issues.

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