



PRESS RELEASE / MEDIA ALERT

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Pages: 2

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Saturday Alien Algae Clean-up: Protect the Reef from “Gorilla Ogo”



Close to 100 volunteers have signed up to help rid the reef of the invasive algae “gorilla ogo” this Saturday, April 2nd. The clean-up is from 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon at the Waikiki Marine Life Conservation District, at the ewa end of the Natatorium.

Volunteers will include students and parents from Maemae Elementary School, Kamehameha Middle School and Kalani High School, students in the University of Hawaii’s Marine Option Program and the UH Scientific Diver class, along with concerned community members.

Gorilla ogo forms dense mats over the reef, overgrowing and killing other seaweeds and coral, and reducing habitat and food for a multitude of reef dwellers.

Event coordinator Signe Opheim notes that, “More than 85 tons of invasive seaweed has been removed by volunteers so far. Volunteers are making a difference in preserving Hawaii’s nearshore resources.”

Volunteer snorkelers and scuba divers will remove the 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.

(more)

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 eaten and used in dishes like 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 at the Waikiki Marine Life Conservation district. Between the years 1966 and 1973 researchers found that an 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 is 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, UH Marine Option Program, 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.

(END)

We will be holding our next alien algae cleanup event on

June 18, 2005

7:30 am -12:00 pm
at the

Waikiki MLCD (Natatorium)

...and this time the pesky jellyfish will be nowhere in sight!!

We need your help to continue to remove alien algae from our coral reefs! You have done a tremendous job thus far in removing over 85 tons of the alien limu *Gracilaria salicornia* from **Waikiki**. But it is important to keep up the effort! We hope you can come down on

Saturday, June 18

to help preserve our unique marine ecosystem, and make a difference in the quality of our ocean life.

If you plan on helping in the water, please be sure to bring your own snorkeling gear. Also, please wear 'reef walkers' or old tennis shoes for foot protection. And don't forget a hat and some sunscreen!

Please contact Signe Opheim to help out or for more details (779-2616, or opheim@hawaii.edu)
by **Wednesday, June 15th**

**You are the ones who are
making a difference in preserving
Hawaii's natural resources!**