



## PRESS RELEASE

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**Contact:** Christy Martin, Public Information Officer  
CGAPS—Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species  
Ph: (808) 722-0995  
Email: [christym@rocketmail.com](mailto:christym@rocketmail.com)

Julie Leialoha, Program Manager  
BIISC—Big Island Invasive Species Committee  
Ph: (808) 974-4140

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### **BIISC Clarifies Coqui Work Plan**

Recent media attention on coqui frogs has resulted in a flood of calls to the Big Island Invasive Species Committee (BIISC) hotline (961-3299).

“Everyone wants someone to come out and take care of the problem,” said Program Manager Julie Leialoha. “We had more than 50 calls yesterday, and we tell everyone the same thing: Communities need to band together and take care of the frogs themselves. There are just too many frogs for Hawaii Department of Agriculture or the Big Island Invasive Species Committee to handle.”

“BIISC tries to assist the public by providing technical information on how they can control frogs on their property. Hotline calls are very important to us, but there is no way we can control every population of coqui,” said Leialoha.

The Big Island has over 300 populations of frogs, many of which have thousands to tens of thousands of frogs infesting acres and acres of land.

With limited staff and funding, the Invasive Species Committee has had to prioritize their work in what can be considered an attempt at “ecological triage”. In short, BIISC will work on small coqui populations that can be eradicated, particularly ones that directly threaten high-value natural resource areas such as Natural Area Reserves, Forest Reserves, watershed forests and conservation lands such as Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

This leaves out most neighborhoods and housing areas. BIISC will help these communities by providing information on the Hawaii Department of Agriculture’s free

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sprayer-loan program. There are several 100-gallon spray rigs and one 300-gallon sprayer available to the public at no charge. Borrowers need to call BIISC to reserve a sprayer (961-3299). There are several locations island-wide that house sprayers. Borrowers are responsible for their own protective gear, picking up and returning the sprayer and for buying citric acid or hydrated lime.

BIISC will continue to take calls reporting new coqui locations, in an attempt to map the spread of this pest and to provide information on the sprayer loan program (961-3299).

Coqui frogs (*Eleutherodactylus coqui*), small frogs native to Puerto Rico, were introduced to the Big Island via Florida as a stowaway in a single shipment of nursery plants around or before 1998. They have since become widespread pests affecting the plant industry, property values, tourism, insect populations and the health and quality of life of residents.

For more information on the Big Island Invasive Species Committee, visit [www.hear.org/biisc](http://www.hear.org/biisc).

### **More Information on Coqui**

Coqui deposit 4-6 clutches of about 28 eggs each per year, with a development period of 17-26 days, a time between clutches of about eight weeks, and a time between generations (i.e., from egg to egg-laying adult) of about eight months. This means that one pair of frogs can multiply to over 10,000 frogs within a year if all survive.

Local densities (which are still increasing) are conservatively about twice that ever found in Puerto Rico (24,000 frogs/ha) or 55,125 frogs/ha in some Hawaii locations (Pitt/Beard in press).

Introduced species leave behind many of the diseases, predators and competitors that kept their numbers low in their home range. Although Hawaii and Puerto Rico share common predators for coqui, such as chickens, rats, mongoose and other generalist predators, we lack the native birds, reptiles and arthropods (such as whip scorpions) that prey on coqui in Puerto Rico.

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*Christy Martin is the Public Information Officer for the statewide Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS), and the island Invasive Species Committees.*

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