



PRESS RELEASE

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Invasive Species Awareness Campaign Kicks off Monday

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) will kick off the *Silent Invasion* media campaign with five television public service announcements (PSAs) designed to raise awareness about invasive species and what people can do to help protect Hawaii from invasive pests. The PSAs will air on all major network affiliates starting on Monday, January 23.

1. “Protect Hawaii—Report a Pest” #1, #2 (two PSAs)

Background: Public awareness studies show that the vast majority of people do not know what agency to call when they see a snake or other invasive pest, or that there is a pest hotline number. Additionally, the state’s pest hotline number was an Oahu number which made it a toll call for neighbor island residents. Therefore, a new, toll-free pest hotline system has been implemented and two PSAs will advertise the number and the importance of calling to report invasive pests.

The new Pest Hotline number, 643-PEST, can be dialed from any island in the state, without dialing a “1” or an area code. A computer program will route calls to Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) offices, which provide coverage 20 hours/day, seven days/week. The implementation of the new number means that neighbor island callers will NOT incur toll charges as they have in the past when calling the original pest hotline, 586-PEST. The original pest hotline will continue to be operational. The new pest hotline number will use HATS lines, which will cut down on toll charges incurred by HDOA (although the new hotline and toll charges will be paid for by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) with funds from the Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC) for a period of three years). In addition, the new system comes with monthly reports on number of calls, originating location of calls, and other data that will be used to keep a better handle on the number and types of invasive pest calls in the state. An existing HDOA database used to log interceptions of pests at airports and harbors has been modified to also log pest hotline reports.

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3. “Protect Hawaii—Don’t Plant a Pest.”

Background: More than half of the invasive plants that are threatening Hawaii’s forests and natural areas started off as ornamental plants in yards and gardens and landscaping. Some of the most popular ornamentals today (including Australian tree fern and strawberry guava) are spreading through the forest and replacing native plants and the animals that depend on them. Therefore, the message to the public is that they can help protect Hawaii by asking for native or non-invasive plants, and that their choices at their nursery or garden shop can make a difference in forests and natural areas.

4. “Protect Hawaii—Don’t Pack a Pest.”

Background: In Hawaii there is a tradition of bringing presents back from overseas to give to friends and family, and oftentimes it is an item like food or plants that may harbor invasive insects or plant diseases. This message will remind people that they could unknowingly carry unwanted pests into the state hidden in fruits, plants or even soil from overseas, and that they must declare these items and have them inspected. People are asked to help protect Hawaii by declaring all items listed on agriculture forms so that they can be inspected for unwanted pests, and that most items are returned to them after inspection.

5. “Protect Hawaii—The Silent Invasion of Hawaii’s Reefs”

Background: Invasive marine species are a relatively new concept. There is a rise in cases of invasive alien aquarium species found on Hawaii reefs, and it is believed that people may dump their marine aquariums, as has been the case with fresh water aquariums into Hawaii’s streams. Invasive seaweeds are also moved as fragments on dive and snorkeling gear from infested reefs (like Waikiki and Ala Moana) to more pristine areas such as Hanauma Bay and Shark’s Cove. This PSA combines both messages as two ways to help protect Hawaii’s reefs.

This campaign is generously supported through funds from the U.S. Department of Defense-Office of Insular Affairs, DLNR-Division of Forestry and Wildlife and Division of Aquatic Resources, HISC, Hawaii Tourism Authority-Natural Resources Program, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The CGAPS is a partnership formed in 1995 to bring agencies and organizations together to work on improving Hawaii’s invasive species prevention, early detection and rapid response programs, and to raise public awareness about invasive pests. CGAPS participants include HDOA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, DLNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii, the Bishop Museum, and others.

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