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STATE OF HAWAII
BEFORE THE
HOUSE RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION,
WILDLIFE AND OCEANS

HONOLULU, HAWAII
APRIL 15, 2004

Aloha and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Michael G. Buck, and I am currently the Administrator for the Hawaii Division of Forestry & Wildlife, Department of Land and Natural Resources. I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Abercrombie, for your leadership and recognition of the importance of invasive species prevention and control programs in Hawaii and our nation.

I have had the honor of overseeing the health of the bulk of America's tropical forests and the animals that live there for the State of Hawaii over the past 12 years. Literally, we have been on the front lines of many invasive species battles. Hawaii is in the midst of a growing invasive species crisis affecting the islands' endangered plants and animals, overall environmental and human health, and the viability of its tourism (marine/land) and agriculture-based economy. Invasive pests already cost the State millions of dollars of crop losses, the extinction of native species, the destruction of native forests and the spread of disease.

In 1999, I was also honored to be an initial member of the Federal Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC), as authorized by President Clinton's Executive Order 13112. The ISAC, was established to advise the Invasive Species Council on a broad array of issues related to preventing the introduction of invasive species and providing for their control and minimizing the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause. The Invasive Species Council includes the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. It is attempting to coordinate the hundreds of prevention, research and management programs in which all the federal agencies are involved. The major work of Council during the Clinton administration was the completion of a national management plan. The Bush Administration has continued the Executive Order and I was reappointed to serve, until my second term expired last month.

My work experiences have provided the opportunities to plan and implement invasive species programs at both the Federal and State level. Many lessons have been learned, most of them the hard way. I believe that we need to develop a nation-wide invasive species program, that is non-regulatory and incentive driven whenever possible, one that supports and builds capacity at the State level, and encourages voluntary cooperation of affected private entities when ever possible.

I would like to focus my testimony on the critical roles that States should play in invasive species programs. If I may be so bold, I will also share specific recommendations, that we have been developed by the National Invasive Species Advisory Committee, how the Federal government can work more effectively with the states.

Let me state some educated assumptions that I am operating under:

- With an increasing global economy accompanied by increasing free trade politics and pressures, we are just witnessing the tip of the iceberg in regard to invasive species. Many are already here, but just haven't begun to spread.
- The economic impacts of invasive species will drive increased emphasis on invasive species programs. Strategically, it will be the major environmental issues that will cross over with the public health and economic sectors. The public will demand increased government action and intervention.
- Few states have organized to deal with invasive species. There is a large gap between scattered local and regional entities, who have already self organized to deal with specific problems and the federal government, which to its credit, is trying to provide some leadership.
- While agency coordination and regulatory reviews are needed at the federal level, a one size fits all strategy will not work to address the complexity and wide ranging agency and community needs to combat invasive species at the local level.
- The invasive species are being primarily carried by environmental concerns within Federal agencies, not as such by the agricultural, public health, and economic sectors which are just starting to get more involved.
- There is a need for coordinated state and regional response, as a federal lead role for certain aspects (e.g. early detection and rapid response) is problematic, especially in regard to current on the ground information and access to private lands.
- Effective control will probably most effective and efficient with a regional approach that might span multiple states (e.g. zebra mussel Great Lakes coalition, Pacific Islands) or a large region within a state (e.g. Everglades -Florida)

Role of the States is Critical

- There are inconsistencies and gaps in current federal laws and policies which may fail to account for unique threats to and priorities of particular state or regions
- State policies and program can act as a safety net to address significant invasive species problems not currently covered by federal law and may also regulate invasive species more comprehensively and implement policies more effectively than possible under parallel federal laws and programs.

- States already control the entry and release of many invasive species within their borders, particularly fish and wildlife species.
- States are in a better position to identify and address problems because of local knowledge and on the ground familiarity.
- State and local action is essential to ensuring early identification and rapid response to incipient infestations.
- States can provide models that can assist those seeking to adopt new legal tools, revise existing ones, or more effectively enforce and implement those on the books.
- State experiences and legal approaches provide useful information and a basis for action that can inform and catalyze future state, as well as federal reforms

Partnerships are the Key to Meet Hawaii's Invasive Species Challenge

I believe that Hawaii is the best state model for developing strategies for federal agencies, not only to work together more effectively, but also to work in partnership with state and local government entities. Increasing success in invasive species projects in Hawaii has come largely from the formation of strong partnerships between State, County and Federal agencies and private groups. Just as many landowners and businesses are affected by the same invasive species concerns, many agencies are responsible for the pathways that bring potentially invasive species into Hawaii, regulate their movement and control their spread.

Partnerships to address invasive species issues have been responsible for the greatest improvements in Hawaii's ability to respond to recognized priority pests. In Hawaii, combining limited resources, authority, and expertise has led to the creation of Invasive Species Committees that carry out on the ground actions, the Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species that has allowed agency staff to develop integrated policies within the state and most recently the Hawaii Invasive Species Council composed of State agency heads.

Implementation of current management plans developed by coordinated efforts of relevant public agencies and affected local constituents in Hawaii can help build the framework to begin or enhance larger-scale regional strategies to combat wide-ranging invasive species. Federal investments to support local, State, and regional partners who are prepared to take action now against known priority invasive species will provide valuable lessons for other regions and promote innovation and efficiency in protection and public outreach strategies. By promoting their progress, these partnerships will in turn help identify the policy and legal obstacles to success as well as build a constituency for more effective invasive-species prevention and control programs in other areas.

Recommended Guidelines and Strategies for Successful State Federal/State Partnerships to Combat Invasive Species

At its March 4-5, 2003 meeting, the National Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC) formally recommended the attached guidelines and strategies for Federal/State Partnerships to Combat Invasive Species to the National Invasive Species Council.

The National Invasive Species Management Plan calls for the creation of rapid-response teams in cooperation with State, local and tribal entities (Action Item #25) and for legislation to authorize matching Federal funds to build state capacities for addressing invasive species (Action Item #34). These guidelines and potential strategies to implement those guidelines can assist in developing and/or commenting on Federal/State partnership proposals. These proposed strategies are specific examples of how the guidelines might be implemented and are not meant to exclude other useful and existing mechanisms.

Guideline #1 - Federal/State partnerships should be non-regulatory and incentive driven in nature, whenever possible; they should encourage voluntary cooperation of affected private entities.

Potential Strategies:

- Establish a competitive cost-share grant program to provide financial assistance to stakeholders who are prepared to undertake invasive-species control projects through partnership agreements.
- Award financial assistance by a competitive grants process administered by the appropriate State/County agency or a local community foundation.
- Make legislatively-established interstate compacts of states eligible to receive funds to provide for regional approaches for planning and implementation of actions for their member states.

Guideline #2 - Federal/State partnerships should be flexible enough to address the complexity and wide-ranging agency and community needs to combat invasive species at the local level.

Potential Strategies:

- Allow Governor of each State to determine appropriate agencies and entities to deliver program.
- Require that legislation establish a specific authority for funding and that funding be provided to legislatively-established interstate compacts of states to provide for planning and implementation of actions for their member states.

Guideline #3 - Federal/State partnerships should support the development of State-level (regional where appropriate) invasive-species management plans to: 1) build the framework to begin larger-scale regional strategies to combat wide-ranging invasive species; and 2) identify policy and legal obstacles to success.

Potential Strategies:

- Provide matching funds (if needed) to support the development of comprehensive State and regional invasive-species prevention and control plan(s), certified by the Governor(s), that:
 - (1) include existing baseline data on the status of invasive species within the State or region;
 - (2) outline threats, management actions, and structures needed to address those threats for invasive species response and control efforts within the State or region;
 - (3) identify priority areas and invasive species for control efforts within the State or region ; and
 - (4) identify problems and opportunities associated with existing Federal, State, and local regulatory laws in regard to invasive-species control within the State or region.

Guideline #4 - Federal/State partnerships should rapidly respond to priority invasive species that could spread to other regions and states.

Potential Strategy:

- Provide focused funding to support local, State, and regional partnerships that are prepared to rapidly respond against known priority invasive species.

Guideline #5 - Federal/State partnerships should share successful invasive-species prevention and control techniques among States and regions.

Potential Strategy:

- Establish web-based reporting capacity that supports an information clearinghouse and focal point to consolidate invasive-species prevention and control efforts in the nation.

Guideline #6 - Federal/State partnerships should increase public support and understanding of invasive species prevention and control issues.

Potential Strategy:

- Provide funding for region-wide public education materials for priority invasive species.

I would hope that any pending Federal legislation or current Federal actions that the Subcommittee has oversight dealing with are supportive of these recommend guideline or could be changed to be more supportive as needed. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.