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Testimony of the

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Before the
Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans
Committee on Resources
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Wayne Gilchrest,
Chairman-Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans

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H.R. 3479
The Brown Tree Snake Control and Eradication Act

Testimony presented to the Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans Subcommittee, House Committee on Resources

By

Felix P. Camacho
Governor of Guam

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify on House Resolution 3479 The Brown Tree Snake Control and Eradication Act. My name is Felix Perez Camacho, Governor of Guam.

I would like to express my appreciation to you for giving me this opportunity to address the need for this legislation that is an important issue for Guam and the other areas of the United States where the brown tree snake (BTS) has been an economic and human health hazard.

As Governor of Guam, I fully support bill H.R. 3479. The BTS battle on Guam has exceeded all expectations over the years and at this point future efforts need to be constant and continuous if we intend to win this war. This bill establishes critical mandates for key federal agencies and identifies funding to fulfill those mandates. This will solve many of the staffing and program continuity issues that have hampered this program over the years. Additionally, I offer the following suggestions in working out some of the finer details of this proposal:

A number of my suggestions try to place the Government of Guam in the middle of this issue and this is largely to ensure that the knowledge, science, and management are coordinated locally. We have great federal partners and look forward to continuing these relations. However, this issue has grown to include a large number of partners and personnel and it has been a challenge making sure we on Guam have the most current and up to date information on this issue.

I have attached an itemized list of my comments to coincide with the respective sections of H.R. 3479 and I will highlight some of these concerns in my oral testimony.

Among Guam's greatest concerns is this proposal's lack of an appropriation section. The intent of this effort is to increase our efforts and I fear the partner agencies will be faced with the necessity of diverting existing funds to fulfill these new mandates. This will certainly jeopardize other programs and potentially take funds away from other critical import work. This effort needs to provide new funds to expand efforts if it is to help us make progress in the fight against the brown tree snake.

While I support the broad inclusion of the many agencies that play a role in this important issue, I am worried that Guam's role in the Brown Tree Snake Eradication Committee has been diminished to one vote in a committee with a minimum of 16 members. The BTS issue is a Guam problem first and foremost; while the snake indeed poses great risk to other neighboring areas, I feel Guam's situation needs to be prioritized. I might suggest a policy committee outside the operations committee that would consist of a single representation from each state (including Territorial and Commonwealth) and the federal Government.

I also have great concern in the imposing of a federal requirement for BTS pre-departure quarantine protocols for persons and cargo leaving Guam. I do not think that it is wise to mandate this type of action. I will be happy to commit to developing an MOU or an MOA to develop non-intrusive protocols for screening outgoing cargo, providing funding to support such efforts are provided. I also feel this is an unfair burden on Guam unless similar considerations are going to be made for all the other invasive risks coming out of other parts of the United States. This is a particularly sensitive issue for Guam, as we are now dealing with additional invasive species that have arrived on our island within the last several months.

Additionally, it is unclear where the funding to support the burden of the pre-departure quarantine protocols would be derived. Guam has a tourism-based economy and image is critical to the future of this industry. This proposal could represent a serious image risk to Guam, at a time when our most important industry is still recovering from several years of natural disasters and geopolitical events beyond the island's control.

In the early days of BTS work, Guam's environment was unfairly written off and the vast majority of the effort was put into interdiction. Recently, more effort has been directed at species and habitat recovery. In reviewing the allowable work areas, again the predominate focus is on research and there needs to be some assurance that the effort to recover Guam's natural resources is at the forefront of this effort in prioritizing projects and allocation of funds.

I wish to thank the members of Congress for taking this issue seriously and putting this bill together. This bill will accomplish the long-term support that is needed to deal with this complex and far-reaching problem. I wish to express my special thanks to Delegate Bordallo from Guam and the efforts she has made to get H.R. 3479 to this point. I appreciate this opportunity to testify and look forward to working together to make this important proposal a reality.

Guam's recommendations for HR 3479

- 1) Section 4 (e). We suggest this section include the University of Guam and other cooperating research units.
- 2) Section 5, (b), (3). The term "science-based" needs to be deleted because educational or other beneficial options may be eliminated.
- 3) Section 5, (b) (5): The identification of the Fort Collins Service Center to earmark funds is not consistent with the allocation format to other sources. Fort Collins Service Center is certainly recognized for its importance in doing BTS research but the earmark of funds should either specifically identify the intended end point for all allocation or identify the general recipient agency.
- 4) Section 5, (b) (6): The expansion of long-term research should not be limited to chemical and biological control techniques, but should be kept opened to include "other" techniques. In addition, in this section the word "sites" should be changed to "locations" or "areas," giving the section broad geographical scale.
- 5) Section 6 (b): The issue of a federally mandated pre-departure quarantine needs to be revisited. This is a harsh protocol for Guam given all the other invasive issues coming from other places. Guam is more than willing to cooperatively develop protocols if federal funds to run such programs are provided. I would like to see an appropriation of funds and commitment through an MOU or MOA instead of establishing a mandate with new liabilities.
- 6) Section 7 (b) (1): I am worried that Guam's role in this has been diminished to a vote of one among a minimum of 16 members. This is a Guam problem first and poses great risk to other neighbor areas, but I feel Guam's situation needs to be prioritized. I might suggest a policy committee outside the operations committee that includes a single representative from each state (including Territorial and Commonwealth) and the federal Government.

7) Section 7 (a-c): Though this section mentions a chairman, there is no mention of how the chairman is chosen. Is the chairman to be chosen by majority vote or will the President select the chairman? This section also does not specify the mechanism to disperse funds, or how project prioritization will be accomplished.

8) Section 7 (b) (5): I fully support the idea of representation attending an annual meeting and this requires some appropriation of funds to cover travel and per diem costs.

9) Section 7 (b) (5): The bill does not address the level of expertise the representatives to the committee should have. The intended type of representative should be described (researcher, manager, or administrator).

10) In general: As some states assess a percentage cost to federally allocated grants for "Indirect Costs", this bill does not address the allowable charge associated to indirect costs. I recommended the indirect cost be minimized at 3% for personnel costs to allow maximum program benefit.