

House of Representatives
Twenty-Fourth Legislature
Regular Session of 2008

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Hearing
Friday, February 8, 2008
9:15 a.m.

Testimony by: Ralph C. Boyea, Legislative Advocate, Hawai'i County Council

Testimony in favor of HB 2977 RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

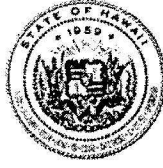
Chairpersons Tsuji, Herkes and Souki
Vice Chairs Brower, McKelvey and Nishimoto
Honored Representatives,

On behalf of the Hawai'i County Council, I ask that you to pass House Bill 2977. House Bill 2977 requires the invasive species council to give priority to eradicating coqui frogs that are on state or county land and within 1 mile of residential areas.

The Hawai'i County Council is very supportive of any efforts by the State Legislature to control invasive species. Coqui frogs have had a significant impact on the quality of life for Hawai'i County residents. Any efforts that the State can make to mitigate and control the coqui frogs will be appreciated.

We urge you to pass HB2977.

LINDA LINGLE
Governor



SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DUANE K. OKAMOTO
Deputy to the Chairperson

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**TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
FEBRUARY 8, 2008
9:15 A.M.**

**HOUSE BILL 2977
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES**

Chairperson Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 2977. The purpose of this bill is to amend chapter 194-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes to include a provision that the Hawaii Invasive Species Council shall amend their plan and give priority to eradicating coqui frogs on state and county lands within one mile of residential areas. The department offers comments.

The Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC), a partnership of federal, state, county, and private, provides the institutional framework for leadership and coordination to develop and implement a comprehensive state-wide invasive species program.

An effective program is one that has sufficient programmatic capability to prevent new invasive species from entering into the State, control those pests already here at a level that reduces the risks, and mitigates the hazards at a level acceptable to the people of Hawaii.

The purpose for which HISC was established is unquestioned. From this and other legislation, it is apparent that there are concerns with the process in regards to decision-making and implementation of invasive species programs.

It is also clear that the coqui frog, especially the populations on the island of Hawaii, has not been mitigated to a level acceptable to the community. Community action groups that are trying to control the frog within their neighborhoods view the infested state and county lands as a reservoir for re-infestations.

The department recommends that the coqui frog issue should be prioritized, but in the context of the whole decision-making and implementation process of HISC needing to be reviewed, and if necessary, reformed to make HISC a more effective program that has sufficient programmatic capability to adequately address invasive species issues.

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



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TESTIMONY OF THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

on House Bill 2977 – RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE

February 8, 2008

House Bill 2977 directs the Hawaii Invasive Species Council (Council) give priority to eradicating coqui frogs that are on state or county land and within one mile of residential areas. The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) recognizes the problems that uncontrolled coqui frog populations have on residential communities and supports the intent of this bill to provide relief for these problems, and is willing to work with partners, counties, federal agencies and the Legislature to find the best solutions to those problems.

In July 18, 2006, the Hawaii Invasive Species Council developed a statewide plan, “**Hawaii’s Coqui Frog Management, Research, and Education Plan**”, for the control of coqui frogs. The Department is happy to update that plan as new information, technology and resources are available and to address new populations and problems that occur.

Unfortunately, there are populations of coqui frogs on all of the main Hawaiian Islands. Coqui are found in only three sites on Oahu and only one site on Kauai and the prospects to eradicate them island wide with current resources are promising. Maui has 14 known coqui populations and by the end of 2007, four were considered completely controlled. Of the ten remaining populations currently being controlled, only Maliko Gulch presents significant challenges for the ultimate success of the island wide eradication effort. Maliko Gulch requires additional resources for containment over the short term and eradication over the mid-term. This priority site on Maui encompasses private and state lands and extends into a remote uninhabited gully with some residences near by. The populations of coqui on the Island of Hawaii are estimated to cover over 24,000 acres. With current control methods, the estimated cost to treat frogs per acre is \$1,500 - \$2,100 per acre and requires multiple treatments. The cost to control the total infested acreage using current methods would be a minimum of \$36,000,000. Current control tools would not be capable of treating the entire infested area before reinfestation could occur.

The Department was provided \$800,000 for coqui frog control efforts in FY08 - \$500,000 for Hawaii, \$200,000 for Maui and \$100,000 for Oahu. On Hawaii island, \$233,000 of the \$500,000 allocated by the legislature was provided to the United States Department of Agriculture, Fish and Wildlife Services control team and loan sprayer program that focus on controlling coqui in

residential areas. The remaining \$267,000 supports the Coqui Coordinator, control technicians and data specialist who works with the Hawaii County Coqui Frog Working Group to track control efforts in direct support of county efforts to contain the spread of coqui and support affected communities.

Focusing on eradicating coqui frogs that are on state or county land within one mile of residential areas may not be the best approach for all islands, most effective measure to prevent introduction or removal of new infestations into new areas, or slow the spread of coqui into ecologically sensitive areas. Priorities as determined by the Coqui Statewide Plan include stopping the spread by targeting sites that pose a high risk of increasing the spread of coqui to new areas such as refuse transfer stations, and new populations that are isolated from existing populations that threaten to significantly increase the current distribution of coqui. In many cases these priority sites are more than one mile from residential areas.

The Department is happy to work with the county Coqui Frog Working Groups, Invasive Species Committees, Department of Agriculture, County agencies, University of Hawaii, federal partners and communities to update and implement statewide plans.



Legislative Testimony
HB 2977, RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

House Committee on Agriculture

February 8, 2008

9:15 a.m.

Room: 325

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **OPPOSES** HB 2977, which seeks to amend Section 194-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes to give priority to eradicating coqui frogs on state or county lands within a one mile radius of residential areas.

This state is under attack. More than 8,000 plant species have been introduced into gardens and other areas of Hawai'i. Over half of Hawai'i's current flora of flowering plants are non-native, and almost ten percent of these represent a serious threat to our native ecosystems. Numerous invasive marine species threaten our reefs and marine biological assets, while uncounted numbers of invasive species threaten our forests and streams. These species are not high profile or even annoying for residents and visitors; however, the threats that they present for us all are very troubling and real. The sheer number of invasive species coupled with our resource based economy results in what the legislature called in 2003, "the single greatest threat to Hawai'i's economy and natural environment and to the health and lifestyle of Hawai'i's people."

In the face of the scale of this threat, to focus legislation on one of these species is questionable. To focus on a species for aesthetics is poor judgment. To focus on an annoying species on state or county lands only within one mile of residential areas, as this bill proposes, is nonsense.

Hawai'i's 2007 Coqui Frog Management, Research, and Education Plan reports that in 2006 alone, the legislature allocated more than \$1.8 million for the control of coqui frogs and that "Multi-agency efforts since 2000 have reduced the populations of Kauai and Oahu and eradication is feasible with current tools and resources."

OHA understands and is sympathetic to the issues that the coqui frog raises for the people of this state; however, we are reluctant to make the legislative leap that this bill proposes.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committees to HOLD HB 2977. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
Regarding H.B. 2977 Relating to Invasive Species
House Committee on Agriculture
Friday, February 8, 2008, 9:15AM, Room 325

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is a private non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of Hawaii's native plants, animals, and ecosystems. The Conservancy has helped to protect nearly 200,000 acres of natural lands for rare and endangered native species in Hawai'i. Today, we actively manage more than 32,000 acres in 11 nature preserves on O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Kaua'i and also work closely with government agencies and private landowners on cooperative land management projects.

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i submits the following comments regarding H.B. 2977 Relating to Invasive Species.

We appreciate the crisis situation that exists with respect to coqui frog invasions, particularly on Hawai'i island and other locations in the State, and we support a strong and coordinated response to address these invasions.

However, we hope that the necessary response to coqui will not prevent the State and its partners from also devoting appropriate attention to other pests that have become established in Hawai'i or worse pests that could come here. The task of the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (HISC) is to provide a comprehensive, statewide approach to invasive species including prevention, early detection, control, research and education programs. This effort necessarily results in prioritization based on a variety of issues including human health, safety and well-being, economic harm, and the threat to the health and function of the environment.

We are concerned that placing a statutory priority on one pest over any other may have some unintended consequences. For example, the HISC might have to prioritize coqui frog control over response to an introduction of an arguably much worse pest like red imported fire ants, or a mosquito-borne disease. We are also concerned about unintended financial impacts. In Fiscal Year 2007, the Legislature's provision of additional funding for coqui control was really a shifting of existing funds from other invasive species programs, which then caused layoffs in the Island Invasive Species Committees and a hiatus in the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council's research grant program.

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