

HB 2977 HD1

LINDA LINGLE
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TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2008
1:15 P.M.
ROOM 229

HOUSE BILL 2977, H.D. 1
RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

Chairpersons Menor and Inouye and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 2977, H.D. 1. 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.

It is 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.

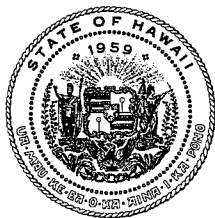
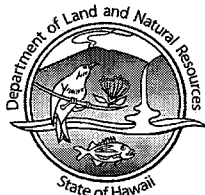
The Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC), a partnership of federal, state, county, and private, provides the institutional framework for leadership and coordination to develop and implement a comprehensive state-wide invasive species program.

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.

An effective program is also one that maintains an objective perspective and sets and follows established priorities and strategies. In this regard, coqui frogs on state or county lands within one mile of residential areas may not pose the highest risk of establishment or proliferation.

It is important that we work closely with our community partners in addressing this and other invasive pests so that they have a clear understanding of the reason for and implementation of the coqui statewide plan. Coordinated efforts and support are needed to make headway in this battle.

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, House Draft 1 – RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

March 24, 2008

House Bill 2977, House Draft 1 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 communities and has worked 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 was presented with a statewide plan, **“Hawaii’s Coqui Frog Management, Research, and Education Plan”**, for the control of coqui frogs prepared by the Department. The Department updates the plan as new information, technology and resources are available and to address new populations and problems that occur. As no funding has been dedicated to coqui frog control in the coming year, actions recommended by the plan will be limited and largely dependent on county and community efforts with assistance from the Big Island Invasive Species Committee.

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. Key control sites that will determine whether or not this growing population can be eradicated are more than one mile from residents. 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 best strategy for containment of the current population is to address new populations before they grow to negatively impact additional communities such as Volcanoes. Targeting new outbreaks before large new populations establish, regardless of their proximity to residential areas, is key to the long term containment of coqui on the Island of Hawaii.

The Department was provided \$800,000 for coqui frog control efforts for the first year of the biennium only - \$500,000 for Hawaii, \$200,000 for Maui and \$100,000 for Kauai. 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 work 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. There are no additional funds specifically dedicated for coqui control in the next fiscal year budget. Control work will rely on limited available budgets of partners in the working group.

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, but the scope of activities will depend on receipt of adequate funding to implement them.



Legislative Testimony
HB 2977, HD 1, RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES
Senate Committees on Energy and Environment;
and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs

March 24, 2008

1:15 p.m.

Room: 229

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** H.B. 2977, H.D. 1, which seeks to amend Section 194-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes to require the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (Council), in its Coqui Frog Eradication Plan, to give priority to eradicating coqui frogs on state or county lands within a one mile radius of residential areas.

OHA appreciates the thoughtful amendment to this bill and now supports this proposed legislation, which is much more focused and balanced.

As we wrote in our previous testimony, our 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."

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."

While it would have been irresponsible to focus all of the State's alien species resources on one species, this amended bill's proposal for the Council to focus its Coqui Frog Eradication Plan on regions that will provide the most immediate, beneficial impact on our citizens is responsible and pragmatic legislation.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committees to PASS H.B. 2977, H.D.
1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
Regarding H.B. 2977 HD 1 Relating to Invasive Species
Senate Committee on Energy & Environment
Senate Committee on Intergovernmental & Military Affairs
Monday, March 24, 2008, 1:15PM, Room 229

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is a private non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of Hawai'i'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 and marine management projects.

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i submits the following comments regarding H.B. 2977 HD 1 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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Conservation Council for Hawai'i

Testimony Submitted to the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
and Senate Committee on Intergovernmental and Military Affairs

Hearing: Monday, March 24, 2008
1:15 pm
Room 229

Opposition to HB 2977 HD 1 Relating to Invasive Species

Aloha. The Conservation Council for Hawai'i opposes HB 2977 HD1, which requires the Hawaii invasive species council, in the coqui frog eradication plan, to give priority to eradicating coqui frogs that are on state or county land and within one mile of residential areas.

We do not think it is appropriate to mandate priorities with regard to controlling coqui frogs. Identifying priorities and specific strategies for controlling coqui frogs should be left to the invasive species council and to the invasive species committees, who have the expertise and are involved in island-wide efforts.

It is also unfortunate that the legislature has waited so long to control these frogs. Warnings to eradicate coqui frogs were issues many years ago with no response by the legislature or government. Now that constituents are complaining about the frogs, legislators are finally responding. But it is probably too late to eradicate the frogs from Hawai'i Island, and the best we can do is try and eradicate them from the other islands when we still have a chance to and to control them on the Big Island as best we can.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Marjorie Ziegler
Marjorie Ziegler



Working Today for the Nature of Tomorrow!

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