

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

POST OFFICE BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
WILLIAM J. AILA, JR.
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
WATER & LAND

Monday March 31, 2014
11AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

In consideration of
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 47
REQUESTING THE HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND UNITED
STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO TAKE ADMINISTRATIVE
ACTIONS TO PROTECT ŌHIA AND OTHER *MYRTACEAE* FAMILY PLANTS FROM
THE DESTRUCTIVE RUST FUNGUS, *PUCCINIA PSIDII*.

House Concurrent Resolution 47 describes the threat posed by the nonnative fungus *Puccinia psidii* to native 'ōhi'a and the ecosystems it supports. This measure requests the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture adopt administrative rules restricting the import of plants in the Myrtaceae family to minimize the risk of introduction of the associated *P. psidii* fungus. The measure also requests that the United States Department of Agriculture acts upon an existing request from the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to classify imports of Myrtaceae species as Not Authorized Pending Pest Risk Analysis. **The Department strongly supports this measure.**

Native 'ōhi'a is a dominant tree species in our mauka forests and is critical to supporting our watershed structure and function. The Department's *Rain Follows the Forest* initiative recognizes the importance of these ecosystems to sustaining Hawai'i's biodiversity and our source of fresh water. The Department also administers the interagency Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (HISC), which in 2011 adopted HISC Resolution 11-4, "Regarding 'Ōhi'a Rust", which supports the establishment of administrative rules restricting imports of plants in the myrtle family to minimize the risk of introduction of *P. psidii*.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments.

WILLIAM J. AILA, JR.
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

JESSEK. SOUKI
FIRST DEPUTY

WILLIAM M. TAM
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS



HCR47/HR28

REQUESTING THE HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO TAKE ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS TO PROTECT OHIA AND OTHER MYRTACEAE FAMILY PLANTS FROM THE DESTRUCTIVE RUST FUNGUS, PUCCINIA PSIDII.
House Committee on Water & Land

March 31, 2014

11:00 a.m.

Room 325

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HCR47/HR28, which would urge proactive administrative measures to protect Hawai'i's iconic and culturally, ecologically and environmentally significant 'ōhi'a from potentially catastrophic pest introductions.

Found nowhere else in the world, 'ōhi'a or *Metrosideros polymorpha* is a key component of Hawai'i's culture, ecology and environment. Native Hawaiians recognize 'ōhi'a as the first sign of life to emerge after a lava flow, and have developed a range of medicinal, spiritual, practical and other uses for all parts of the plant. Many aspects of our islands' ecosystems also depend upon the unique characteristics of 'ōhi'a, and a number of endemic and often endangered species have evolved to form close relationships with what is still one of the most common trees in Hawai'i. Moreover, the restoration of our once abundant 'ōhi'a forests is now recognized as critical to watershed protection and aquifer recharge, a growing concern given the anticipated impacts of an increasing population base, decreasing rainfall trends and climate change.

As noted in this resolution, the recent introduction and extraordinarily rapid distribution of a relatively benign strain of the rust fungus *Puccinia* demonstrated the vulnerability of 'ōhi'a and related plants to potentially catastrophic destruction, should a more malignant strain be introduced. Given the high potential for such an introduction, and the apparent futility of reactive, post-introduction control measures, timely and proactive rulemaking as urged by these resolutions may be a necessary investment to protect one of our most iconic and significant plant species.

Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** HCR47/HR28. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Governor



SCOTT E. ENRIGHT
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

KEN H. KAKESAKO
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF SCOTT E. ENRIGHT
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND
MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2014
11:00 A.M.
Conference Room 325**

**HCR NO. 47 REQUESTING THE HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO TAKE ADMINISTRATIVE
ACTIONS TO PROTECT OHIA AND OTHER MYRTACEAE FAMILY PLANTS FROM
THE DESTRUCTIVE RUST FUNGUS, PUCCINIA PSIDII**

Chairperson Evans and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Concurrent Resolution No. 47. This resolution requests the Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) to adopt permanent rules restricting importation of plants in the Myrtaceae family. The Department supports the intent of this resolution.

HDOA is already in the process of creating new permanent importation rules for plants in the Myrtaceae family, and HDOA is dedicated to adopting these rules in a timely manner, following all procedures in our administrative rules and the Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

March 31, 2014

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

TESTIMONY ON HCR47

REQUESTING THE HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO TAKE ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS TO PROTECT OHIA
AND OTHER MYRTACEAE FAMILY PLANTS FROM THE DESTRUCTIVE RUST FUNGUS,
PUCCINIA PSIDII

Room 312
11:00 AM

Aloha Chair Evans, Vice Chair Lowen, and Members of the Committee:

I am Christopher Manfredi, President of the Hawaii Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,832 farm family members statewide, and serves as Hawaii's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic and educational interest of our diverse agricultural community.

HFB stands in strong support of HCR 47 requesting the HDOA to expeditiously adopt a permanent rule restricting the importation of plants in the Myrtaceae family.

The Ohia plant is recognized as a cultural and ecologically important plant species in Hawaii. It is under significant threat by *Puccinia psidii* and its devastation can be seen in ghostly stands of rose apple on the road to Hana. The Ohia is an important plant in our watersheds. Devastation to these stands will strain our already taxed water systems.

Local production of agricultural crops whose imports could lead to significant harm to the environment fulfills consumer demand while protecting the environment.

HFB respectfully requests your **strong support** of this measure as part of a broader effort to control this and other devastating invasive species.

Moreover, we suggest that the Legislature use this as an example of the need for a comprehensive plan when making decisions on bills regarding invasive species. Thank you.

lowen2-Karen

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Saturday, March 29, 2014 6:31 PM
To: waltestimony
Cc: warrenmcfb@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HCR47 on Mar 31, 2014 11:00AM*

HCR47

Submitted on: 3/29/2014

Testimony for WAL on Mar 31, 2014 11:00AM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Warren Watanabe	Maui County Farm Bureau	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
Supporting HCR 47 Requesting the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture and
The U.S. Department of Agriculture to Take Administrative Actions to Protect
'Ōhi'a and Other Myrtaceae Family Plants from the Destructive Rust Fungus *Puccinia Psidii*
House Committee on Water and Land
Monday, March 31, 2014, 11:00AM, Room 325

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is a private non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which life in these islands depends. The Conservancy has helped to protect nearly 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i. Today, we actively manage more than 35,000 acres in 11 nature preserves on Maui, Hawai'i, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Kaua'i. We also work closely with government agencies, private parties and communities on cooperative land and marine management projects.

The Nature Conservancy supports HCR 47.

We are grateful for and supportive of the administrative rules currently being drafted by the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture to restrict *Myrtaceae* family plant imports to Hawai'i to prevent introduction of additional strains of *Puccinia psidii*, or 'ōhi'a rust. We also urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture to favorably review and approve the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resource's petition seeking federal restrictions on foreign imports of *Myrtaceae* family plants to Hawai'i.

One strain of *Puccinia psidii* was discovered attacking horticultural plants and *Myrtaceae* native plants on O'ahu in 2005. Within a few months, it had spread to all the main Hawaiian Islands. This rust attacks a wide range of plants. Of greatest concern in Hawai'i is the native 'ōhi'a tree, which makes up 75% of the native forests on the islands. Loss of the 'ōhi'a would destroy habitat for the islands' beleaguered native wildlife and expose steep-sided watersheds to severe erosion. The strain of the rust now in Hawai'i does not cause significant damage to 'ōhi'a, but experts fear introduction of other, more virulent strains.

Invasive weeds, insects, diseases, and other pests are one of the greatest threats to Hawaii's economy, agriculture, natural environment, and the health and lifestyle of its people. With favorable conditions and limited competition, non-native species arrive in the Hawaiian islands to find an easy environment in which to thrive. Evidence from Hawai'i and around the world shows that preventing new pest establishment is exponentially more economical than eradicating a pest or, even worse, controlling it indefinitely once it becomes established.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Alan H. Arizumi Christopher J. Benjamin Anne S. Carter Richard A. Cooke III Peter H. Ehrman Kenton T. Eldridge
Thomas M. Gottlieb James J.C. Haynes III Mark L. Johnson Dr. Kenneth Y. Kaneshiro Eiichiro Kuwana
Duncan MacNaughton Wayne K. Minami A. Catherine Ngo James C. Polk H. Monty Richards Chet A. Richardson
Jean E. Rolles Scott C. Rolles Crystal K. Rose Dustin E. Sellers Dustin M. Shindo Nathan E. Smith James Wei Eric K. Yeaman

Chair: Kenton T. Eldridge *Chair Emeriti:* Samuel A. Cooke (co-founder; chair 1980-1991), Herbert C. Cornuelle (co-founder), Bill D. Mills (1991-1995), Jeffrey N. Watanabe (1995-2004), David C. Cole (2004-2008), Duncan MacNaughton (2008-2011)



COORDINATING GROUP ON
ALIEN PEST SPECIES

The House of Representatives
Committee on Water & Land
March 31, 2014
1:00 a.m., Conference Room 325
State Capitol

Testimony in Support of HCR 47

Aloha Chair Evans, Vice Chair Lowen, and Members of the Committee,

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) supports HCR 47, which urges the federal and state departments of agriculture to adopt rules to protect 'ōhi'a, and myrtle family plants, from introductions of *Puccinia psidii*, a rust fungus native to South and Central America.

In 2005, a new rust fungus was discovered spreading on plants in the myrtle family, including rose apple and 'ōhi'a. Surveys found that the rust fungus, *Puccinia psidii*, had already spread to each of the main islands. We watched for several tense months as the rust proved extremely virulent on a rose apple, infesting new growth and eventually defoliating and killing trees, but not proving nearly as severe on 'ōhi'a. We felt like we dodged a bullet because the same could have happened to 'ōhi'a, our dominant native forest tree which occupies more than 1 million acres.

Since then, we learned that *Puccinia psidii* is a global threat to myrtle family plants, and that it spreads hidden in imported myrtle family plants and foliage that are its hosts. In 2007, HDOA passed an interim rule restricting the importation of myrtle family plants. During this time, HDOA inspection of imported flower bouquets found the rust on cut myrtle foliage.

Although the rule expired in 2008, more evidence was collected that overwhelmingly demonstrates that there is a clear and high risk to all myrtle family plants in Hawai'i from additional introductions of *Puccinia psidii*. Genetic studies show that there are multiple strains of this rust fungus, and each strain is associated with different myrtle family plants. Research also showed that when 'ōhi'a were sent to Brazil, all strains were able to sicken 'ōhi'a, some very severely. Further, there is evidence that shows that additional introductions of the strain already present in Hawai'i can bring genetic variation that changes how the rust behaves and what it impacts.

A restriction on the importation of myrtle family plants would allow agencies to set in place safe importation requirements for industries such as biofuels, which import eucalyptus (another myrtle family plant), and even nursery industry imports. For flower vendors who import, there are fewer options, although I suspect that the vast majority of people couldn't identify the foliage in a flower bouquet, much less care if it were myrtle or some other greenery. In fact, one big box store has continued to ship bouquets to Hawai'i without myrtle family foliage in them since the interim rule in 2007, with no apparent impact in sales. For cut eucalyptus, HDOA and partners used a private grant to grow and distribute for free, thousands of ornamental eucalyptus plants statewide to nurseries and flower growers to replace any potential loss in this area.

Your support of HCR 47 will help us send the message that 'ōhi'a must be protected, that there is ample evidence that documents the risk. Mahalo for your consideration.

Aloha,
Christy Martin, CGAPS

lowen2-Karen

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Saturday, March 29, 2014 7:09 AM
To: waltestimony
Cc: mikagawa@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HCR47 on Mar 31, 2014 11:00AM*

HCR47

Submitted on: 3/29/2014

Testimony for WAL on Mar 31, 2014 11:00AM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mary Ikagawa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov