

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Governor



SCOTT E. ENRIGHT
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

KEN H. KAKESAKO
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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**TESTIMONY OF SCOTT E. ENRIGHT
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2014
11:00 A.M.
Conference Room 312**

**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 Wooley 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.



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
AGRICULTURE

Monday March 24, 2014
11AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 312

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
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FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

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 Agriculture
Monday, March 24, 2014, 11:00AM, Room 312

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.

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HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON AGRICULTURE

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

March 24, 2014

11:00 AM

Conference Room 312

Aloha Chair Wooley, Vice Chair Onishi 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 HCR47 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 and devastation to these stands will strain our already insufficient water systems.

Over the last few years, the Hawaii Agricultural Foundation in cooperation with CGAPS and Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation provided Eucalyptus seedlings to farmers across the state. Harvests of the plantings have begun. The capacity to meet local florists needs have been established. Brides will have bouquets of their dreams even with a prohibition in place.

This program provides an excellent example of the partnership between agriculture and the environmental community. Local production of agricultural crops whose imports could cause significant harm to the environment will provide an excellent mechanism to address consumer desires while protecting the environment. It also provides a working example of the comprehensive nature of the Hawaii Biosecurity Plan as crafted by the Legislature.

HFBF respectfully requests your **strong support** of this measure as a natural progression in the control of this devastating invasive species. We also request 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.

onishi2-Micah-Seth

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Saturday, March 22, 2014 7:12 PM
To: AGRtestimony
Cc: warrenmcfb@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HCR47 on Mar 24, 2014 11:00AM*

HCR47

Submitted on: 3/22/2014

Testimony for AGR on Mar 24, 2014 11:00AM in Conference Room 312

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. Warren Watanabe

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onishi2-Micah-Seth

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Saturday, March 22, 2014 5:58 PM
To: AGRtestimony
Cc: swhalen@harc-hspa.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HCR47 on Mar 24, 2014 11:00AM*

HCR47

Submitted on: 3/22/2014

Testimony for AGR on Mar 24, 2014 11:00AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Stephanie A Whalen	HARC	Support	No

Comments:

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House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
March 23, 2014
11:00 a.m., Conference Room 312
State Capitol

Testimony in Support of HCR 47

Aloha Chair Wooley, Vice Chair Onishi 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 in 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, where it could be seen infecting myrtle family plants. We watched for several tense months as the rust spread to 'ōhi'a trees, but proved extremely virulent on a rose apple, infesting new growth and eventually defoliating and killing trees. 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.

Throughout this time, we learned that *Puccinia psidii* was 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*. Like the flu virus, there are multiple strains of this rust fungus, and that each strain is associated with different myrtle family plants. 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. Research also showed that when 'ōhi'a were sent to Brazil they were greatly impacted by several strains of *Puccinia psidii*, and that all strains were able to sicken 'ōhi'a.

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 wouldn't notice or care if there were cut myrtle plants in their flower bouquets. One big box store continues to ship bouquets to Hawai'i without myrtle family foliage in them, and has continued to do so since the interim rule in 2007! A grant a few years ago helped HDOA and partners grow and distribute for free, thousands of ornamental eucalyptus plants statewide to nurseries and flower growers.

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



Hawai'i Wildlife Fund

P.O. Box 70
Volcano, HI 96785

March 21, 2014

TO: Jessica Wooley, Chair, Committee on Agriculture
House of Representatives, State of Hawai'i

RE: Hawai'i House Concurrent Resolution No. 47
Hearing: March 24, 2014, 11am

Hawai'i Wildlife Fund strongly supports H.C.R. No.47 seeking to reduce the opportunity for plants of the family Myrtaceae and their associated pests to enter Hawai'i. Introductions of Myrtaceae pests, such as the *Puccinia psidii* fungus already here and known locally as "ohia rust", dangerously threaten the continued existence of our endemic ohia forests. The plants of this family themselves cannot be adequately screened because they can carry undetectable spores of this or other fungi.

Adoption of a permanent rule by the State Department of Agriculture restricting entry of these plants is certainly justified and should be implemented as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

William G. Gilmartin
Director of Research

onishi2-Micah-Seth

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2014 2:24 PM
To: AGRtestimony
Cc: rtb808@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HCR47 on Mar 24, 2014 11:00AM

HCR47

Submitted on: 3/19/2014

Testimony for AGR on Mar 24, 2014 11:00AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Randal Tadashi Bartlett	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Testimony of Randy Tadashi Bartlett to the House Committee on Agriculture (AGR) on Monday, March 24, 2014 at 11AM Conference Room 312, State Capitol 415 South Beretania Street In Favor of HCR 47 Aloha Chair Wooley, Vice Chair Onishi & Committee Members: As a life-long Hawai'i resident and conservation professional for over 25 years on Maui, I strongly urge you to support HCR 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. Ohi`a (Metrosideros polymorpha) is the cornerstone tree of our native Hawaiian rainforests; comprising up to 70-75% of the forest canopy. The massive & relatively sudden loss of Ohi`a throughout the state, due to infection by the rust fungus, Puccinia psidii, as witnessed on Rose Apple (Syzygium jambos), over the last decade or more, would wreak unimaginable, and perhaps, unrecoverable environmental havoc on Hawai'i's native forest ecosystems and watersheds. Please help to keep our life-giving watersheds and precious native rainforest species healthy by supporting the DOA's efforts to protect all of Hawai'i's residents and visitors alike, from the devastating loss of our Ohi`a forests. Mahalo nui loa no kou kokua! UA MAU KE EA O KA `AINA I KA PONO! Randy Tadashi Bartlett POB 880698 Pukalani, HI 96788

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To: AGRtestimony
Cc: plasticcomet@hawaiiantel.net
Subject: Submitted testimony for HCR47 on Mar 24, 2014 11:00AM

HCR47

Submitted on: 3/21/2014

Testimony for AGR on Mar 24, 2014 11:00AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Patrick Conant	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Chairman J. Wooley, Vice Chair R. Onishi and members of the House Comm. on Agriculture, I fully support HCR 47 since new alien strains of the the rust *P. psidii* present a grave risk to our watersheds on all islands in the State. Also, Hawaii has an obligation to many other Pacific isles to make every effort to keep the rust from spreading South to other islands that have native *Metrosideros* species (related to ohia) in their forests. In an effort to improve our biosecurity to keep such new alien spieces out, I suggest the legislature explore funding a full time temporary paralegal assigned to the Plant Quarantine Branch of Hawaii Department of Agriculture to revise and create new Plant Quarantine Rules. Very few improvements have been been made in that regard in the last few decades. Hiring more inspectors is always good, but they must have effective rules to enforce and keep new invasive species out of Hawaii. We all know there have been some very serious ones entering the State recently. Let's close those I oopholes to protect Agriculture, our watersheds and our economy. Mahalo for your kokua, Patrick Conant Volcano, Hawaii

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To: AGRtestimony
Cc: antolinid@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HCR47 on Mar 24, 2014 11:00AM

HCR47

Submitted on: 3/19/2014

Testimony for AGR on Mar 24, 2014 11:00AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Denise Antolini	Individual	Support	No

Comments: NEW ADMINISTRATIVE RULES ARE CRITICAL TO RESTRICTING MYRTACEAE FAMILY PLANTS FROM THE DESTRUCTIVE RUST FUNGUS, PUCCINIA PSIDII. Please support this important measure to move forward the STATE administrative rulemaking process. The Legislature can help Hawaii stay Hawaii - please give the state agencies the legal tools necessary to protect 'Ohia - a culturally important and iconic species that symbolizes the spectacular natural heritage of the islands. Mahalo!

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