

REPORT TO THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
STATE OF HAWAII
REGULAR SESSION OF 2025

**BUDGETARY AND OTHER ISSUES
REGARDING INVASIVE SPECIES**



Prepared by:

**THE STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE**

Section 194-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes

Honolulu, Hawaii

November 2025

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PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Invasive species are non-native plants, animals, insects, and microbes that threaten or cause environmental, economic, and health harm. Invasive species do not fall solely under the authority or jurisdiction of any single State agency or sector. Recognizing this, in 2003, the State Legislature created the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (HISC, Council) as an intra-governmental agency to address invasive species (HISC, Act 85, Session Laws of Hawai'i (SLH) 2003), stating that “the silent invasion of Hawai'i by alien invasive species is the single greatest threat to Hawai'i's economy, natural environment, and the health and lifestyle of Hawai'i's people and visitors.”

At the time, the Council was administratively attached to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), to provide fiscal and administrative support through DOFAW's existing Invasive Species Program.

This document fulfills the reporting requirements of Section 194-2, Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), to inform the Legislature annually about budget issues and other matters related to invasive species. Established under Chapter 194, HRS, the HISC is an interagency board administered by DLNR, DOFAW. All activities took place during Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

PURPOSE & COMPOSITION OF THE HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

The Council was created in 2003 by the State Legislature under Chapter 194, HRS. Its formation was a response to a 2002 Legislative Reference Bureau study that identified significant gaps in how invasive species were managed throughout the State — including limited coordination, funding, and capacity. The aim was to establish a cabinet-level council that would serve as an independent forum, providing policy leadership across State, federal, and local agencies to improve prevention, early detection, rapid response, control, research, outreach, and coordination of invasive species management. HISC's voting members include the chair, director, or a designee from the Hawai'i Departments of Land and Natural Resources, Agriculture and Biosecurity, Health, and Business, Economic Development and Tourism, Transportation, as well as the University of Hawai'i (UH).

The DLNR, DOFAW Invasive Species Program, supported by contract employees from UH, provides operational support for the Council, transforming high-level policies into

coordinated on-the-ground actions. While the Council provides strategic guidance and encourages interagency cooperation, DOFAW Invasive Species Program staff manage daily tasks for HISC that keep Hawai'i's invasive species efforts moving forward. These tasks include managing funding, facilitating communication among agencies and projects, organizing working groups, supporting public reporting tools like 643pest.org, and ensuring that research, prevention, and control efforts are effectively implemented. Their specialized skills in areas such as plant risk assessment, early detection, and public outreach help connect policy with practice, enabling HISC to respond effectively,



rapidly, and strategically to invasive species threats statewide. DOFAW staff currently involved include the DOFAW Invasive Species Program Coordinator, four full-time staff members contracted through UH, and one part-time student hire.

The 2025 Legislative Session continued to focus on invasive species and biosecurity, building on efforts from previous sessions. Several bills were introduced to better manage known pathways, boost funding, and make significant changes to the newly renamed Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (HDAB) and the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council. Progress included increased funding for vital invasive species projects and programs across the State. However, the ongoing spread of environmentally and economically harmful invasive species shows that more work is needed. Developing a

new statewide interagency strategy will be crucial for the State and the HDAB to prioritize in the coming year. This will help ensure effective use of increased funding, proper implementation of new authorities, and ongoing collaboration among State and federal agencies, counties, researchers, industries, and communities—all essential for Hawai'i's biosecurity.

HIGHLIGHTS

Interagency Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) for High Priority Pests

Partners of the MOU created matrices for coconut rhinoceros beetles (CRB), coqui frogs, and little fire ants that specify agency roles and responsibilities. These matrices are currently being used to develop county response plans for each pest. Response plans for little fire ants across all counties have been finalized. (See page 6)

Council Meetings

Four **public meetings** were held to approve the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 HISC budget, adopt the HISC Administrative Rules, direct the introduction of legislation, including the omnibus Biosecurity Bills, Senate Bill (SB) 100 and House Bill (HB) 427, and recognize the 2025 Hawai'i Invasive Species Awareness Month (HISAM) Awardees. (See page 7)

HISC Funding

HISC allocated **\$4,059,457** to fund **19 interagency projects and programs** in the FY25 HISC Budget. (See pages 8-9)



Hawai'i-Pacific Weed Risk Assessments

Fifty-two **weed risk assessments** were completed, including 31 new species assessments and 21 updates of assessments that were over 10 years old. (See page 13)

Pest Interceptions – Ports of Entry Monitoring Program

Traps monitored by the program detected one **CRB** at Līhu'e Airport in June 2024,. In the reporting period, the program detected four at Honolulu Airport, and five at Kona Airport. During the reporting period, twelve **bee swarms** were collected and tested on O'ahu, and one on Maui. All tests came back negative for Africanized bees. There were no new detections of mosquitoes, invasive ants, or Japanese beetles. (See pages 9-10)

Public Reports Submitted to 643-PEST.org

1,547 public pest reports were submitted and responded to through the online public pest reporting system 643PEST.org. (See page 11)

Website Views – Hawai'i Invasive Species Awareness Month

Partners created **10 webinars** that gathered a total of **1,873 YouTube views** for the 2025 Hawai'i Invasive Species Awareness Month webinar series. (See page 12)

INTERAGENCY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) FOR HIGH-PRIORITY PESTS

In April 2024, leadership from HDAB, DLNR, and UH signed the “Interagency Memorandum of Understanding for the Prevention, Rapid Response, and Control or Eradication of High Priority Pests,” concerning the coqui frog, little fire ant, and CRB.

To mark the first anniversary of the MOU signing, an in-person meeting was held in June 2025, attended by the signatories, member organizations, and other key partners, to assess the MOU's status and plan next steps for the year ahead. Based on a pre-meeting survey and comments from attendees, there was consensus that the group excelled at communicating issues among themselves, but much more work was needed to improve conditions for each invasive pest.

Key accomplishments in the first year of the MOU include developing response plans for the Little Fire Ant in each of the four counties and starting draft response plans for both the CRB and coqui frog. These response plans include survey and treatment protocols to guide and coordinate consistent field responses.

Year two of the MOU is expected to focus on the following tasks: establishing data-sharing agreements between the partners to improve communication; holding quarterly meetings among the signatories to ensure leadership helps coordinate efforts; ensuring research is conducted to enhance response efforts; and finalizing the response plans for all pests, using those plans when new incipient populations of priority pests are detected.

More information about the MOU and a pdf of the signed MOU can be found at <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/hisc/info/policy/2024-mou-for-high-priority-pests/>.



COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Hawai'i State Legislature, through Chapter 194, HRS, established the interagency HISC and outlined its composition and responsibilities. Primary duties of the HISC include:

- 1) Advise, consult, and coordinate efforts across departments to address invasive species.
- 2) Identify agency resource gaps regarding invasive species. This is done by monitoring progress on the Hawai'i Interagency Biosecurity Plan and the HISC/Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species 2025 Joint Strategy.
- 3) Coordinate and advocate for the State's stance on invasive species issues. This is done by passing Council resolutions and providing testimony.
- 4) Advise the governor and Legislature on budgetary and related issues related to invasive species. This is achieved through this report and continuous contact throughout the year.

These responsibilities are carried out through the HISC Public Meetings. The HISC held four meetings during FY 2025. According to HRS 194, the Council must hold at least two meetings during the fiscal year. Meetings continued to offer both virtual and in-person options for Council members and the public.

Summaries of all meetings are provided below:

- **August 28, 2024** - Approval of the HISC FY 2025 Budget.
- **November 14, 2024** – Council adopted the proposed new subtitle and chapters under the Hawai'i Administrative Rules as Title 13, Subtitle 14, Chapters 325

“General Provisions” and 326 “Control and Eradication of Invasive Species.” Updated on the implementation of the Interagency MOU for priority pests and outcomes from the Fall 2024 Invasive Species Advisory Committee meeting held in Honolulu, HI.

- **March 20, 2025** – Authorization for the HISC Co-Chairs and Council departments to advocate on behalf of the HISC regarding SB 1100 and HB 427, both related to biosecurity.
- **May 28, 2025** – Update to HISC members on HB 427, relating to biosecurity, and its future implications.

For more details about the Council meetings and to sign up for announcements about upcoming meetings, please visit: <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/hisc/meetings/hisc/>.

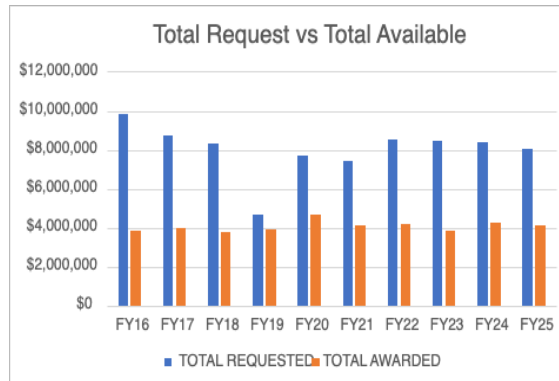
FISCAL YEAR 2025 – HISC BUDGET

The Council reviews invasive species projects each year that 1) address gaps between agency mandates or existing programs, and 2) improve our shared knowledge through research and the development of new tools. Funds are allocated through a grant process, in which State, county, and federal offices can submit funding requests and work with the council to draft a recommended budget for review.

For FY 2025, the Legislature allocated \$5,750,000 to invasive species projects through DOFAW’s Invasive Species Program. The Legislature also added \$1,500,000 to the invasive species budget to offset a 20% reduction in FY 2023 and FY 2024. The appropriations are subject to a 10% restriction by the Department of Budget and Finance. The Invasive Species Program support team and the Port of Entry Monitoring Program also receive partial funding from this allocation. A detailed breakdown of these amounts is provided in Table 1. The remaining balance of \$4,059,457.00 was used for interagency invasive species control work.

Table 1, Figure 1: Breakdown of the total available FY 2025 HISC funding to support interagency projects and the comparison of total available versus total requested from FY 2016-FY 2025.

	FY25
Total Requests	\$8,034,893.17
HISC Base	\$4,779,230.00
HISC Program Support	\$479,716.89
PoEM	\$249,056.11
Remaining	\$4,059,457.00



Requests for FY 2025 funding totaled \$8,083,419.17 across 19 proposals. With only \$4,059,457 available, the HISC Resources Working Group balanced the budget and reduced the requests by half (see Figure 1). This leaves most applicants needing to secure additional funding sources for their projects.

Of the 19 proposals, all were found to have merit and were discussed by the Resources Working Group. Sixteen proposals received partial awards. One was granted a full award because the project was not scalable, and funding was needed to continue the Ballast Water and Hull Fouling Planner position. Two proposals received no HISC funding for FY 2025 because alternative funding was available. These proposals include “Detection and Management Strategies for the Control of *Prosapia bicincta* (Two-lined Spittlebug) in Hawai’i,” where HDAB will provide \$200,000 from its FY 2025 biosecurity appropriation to support this research, and “Optimizing screening for invasive honeybees’ pests and diseases,” which is partially funded by the FY 2024 Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program.

For a complete list of FY 2025 HISC-funded projects, visit:

<https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/hisc/fy25-funded-projects/>. All funded projects are subject to reporting guidelines, which include a final report due 60 days after project completion. Most final reports will be posted by July 15, 2026.

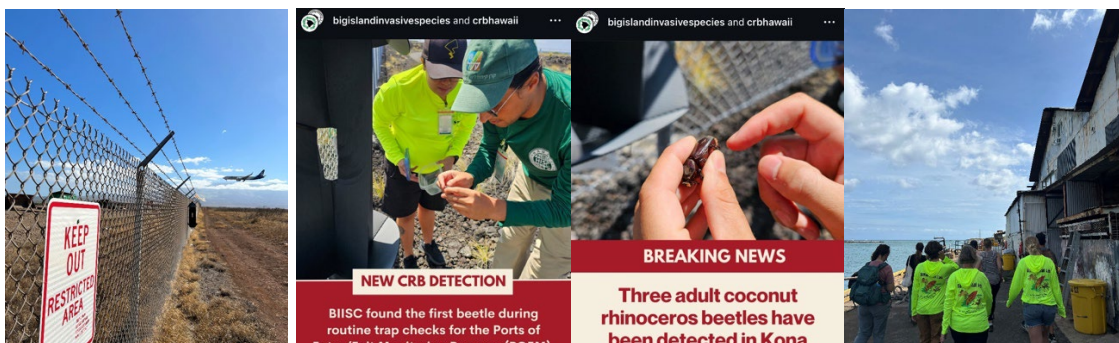
PORTS OF ENTRY MONITORING (POEM) PROGRAM

The Ports-of-Entry Monitoring (PoEM) Program is a cooperative effort among agencies led by the HISC to detect high-risk pests at airports and harbors. It began as a pilot project in 2016 to fill gaps in airport surveillance, where some pests might be missed during routine inspections. Today, the program plays an essential role in Hawai'i's biosecurity by monitoring for mosquitoes, CRB, Africanized ("Killer") honeybees, various invasive ants, and Japanese beetles at State airports and harbors.

The program is responsible for intercepting *Aedes aegypti* larvae at Kahului Airport (OGG) in 2017 and Honolulu Harbor in 2021. This mosquito species transmits dengue fever and is known to occur only on Hawai'i Island. The first CRB detected on Kauai in 2023 was found in one of the traps at Lihue Airport that the program manages.

Program Highlights for FY 2025 include:

- No new mosquito species have been introduced to the State.
- Twelve bee swarms were collected and tested on O'ahu, along with one on Maui. All tested negative for Africanized bees.
- One CRB was found in a trap at Līhu'e Airport in June 2024. During the reporting period four CRB were found at Honolulu Airport, and five at Kona Airport.
- No new ant species have been introduced to the State.



Images from left to right: CRB trap at OGG, CRB news from BIISC, Hawai'i Ant Lab survey of new harbor areas for Northwestern Hawaiian Islands monitoring through PoEM (Photos: HISC, BIISC)

Looking Forward:

- HISC is finalizing the 2026-2030 strategic plan for the PoEM Program. This process included extensive in-person and virtual meetings with stakeholders across the State.
- The technical working group will identify pests to include in the next phase of the PoEM objectives. This may involve *Tropilaelaps* and varroa mites affecting honeybees, Red Palm Weevil acoustic monitoring, and other pests that can be included as capacity permits.

The early detection of CRB in Kona through PoEM has prompted a comprehensive interagency response that has mapped populations, treated infested areas, and eliminated breeding sites, with the goal of containment and eradication. This achievement wouldn't be possible without this Program's monitoring and HISC's statewide coordination of key partners.

643PEST.ORG - HAWAII'S COMMUNITY-POWERED, MULTI-AGENCY PEST HOTLINE



The pest hotlines (643-PEST and 643pest.org) serve as the State's central hubs for pest reports. Calls to 643-PEST are directed to HDAB Plant Quarantine inspectors. The online hotline is designed for flexibility and collaboration among multiple agencies; it is run by invasive species support specialists and forwards reports to HDAB, the Island Invasive Species Committees (ISCs), DLNR, county agencies, and NGO partners, as needed.

This model enables DAB inspectors to focus on their primary inspection duties while pest report facilitators provide the public with a quick, consistent response across a wider range of species. **Every report is triaged:** identification by subject experts,

FY25 at a glance

- **1,547** pest reports responded to statewide (all-time total to date: **9,013**).
- **By island:** O'ahu ~**935**, Maui ~**229**, Hawai'i ~**187**, Kaua'i ~**190** (Moloka'i **3**, Lāna'i **3**).
- **Unique species identified and documented: 131.**
- **How reports were resolved: 52%** Guidance given (established or widespread species), **28%** Forwarded for action, **9%** ID not possible.

practical control steps offered to the reporter, and, when necessary, a handoff to the appropriate response team.

Notable trends

- **Coqui reports increased statewide** (from **108 to 188**), with the most significant growth on **O'ahu** and **Maui**.
- **Rabbit reports increased across all islands** compared to FY 2024, which is an emerging agricultural and natural area concern that would benefit from a coordinated response and informed community reporting.

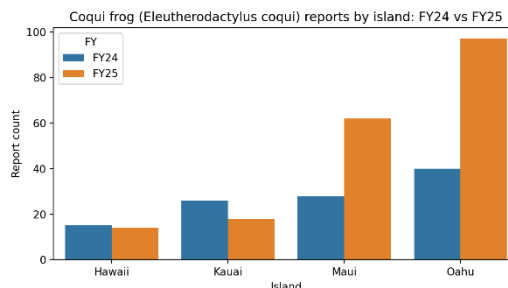


Figure 1: Figure 1 Coqui reports by island, FY 2024 vs FY 2025: Largest increases on O'ahu and Maui; statewide total rose from 108 → 188



643PEST.org Dashboard

Visit the public, real-time [643PEST.org Dashboard](https://643PEST.org) to explore island-by-island and species-level trends in reports and outcomes.

HAWAI'I INVASIVE SPECIES AWARENESS MONTH (HISAM)

Hawai'i Invasive Species Awareness Month (HISAM) is a month-long statewide campaign led by HISC, involving a coalition of HDAB, DLNR, UH, the ISCs, counties, and NGOs. Now in its seventh year, it offers free talks, hands-on workdays, and on-demand recordings that reach residents, cultural practitioners, land stewards, educators, producers, and policymakers. The engagement results in action on a scale and depth unmatched by any other state.

2025 HISAM Theme- Explore what is at risk, mauka to makai

In 2025, we turned to those who mālama 'āina for guidance. We highlighted the people, places, practices, and species most at risk, and how communities can protect them through place-based stewardship, everyday prevention, and rapid reporting and response pathways.

- **10 webinars** (live on Zoom & Facebook Live; archived to YouTube).
- **1,873 YouTube views** and **over 268 hours** of watch time (and increasing).
- Participants from **every county**, as well as mainland and Pacific attendees.

- Topics ranged from **Hawaiian cultural practices** to **native seabird conservation** to live presentations from **Papahānaumokuākea**, alongside practical sessions on coqui control, habitat restoration, and community engagement.



Governor's proclamation declaring May as HISAM and a Capitol luncheon honoring awardees.

- The audience mainly includes viewers from conservation and natural resources, with active involvement from community members and the agriculture sector.

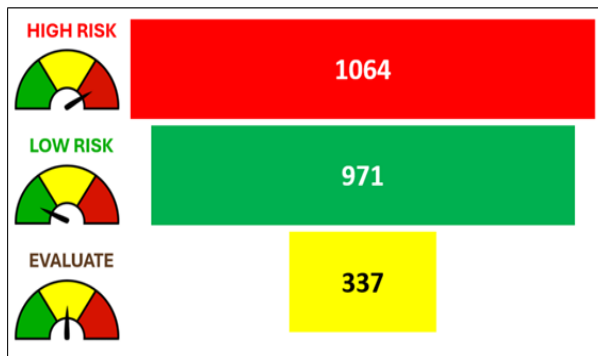
HISAM 2025 Awardees:

- Outstanding Business Leader: **Aloha Termite & Pest Control**
- Community Hero: **Haleakalā Ranch**
- Greatest Hit: **Trenton Yasui** (HDAB Plant Quarantine)
- Island MVPs: **Kiane Prietto** (Hawai'i Island), **Mike Opgenorth** (Maui Nui), **Thomas Griego** (O'ahu), **Work It Out Kaua'i** (Kaua'i).

View the HISAM 2025 presentations on the [**HISAM 2025 Playlist**](#), then explore the [**HISAM25 page**](#) to see every event, award, and highlight.


Hawai'i-Pacific Weed Risk Assessment (HPWRA):

The HPWRA assesses the likelihood of plants becoming invasive in the Hawaiian



Islands through a science-based, non-regulatory screening process. It supports statewide prevention efforts and helps public agencies, private organizations, and individuals make informed decisions about planting and imports.


Figure 2. 2372 Assessments to Date




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Pono Plant (low risk)



Score
-3

Date Screened
April 28, 2025

Synonyms
Artocarpus integrifolius, Artocarpus integrifolius var. hirsutus, Rademachia integra, Saccus integer, Sitodilum cauliflorum, Sitodilum macrocarpon

Family
Moraceae

Genus
Artocarpus

Species
integer

Artocarpus integer (cempedak, chempedak)

Family: Moraceae

Artocarpus integer, commonly known as chempedak, is a tree species native to Malaysia, Indonesia, and southern Thailand. It belongs to the Moraceae family, which also includes well-known fruit trees like breadfruit (*Artocarpus altilis*) and jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*). The tree can grow 10–30 meters in height and has a spreading, irregular canopy. Its leaves are elliptical, leathery, and dark green, while its flowers are small and produced in dense, cylindrical inflorescences. The fruit of *Artocarpus integer* is elongated, yellowish to brown when ripe, and has a strong aroma with a sweet, custard-like flavor. The fruit, seeds, and occasionally the flowers are edible and are widely used in traditional

Figure 3. Plant Pono (plantpono.org) Species Pages

Assessments and Plant Pono:

In FY 2025, 52 assessments were completed, including 31 new species assessments and 21 updates of assessments older than 10 years, ensuring current risk evaluations for each plant. All assessments are available on the Plant Pono website (plantpono.org), which also provides resources on native and non-invasive plants. To enhance accessibility and public communication, 67 new species pages and summaries were added to the site, presenting information on invasive and non-invasive plants in a clear, user-friendly format.

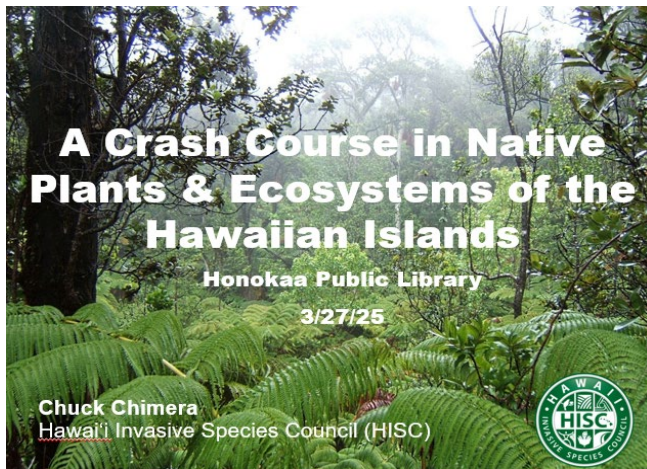


Figure 3. Outreach and Public Engagement

Outreach and Public Engagement: The HPWRA specialist gave presentations on the risk assessment system, Plant Pono, and native and invasive plants to various audiences, including the Pa‘auilo Mauka Kalōpā Community Association, graduate students in UH’s Plant and Environmental Protection Sciences program, the Honoka‘a Public Library, and the 2025 Master Gardener statewide training cohort. The HPWRA specialist also helped the 643PEST.org program by responding to 594

unique pest reports across the State.

2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION OUTCOMES

The 2025 Legislative Session was highlighted by HB 427, which brought significant changes to Hawai‘i’s Agricultural Department and the administrative hosting of HISC. A summary of the main provisions of [HB 427](#) is provided below.

- Renames the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture to the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity.
- Establishes a new Biosecurity Deputy position by 2027.
- Authorizes HDAB and the governor to declare a biosecurity emergency to take specific actions to prevent the establishment and spread of pests and prohibited or restricted organisms.
- Requires HDAB to create a pest dashboard for reporting and tracking biosecurity activities by December 2025.
- Transfers the administration of the HISC from DLNR to HDAB on January 1, 2030.

Approximately 80 invasive species-related bills were introduced during the 2025 Legislative Session. Below is a list of the bills that were approved and signed by the governor.

- [HB 1120](#) – Department of Health – Legal authority and duty to prevent and address nuisances that impact public and environmental health.
- [HB 1220](#) – Provides funding for the DLNR Division of Aquatic Resources to assist in removing the majano anemone from Kaneohe Bay.

- [SB 140](#) – Forbids importing firewood unless it is heat-treated or approved by HDOAB.
- [SB 223](#) – Requires certain owners and occupants of properties in hazardous fire zones to maintain effective firebreaks.
- [SB 330](#) – Directs the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture to enforce federal quarantines to prevent the introduction of invasive pests and diseases into the State.
- HB 985 -- Allocates funding to the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture to continue the statewide pesticide drift monitoring study (school safety).

In addition to these bills, two State resolutions were adopted regarding funding for invasive species, and counties were encouraged to develop response plans to address them.

The HISC monitors invasive species and biosecurity legislation each session. You can view the full list of bills introduced during the 2025 Legislative Session on the HISC webpage: [Hawai'i Invasive Species Council | 2025 Legislative Session](#)

2026 LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

HISC and partners have long advocated for increased funding to HDAB to support capacity building and the implementation of critical authorities for preventing and managing invasive species. Both the 2024 and 2025 Legislative Sessions demonstrated renewed commitments from the State Legislature to combat invasive species by enhancing biosecurity efforts through HDAB, HISC, and other vital programs that provide on-the-ground management and outreach across the State through the passage of Act 231, SLH 2024 and Act 236, SLH 2025.

The passage of these Acts prompts questions and challenges about the most effective ways to implement funding and activities outlined in law that require interagency collaboration and strategic planning. HISC can serve as a forum for collaborative discussion and guidance on implementation, but planning is also necessary to determine the best course of action for an overall biosecurity strategy that incorporates recent legislation and future initiatives aimed at continuously improving Hawai'i's biosecurity. This is especially important as the 2017-2027 Hawai'i Interagency Biosecurity Plan nears the end of its 10-year term.

For the 2026 Legislative Session, overall recommendations are to refocus efforts on a shared vision for Hawai'i's biosecurity and provide guidance on the implementation of Act 236, SLH 2025. This can be achieved through the following actions:

- Allocate appropriate funds to support the planning and development of a Statewide Biosecurity Plan that includes input from State and federal agencies, counties, industry, and local communities. HDAB should lead this effort with guidance from HISC.
- Amend Act 236, SLH 2025 language so that the HISC appropriation of \$4.25 million is allocated directly to DLNR for FY 2027. Currently, the language directs the appropriation to HDAB in FY 2027, which creates an unnecessary step of transferring funding from HDAB to DLNR, the department that currently administers the HISC.
- The Council will issue a guiding document to the Legislature regarding the transfer of the HISC to HDAB in 2030, in accordance with Act 236, SLH 2025.
- Create three additional civil service positions to support invasive species efforts at DLNR, in addition to the existing Invasive Species Coordinator position.

