

The Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry, USDA Forest Service has been involved in a research project for biocontrol of strawberry guava and we are nearing an exciting milestone. You may have read one of the recent newspaper articles about this. This research has been supported by the USDA FS International Programs, the National Park Service, the USGS-BRD, and the State of Hawaii among others.

We have submitted a formal petition to the Hawaii Dept. of Agriculture for release of the insect agent (*Tectococcus ovatus*, the strawberry guava leaf gall scale) that we think has the best chance of contributing to control of this weed. The petition, prepared by Tracy Johnson, has been reviewed by a committee of entomologists and was approved unanimously, which is a rare occurrence of late. It was then forwarded to the Advisory Committee on Plants and Animals, who voted 6 to 1 in favor of recommending approval of our request to the Hawaii Board of Agriculture. The Board of Ag is the state government entity that makes final decisions regarding permitting entry of new organisms to Hawaii. On the federal side, the USDA Animal and Plant Inspection Service and Fish and Wildlife Service also must approve, but historically in Hawaii the state government has had the main control over this process.

We are on track for having the Board of Ag consider this request at their meeting on November 22, which will be open to the public for testimony. They can decide to preliminarily approve the request at that meeting. Then the matter would move to public hearings in each county to gather additional public testimony (probably Feb 2006). Finally the Board of Ag would review all testimony and make a final decision.

Further information can be found on the FS web site:
www.fs.fed.us/psw/topics/ecosystem_processes/tropical/invasives

Written comments can be submitted to Darcy Oishi, Hawaii DOA. He will compile. Letters can be addressed to the Board of Agriculture, or to its Chair, Sandra Kunimoto.

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