BIISC Quarterly GENERAL Meeting Minutes: 16 December 2003
DLNR - Hilo Forestry Conference Room

1. Introductions - All

We started the meeting by giving our introductions and because the meeting was focused around the need for BIISC to address species other than Miconia, as we went around the room introducing ourselves, everyone said what target species they were currently working on.

Here is a summary list:
Miconia, coqui frogs, strawberry guava, Melastoma, Rubus, Pyracantha, fountain grass, Bocconia, ungulates, mongoose, Australian tree fern, gorse, banana poka, holly, faya tree, silk oak, palm grass, rodents, Tibouchina, stinging nettle caterpillar, giant whitefly, little fire ant, Clidemia, tropical ash, and Albezia.

2. Media Plan Update – Christy Martin

The media plan, which is 2/3 funded now and also has a grant proposal in with the Hawaii Tourism Authority, is focused on getting three messages out:

1) Don't plant a pest – so that people can ask for non-invasive plants at their nurseries
2) Don't pack a pest – so that invasive species aren't brought in, and
3) Report a pest – so that people know who to call if they see a pest

Christy is expecting major TV and public broadcast time, with the messages getting out a couple of times a week.

3. Expansion to Other/Incipient Species and/or Populations – Laura Nelson

This general meeting was held specifically to discuss the need for BIISC to expand to species other than Miconia, and incipient species and/or populations. This topic was one of three priority topics identified at our last meeting, on 27 October 2003, for a discussion on the overall direction of BIISC. The two other topics, BIISC structure and the evaluation of the Miconia operation were discussed at the last meeting, while this one was held over because we ran out of time.

In order for BIISC to carry out its mission which includes prevention and eradication of incipient species, as well as controlling established species, we need to expand our operations.

We have a list of target species which needs to be revised, and we also need to agree upon a process by which we can make decisions on whether or not to put resources into controlling and/or eradicating *any* target species. This process needs to be science-based, quantitative and defensible. In other words, if we had unlimited resources, *how* would we decide what to do with them and could we defend our decision?

The Field Operations Working Group has started looking at this question and has developed a decision tree for invasive species response (this will be attached to the final version of the minutes).

Two questions were posed to help frame the discussion:

1) It makes the most sense to target species or populations that are incipient, but what is our definition of incipient?
2) Do we use the "E" word? (eradication)

John Randall, Weed Scientist for The Nature Conservancy, sent over a paper titled: "When is Eradication of Exotic Pest Plants a Realistic Goal?" It reports that 14 exotic weeds have been successfully eradicated from California. The authors looked at 53 infestations of 18 A-rated species targeted for eradication and saw a relationship between the initial infestation area and eradication effort and the probability of successful eradication. They conclude:

> "Professional eradication of exotic weed infestations smaller than one hectare is usually possible. In addition, about 1/3 of infestations between 1 ha and 100 ha and ¼ of infestations between 101 and 1000 ha have been eradicated. However, costs of eradication projects increase dramatically. With a realistic amount of resources, it is very unlikely that infestations larger than 1000 ha can be eradicated. Early detection of the presence of an invasive taxon can make the difference between being able to employ offensive strategies (eradication), and the necessity of retreating into a defensive strategy that usually means an infinite financial commitment. Nevertheless, depending on the potential impact of individual weedy species, even infestations larger than 1000 ha should be targeted for eradication effort or, at least, substantial reduction and containment." *

4. Discussion - All

The floor was opened for discussion on the general topic. The statements made fell into the following, more specific areas:

- Target Species List
- Distribution Survey
- Criteria for Choosing Control Targets
- Partners

* M. Rejmanek and M.J. Pitcairn. 2002. When is eradication of exotic pest plants a realistic goal? Pages 249-253 in Veitch, C.R. and Clout, M.N. (eds.) Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species. IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.

Target Species List

In New Zealand target species are given a rating on whether or not to respond. Their criteria and MISC's are similar. They include:

- Feasibility of eradication
- Size and number of locations
- Number of property owners
- Public support
- Cost of control
- Amount of time
- Resources available
- Risk to economy, health, natural areas, and agriculture
- Species invasiveness, naturalized elsewhere
- Ranking: low, medium, high
- Add personal knowledge
- Estimated cost of control
- Noxious weed list
- Seed bank
-

A smaller group then gets together to rate the species.

We need to take an objective look at our current target species list and gather more information. It was decided that a smaller group needs to review our list. We need to know whether more species should be added as a result of the roadside surveys. We also need to determine which species can be eliminated off the list.

We can run the target species through the Weed Risk Assessment to generate information. In particular, we need to know whether the species are invasive elsewhere, whether they are a biological or social threat, what their potential threat is to natives, and what habitats they are invading. Some on the list appear not to be naturalized, although if they make it to the right habitat they might take off. We may also want to prioritize plants based on their ability to limit our ability to control them by changing field conditions (thorny, etc.).

A working group formed to review the target species list:

Pat Conant (lead)
Rick Warshauer
Linda Pratt
Mindy Wilkenson
Earlene Wilson

Distribution Survey

In order to be able to make informed decisions about what species to target for action, we need to do a survey to collect size and location data. We will eventually need to shrink our list of species to target for action, but the size of the list of species to survey for doesn't really matter. For example, the roadside survey is being conducted with a list of over 200 species, and it would take the same amount of time to complete it if it used a list of only 30.

Mapping is needed to develop a control strategy. HAVO did a survey first, and their strategy followed. Trained botanists will be needed for mapping species. The roadside surveys are just the starting point. We need more capacity for more surveys. We need to target areas to do the surveys.

What should our general survey strategy be? We can take a regional approach or a species approach. We need to find out what our big gaps of knowledge are. If we focus only on key areas such as the NARS, then we may not know whether or not we're missing something elsewhere, but we need to narrow our search somehow (because the island is Big = 2.5 million acres).

For information on species distribution, it is worth it to collect the information that we have so far. We should also go to other sources with the list to find information about the distribution of targets.

Since we need to have more people looking, there is a real opportunity to use pubic outreach for the survey. We can get the public's input via "Report a Pest." We could put their photos in the paper and use a website for reporting. BIISC members could report occurrences if pictures were taken off the HEAR website and sent around with a date to respond by. Phil Motooka's book will be on the UH-CTAHR website in 6 months.

We could get more people involved: nursery, rancher, etc. could rate the 10 worst pests. Kamehameha Schools could survey lessees for weed issues. They are easily reached, especially if it could solve economic problems. Other surveys are on-going, such as those by cattlemen. A caution about depending on the Hotline: the public is calling in about species but people need to be trained to answer the calls – the public expects us to be able to respond.

The bottom line: We need to find the funding and people to carry out the survey. We need to decide how much we're going to put into doing the survey (what percentage of resources we're going to take away from Miconia). We should take a look at the effort on Maui: what worked and what didn't work, and how much it cost.

Criteria for Choosing Control Targets

If we work on something that's not a serious problem then people won't take us seriously. The social criteria are important: people have to really hate it, be mad about it. Maybe a flagship species will improve our funding (e.g. Salvinia in Lake Wilson). However, species that engender emotion have probably already reached a population level of over 1,000 ha, so they would be impossible to eradicate.

We need a multi-pronged approach. Perhaps we need to have several targets: both incipient species and incipient populations. Let's just go for it: choose a target, figure out how much it's going to take, then go for it!

We're not hung up on eradication. Local control, limited spread and containment are all o.k.

Partners

We need to be better organized to get more funding. The conservation issue is not enough. We need the Farm Bureau, agriculture, NRCS, the nursery trade, etc. if we're going to marshal a constituency. If our highest priority is special ecological areas then what is that saying about social and economic concerns? We seem to be saying that we value above all others the natural areas, but we need to be more inclusive. We need to invite a larger community if we're going to grow.

For example, we can look at the Bocconia issue. There we have a good chance of success in bringing in partners. Forest Solutions proposed to Prudential Timber to get rid of Bocconia in the Eucalyptus plantation. Their question in response was: "What is everybody else doing about it?" We can get people on board who have money, but we need to show them that we're willing to address the problem and participate in carrying out the effort.

Next Meeting:

Laura is stepping down from the chair. The next meeting will be announced by the incoming chair (to be announced).

Attendees:

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