

Big Island Invasive Species Committee



FY 2006, Fourth Quarter
April 1 to June 30, 2006

BIISC has had a challenging fourth quarter. In April the operation was placed on RCUH review given a score of personnel problems along with the loss of personnel. Work however continued to move forward in May and especially June with the assistance of personnel from the East Maui Watershed Partnership program. Though field project productivity lagged in April, May and particularly June efforts were extremely productive. Our Executive Committee has been extremely helpful in dictating and directing objectives to assist BIISC during a difficult period. Our primary goal is to bring BIISC field personnel back to an acceptable level by filling key vacant positions.

Miconia survey and suppression efforts were the primary focus of field operations during this quarter. Survey and control programs for Miconia were conducted in Hilo, lower Puna, Kurtistown, Hamakua and Kona. East Maui Watershed Partnership (EMWP) crew assisted BIISC with operations in Kona for two weeks in June. Some 230 acres were surveyed and suppression activities took place on a total of 2.3 acres (combined) with 2,777 Miconia plants treated.

Though survey and control activities in S. Kona had not taken place for nearly 4 years, the most recent operation found only 16 Miconia plants, of which 4 were adults. However, 2 of these plants were very large adults (20') found in a dense thicket of strawberry guava. An aerial survey conducted during this same period did not find any additional Miconia in either the Honaunau or Honalo populations.

BIISC welcomed two new, but temporary employees to assist with a back log of data issues. Sandra Ireland was initially brought on to assist with an enormous back log of data collected from hotline calls, 90% of which were coqui reports. She was initially loaned to BIISC half-time by the Hawaii Island Economic Development Board (HIEDB), as part of their "Women in Technology" grant program available to college students. BIISC picked up the remaining 50% once school ended, eventually transferring Sandi to BIISC full-time for the remainder of her temporary hire scheduled to end in August. With Sandi's assistance, patience and perseverance, she was able to get all of the hotline data into a manageable database, where GIS shape files are now being created with assistance from USDA-Wildlife Services personnel. BIISC can now create a much more accurate GIS overlay of coqui location reports. This effort is expected to continue with the expected hire of a State Coqui Coordinator in September. In addition Sandi has handled on-going hotline calls on a regular basis. Her addition to the BIISC operation has been an enormous help in dealing with on-going County wide coqui control efforts.

23 East Kawili Street Hilo, Hawaii 96720
Phone: 933-3340 Fax: 933-3339

Website: www.hear.org/biisc, www.bigislandisc.org
Hotline: (808) 961-3299

Our newest addition to the BIISC data team is Peter Graves, whose primary duty at this time is to assist our Data Technician with fixing problematic discrepancies in 2005 GIS data. Peter's term will end in September.

BIISC has lost numerous personnel during this reporting period, most recently our Field Leader Jennifer Randall who accepted a position with PTA. We will miss her, and am grateful to all her hard work particularly with the large Kona operation. BIISC continues to recruit an overall Field Supervisor and expects to start filling vacant field positions once this key position is filled. Recruitment for a "Public Outreach Specialist" is winding down and interviews of candidates are expected to take place soon. This will be a key addition to BIISC's efforts.

Partnerships have been crucial during this reporting period. On a high note, thanks to the cooperative efforts of DOFAW's Administrator Roger Imoto and Nelson Ayers, and assistance from the Office of Environmental Quality Control (OEQC), BIISC has received approval for aerial spaying of Miconia and coqui on all Big Island State Forest Reserves under DOFAW exemption rules. We are currently working on maps for Roger to clearly identify potential Forest Reserve worksites. Two potential high priority sites are Maku'u Forest Reserve for Miconia and an isolated Kalopa Forest Reserve coqui population out of reach for traditional ground control efforts. Other partnership efforts with members of the Coqui Frog Working Group, with great assistance from USDA research staff and funding from HIEDB, a County wide coqui database is finally in its infancy stage of creation.

The BIISC community citric acid matching program (CAMP), part of the community loan sprayer program, has proven extremely popular. Since the program's inception in August of 2005, BIISC has matched 7 tons of citric acid. Unfortunately, with coqui season upon us, there has been a chemical shortage for community members to purchase their match since May. Due to this problem, and the fact that BIISC was the only organization with a stock pile of citric acid on the entire island, we honored request in an effort to appease community needs. It was a great relief to community groups that had booked the loan sprayer's weeks in advance. Fortunately an emergency supply has been ordered by HIEDB and they have agreed to provide additional stock to supplement our matching program.

Last, BIISC was asked to assist in a control of snails (the escargot type) at the Kilohana hunter check in station by USGS personnel. DOFAW staff conducted the initial treatment, and BIISC followed up with two additional surveys and control. We are glad to report that in the last survey in and around the Kilohana check in station this past June, no snails were found. Pat suggested we continue to follow up for at least a year.

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