

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 12, 2016

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20230-0002

Dear Secretaries Vilsack, Jewell, and Pritzker,

In March 2015 the Department of Navy released the “*Regional Biosecurity Plan (RBP) for Micronesia and Hawaii.*” The RBP makes numerous recommendations for various entities, including federal agencies, to implement in order to prevent, manage, and control invasive species within the Pacific region. These recommendations are made for Hawaii, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and are particularly timely as the United States continues its strategic rebalance to the Asia-Pacific.

Given your position as co-chairs of the National Invasive Species Council (NISC), established via Executive Order 13112, we respectfully request information on NISC’s plans to implement the outlined recommendations. Specifically, we are seeking information on:

- 1.) the recommendations within the RBP that NISC has prioritized,
- 2.) a timeline for implementing those priority recommendations,
- 3.) the federal resources required to support that implementation, and
- 4.) the role of NISC in coordinating with the various jurisdictions on implementing their respective recommendations.

Tropical islands like the State of Hawaii as well as Pacific territories and Island nations are extremely susceptible to invasive alien species. Increased human interactions with these island environments, due to our military presence throughout the Asia-Pacific, and strong and growing commercial relationships, will only increase the threat of alien species introduction in coming years.

As you know, the current impacts of invasive species in Hawaii and across the Pacific islands ripple through every sector of our economy and society. Invasive viruses impact human, animal, and plant health. Invasive species like the coffee berry borer cause devastating losses to

Hawaii's world-renowned coffee industry. The native forests and watersheds we rely on for fresh water and other needs are impacted due to invasive ungulates, and invasive algae poses serious threats to our marine life. The invasive coconut rhinoceros beetle is currently causing widespread harm to coconut trees in both Hawaii and Guam and has already negatively impacted Guam's visitor industry. The invasive cane toad's toxic secretions have impacted ecosystems and the invasive apple snail that hosts several human parasites including rat lungworm have impacted human health across multiple Pacific islands, including Hawaii, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands. These are only some examples of the breadth invasive species threats pose to Hawaii and Pacific territories' peoples, communities, and economy. Without adequate research funding and proportional mitigation efforts, these few examples, among many others across our Pacific islands, will have adverse impacts on our communities and economies.

The RBP is an invaluable document that was developed with input from hundreds of individuals over the course of roughly eight years. The recommendations made in the RBP provide a roadmap for responsible invasive species management and mitigation in the Pacific. As our economic, military, and social ties in the Asia-Pacific continue to grow and strengthen, we must have a strategy that allows this growth to continue sustainably. We must lead the way by providing the federal resources and support necessary to address our biosecurity needs.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request for information and for your continued efforts related to invasive species management and mitigation in Hawaii and across the Pacific.

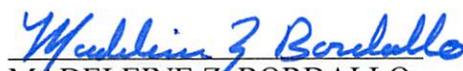
Sincerely,


MAZIE K. HIRONO
U.S. Senator


BRIAN SCHATZ
U.S. Senator


TULSI GABBARD
U.S. Representative


MARK TAKAI
U.S. Representative


MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
Member of Congress


GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Ray Mabus, Secretary, U.S. Department of Navy