



STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF Watershed Protection and Invasive Species Control

The Hawai'i Conservation Alliance (HCA) is a cooperative collaboration of conservation leaders representing 24 state and federal agencies, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations. HCA's mission is to provide unified leadership and advocacy on conservation issues critical to Hawai'i. Collectively, we are responsible for managing the biodiversity of Hawai'i's lands and waters with more than 1,600 square miles of land and 140,000 square miles of marine area designated for biodiversity protection. HCA strives to manage these resources in a manner that integrates Native Hawaiian approaches and knowledge systems with conventional conservation efforts to care for Hawai'i's 'āina and people.

The HCA strongly supports watershed protection and invasive species control as outlined in the watershed protection plan, "The Rain Follows the Forest," released by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). This proposal advances broad goals of community sustainability, ecosystem integrity, and biodiversity conservation by: 1) controlling key threats to priority watersheds, including invasive plant and animal species, fire, and plant diseases; 2) restoring the integrity and water retention capacity of these watersheds through protection and replanting of native species; and 3) educating Hawai'i's public as to the value of ecologically intact watersheds. By providing effective forest management, this initiative helps to replenish streams and aquifers diminished by decades of ecological neglect.

The HCA further supports watershed protection and invasive species control as key objectives within the broader goals and management efforts of the Alliance, including:

- 1) Reversing ecosystem degradation;
- 2) Enhancing ecosystem functioning and resulting goods and services;
- 3) Preservation of native ecosystems;
- 4) Increasing the diversity of native species;
- 5) Maintaining native biodiversity for future generations; and
- 6) Ensuring a sustainable management of Hawai'i's natural resources for island communities.

The HCA will support and contribute to Hawai'i's watershed restoration and invasive species control efforts through:

- 1) Collaboration between state, federal, non-profit, and community partners;
- 2) Management of adjacent land parcels by members such as Kamehameha Schools, National Park Service, and The Nature Conservancy;
- 3) Enhancing biosecurity efforts to prevent emergence of new threats;
- 4) Facilitation of funding opportunities through agencies such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and U.S. Forest Service; and
- 5) Increasing community, cultural, and technical capacity for state efforts in support of sustainable land to sea watershed management.

Effective watershed protection, including the control of damaging invasive species, must become a top priority for Hawai'i in order to protect native biodiversity, agriculture, human health, and quality of life.