INVASIVE SPECIES, CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND THE MICRONESIA BIOSECURITY PLAN

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Background:

Many Pacific leaders have recently acknowledged that invasive species management is a fundamental component of efforts to adapt to climate change, build resilient economies, strengthen food security, protect biodiversity, improve fresh water availability and achieve sustainable social and economic development objectives. In the recent meetings of the Pacific Islands Forum, Micronesia Chief Executives Summit and the Association of Pacific Island Legislators, invasive species concerns and their impacts on other island priority issues have been highlighted. The U.S. Government is working with Pacific Insular Areas to aggressively address these expressed concerns.

Due to their small size, isolation and high levels of endemism, the impacts of invasive species on islands is often more severe and immediate than that seen on continents. Invaders such as the little fire ant, brown treesnake, avian malaria and fruit flies have caused hundreds of millions of dollars in economic damage, caused extinctions of endemic species and have dramatically altered the native ecology of numerous islands. However, the same characteristics that make islands so susceptible to invasive species damages also allow islands to more easily prevent, mitigate or remove invasive species incursions.

- Example: The little fire ant (LFA) stings humans, blinds domesticated animals, directly decreases agricultural yield and land availability and disrupts ecosystems. LFA was found on Guam 2 years ago and was just recently found on Oahu.
- Example: The Indo-Pacific Lionfish has invaded from the Southeast U.S. all the way to Venezuela, sometimes in densities of over 1,000 lionfish/acre. Lionfish can severely impact native reef fish including economically important species such as snappers and groupers.

Discussion:

The United States Government (primarily the Department of Defense) has funded development of the largest, most comprehensive invasive species prevention plan ever undertaken. The Micronesia Biosecurity Plan has tremendous support at the highest political levels throughout Micronesia, actively involves the expertise of key regional partners (NZ and AUS) and is a cutting-edge plan that, if implemented, would significantly prevent the spread of invasive species and also directly benefit efforts to improve or maintain ecosystem resiliency to climate change.

The 2014 Pacific Island Forum in Palau may include a report prepared by Pacific partners on the current status of invasive species impacts and management in the Pacific (per Resolution 19-1 of the Micronesia Chief Executives Summit) In this report the Micronesia Biosecurity Plan may be highlighted as a model of collaborative invasive species efforts for other island regions.

The National Invasive Species Council (NISC) would welcome any opportunity to work with insular areas to address invasive species concerns and to continue and build off of the precedent-setting work in Micronesia.

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