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**Office of the Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas**

**Interior Provides \$3.7 Million for Brown Tree Snake Control,  
Interdiction, and Prevention in Western Pacific and Hawaii**

*Includes Re-establishment of Hawaii Dog Detector Program*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 12, 2015) – Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia’aina today announced \$3,673,876 in grant assistance for brown tree snake interdiction and control in Guam, and prevention in the Northern Mariana Islands and Hawaii.

The fiscal year 2015 funding, provided under the Office of Insular Affairs’ Technical Assistance Program, will support and bolster live-trapping and live-baiting of snakes – methods that have proven effective in reducing brown tree snake activity in Guam’s forests and port areas. The grant will also support critical rapid-response training and prevention efforts and vital research, as well as re-establish the canine-detector program in Hawaii.

The brown tree snake was unintentionally introduced on Guam sometime after World War II, and has been largely responsible for the extinction of most of Guam’s native forest vertebrate species. With the absence of natural predators, the snake has decimated domestic bird populations on Guam and other pets, and caused island-wide power outages affecting residents as well as commercial and military activities.

There is appropriate concern that the introduction of the brown tree snake to other vulnerable areas, such as Hawaii, will have similarly catastrophic ecological and economic impacts as on Guam. The potential cost of a brown tree snake introduction on Hawaii alone has been estimated between \$593 million to \$2.14 billion annually. Hawaii is also home to one-third of all endangered bird species in the nation. Since Guam is a major transportation hub in the Pacific,

numerous opportunities exist for this invasive species to be inadvertently introduced to Hawaii and other areas in the Pacific.

“While I am pleased with the progress of our Brown Tree Snake program, it is imperative that we continue to keep our guard up. We must double our efforts to direct the necessary financial and personnel resources to advanced research, technologies, and programs to address this important issue.” said Assistant Secretary Kia’aina. “The goal is to completely eradicate this species on Guam and prevent it from gaining a foothold in the Northern Mariana Islands, Hawaii, or the Micronesia region.”

The funding breakdown is as follows:

- **USDA National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) for Phase II of the Automated Aerial Bait Drop System – \$237,842** – NWRC has developed and is in the process of building an automated toxicant delivery system, for dispensing acetaminophen-loaded neonatal mice into Guam’s forests via helicopter. This reduces the manpower cost of aerial toxicant drops, thus improving the chances for wide-scale eradication.
- **Hawaii Department of Agriculture for re-establishment of the Hawaii Dog Detector Program - \$527,137** – The dog detector program has proven the best line of defense against brown tree snakes entering Hawaii, as dogs have a much higher rate of catching snakes in cargo than through visual searches.
- **Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for program coordination - \$190,000** – FWS provides coordination of the program, managing communication between federal and local agencies and organizing the Brown Tree Snake Technical Working Group and Research Committee.
- **Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Division of Land and Natural Resources for the CNMI Brown Tree Snake Interdiction Program - \$458,952** – This funding supports the interdiction program in the CNMI, which manages all visual surveys and dog searches to ensure the brown tree snake is prevented from establishing itself on Saipan, Rota, or Tinian.
- **Interior’s U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) for research and development - \$1,050,405** – The USGS in partnership with Colorado State University conducts the majority of brown tree snake research, which aids all other agencies in the best practices for search and eradication efforts. They also maintain the Rapid Response Team, who responds immediately to brown tree snake sightings anywhere in the Pacific. The Rapid Response Team is critical in the interdiction of the snakes spreading through the transportation system and becoming established in other areas.

An additional \$1.2 million was provided earlier in this fiscal year for the Guam Interdiction and Control Program administered through the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Wildlife Services and for Phase I of the automated aerial bait drop system administered by the USDA National Wildlife Research Center.

The Brown Tree Snake program is a collaborative effort of federal, state and territorial governments and non-government agencies. Federal partners include Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, Fish and Wildlife Service, and US Geological Survey as well as USDA's National Wildlife Research Center and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Wildlife Service. These Federal partners provide critical support to local government agencies on Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and Hawaii. The team recognizes that ongoing efforts to control and prevent the spread of the brown tree snake are critical to the livelihood, biological diversity, and economies of Micronesia as well as Hawaii.

*The Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas carries out the administrative responsibilities of the Secretary of the Interior in coordinating federal policy for the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and administering and overseeing U.S. federal assistance to the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau under the Compacts of Free Association. The Assistant Secretary executes these responsibilities through the Office of Insular Affairs.*

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