

THE BROWN TREESNAKE CONTROL PROGRAM - FUNDING NEEDS

Briefing Paper

For the Senior Plenary Session of the Interagency Group on Insular Areas

INTRODUCTION

The current and planned expansion of military and domestic activities on Guam are overburdening the Brown Treesnake (BTS) Control Program increasing the chance of the BTS spreading and having similar, disastrous effects on other Pacific sites such as Hawaii, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and the Freely Associated States.

BACKGROUND

The BTS is believed to have been unintentionally introduced to the island of Guam by the Department of Defense following World War II. The BTS is directly responsible for the extinction or local extirpation of 9 of 13 native forest birds and 3 of 12 native lizards. Snakes have caused more than 1,600 power outages in the 20-yr period of 1978-1997 and most recently nearly 200 outages per year. Snakebite is the cause of approximately 1 in 1200 emergency room visits on Guam, with infants constituting a disproportionately high number of these cases. Due to extremely high densities of BTS on Guam, it has been accidentally transported from Guam to other sites worldwide through infested civilian and military vessels and cargo. Documented sites include: Hawaii, CNMI, Corpus Christi, Texas; McAlester, Oklahoma; Japan; Anchorage, Alaska; Wake Island; Taiwan; Kwajalein; Diego Garcia; Darwin, Australia; and Rota, Spain. There is appropriate concern that the introduction of the BTS to other sites will have similar catastrophic impacts.

The BTS Control Program is an operational and research program designed to prevent the dispersal of this non-indigenous invasive species to other areas and to eradicate existing or newly established BTS populations within U.S. areas. It is a cooperative effort by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs (financial assistance and grants management); the U.S. Geologic Survey (basic and applied research); the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (programmatic coordination and restoration); the U.S. Department of Agriculture: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (control management and applied research); the Department of Defense (financial assistance and control management on military facilities); and the Governments of Hawaii, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (control management)

Over 80 people currently work on BTS control or research through Federal funds. The program as a whole received \$7.8 million in funding in FY 2009:

AGENCY	AMOUNT
Department of the Interior	\$2,813,775
Department of Defense	\$4,386,000
Department of Agriculture	\$526,000
Guam Power Authority	\$88,000
Total	\$7,813,775

Approximately \$8.5 million was made available for the program in FY 2010.

III. FUNDING NEEDS

Preventing the spread of the BTS now will be far more affordable than addressing the economic impacts once a population has been established elsewhere. The potential economic impacts on Hawaii alone have been estimated between \$593 million to \$2.14 billion annually. Preventing the spread of the BTS to other areas during the Guam Military Build-Up would require increasing interdiction efforts on Guam as well as in other highly susceptible areas such as Hawaii and the CNMI. In addition, more funding would need to be dedicated to BTS research to ensure that the most effective interdiction tools are available.

To ensure that the BTS threat is fully controlled and managed as Guam prepares for the Military Build-Up, roughly \$19.5 million would be required beginning in FY 2012 with an approximate 10% increase annually. A strategic plan for the BTS program is currently being prepared by the BTS working group which will provide more detailed cost estimates for the next five fiscal years beginning in FY 2012.

This full level of funding would ensure 100% inspection coverage of cargo leaving Guam as well as entering the CNMI and Hawaii from Guam. It would also allow researchers to bring, to the point of practical application, improved interdiction tools and methods that could result in severe suppression of the BTS population on Guam. Eradication of the BTS from Guam would require significantly more resources and could only be pursued once severe suppression of the BTS population occurs.

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