



MITCH D. ROTH
MAYOR

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEIGHTENED VIGILANCE URGED TO FIGHT THE SPREAD OF THE COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE

The discovery in April of live adult coconut rhinoceros beetles (CRBs) at the West Hawai'i Organics Facility in Pu'uana'hulu, South Kohala, is a wake-up call for all residents to be alert and report signs of infestation.

"Protecting our island's unique ecosystem requires everyone's vigilance and proactive effort," said Mayor Mitch Roth. "We must work together to prevent the spread of these invasive beetles and safeguard our agricultural and natural resources."

A CRB is typically up to 2 inches long and black in color, sometimes with a faint red line running down its carapace. It bores into the crown of palm trees to eat the sap inside, weakening the trees and damaging new or budding fronds. While coconut palms are a prime target, the beetle has also been known to attack banana, taro, and sugarcane

While the beetles were found at WHOF, their place of origin is not known. The contracted operator of the facility, Hawaiian Earth Recycling, provides recommendations to minimize the risk of CRB spreading throughout the island:

- 1) **Be vigilant.** Familiarize yourself with the beetle and its effects on plants. If you have coconuts or other palm trees on your property, be especially observant for any signs of infestation.
- 2) **Only use legal and regulated sites to dispose of green waste safely.** Illegal dumping of green waste, including trees and plant material, has the potential to inadvertently move and introduce CRB into new areas.
- 3) **Inspect green waste/materials before moving or transporting.** Do not transport any green waste when CRBs or signs of CRBs are found. Instead, call the Department of Agriculture Pest Hotline at (808) 643-PEST (7378) or the Big Island Invasive Species Committee at (808) 933-3340.

4) **Purchase organics and other green materials from regulated vendors.**

Properly regulated and licensed facilities, like Hawaiian Earth, make every effort to ensure that their products are safe and controlled for the environment.

Each County is receiving a \$200,000 grant from the Department of Agriculture to implement public awareness campaigns to help prevent the spread of CRB by implementing monitoring programs, promote best management practices, and encourage community participation. The Hawai'i County Council took the initial steps to accept the grant at a meeting this week. Fighting the beetle will take the whole community's participation.

For more information visit www.crbhawaii.org.

“Public education and awareness is one of the most important tools of environmental protection. It takes all of us to address this problem and contribute to a solution, which is the eradication of CRBs,” said Marvin Min, Senior Vice President of Hawaiian Earth Recycling.

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