

Reintroduction Guidelines
Hawaii Rare Plant Restoration Group
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These guidelines deal with the reintroduction of rare plants. Reintroduction should be a supplement to habitat management not a substitute. The final goal is not the success of an individual plant, but the establishment of a viable reproducing population where cross-pollination can occur and in which genetic variation is maintained. An intermediate goal may be to establish a population for field stock or research reasons. It is expected that derivatives of the material in such field stocks will be outplanted more widely once appropriate habitat is secured and stabilized. These plants can be maintained as sources of seeds, cuttings or transplants for reintroduction efforts. Research activities may be intended to identify what factors are causing mortality/decline, to test methods to overcome these factors, or validate planting techniques. Ideally, successful research efforts will be permanent outplantings in their own right. Regardless of the intent of the planting, the process of reintroduction should consider the following guidelines. Many of the guidelines require coordination with other committees within the HRPRG as well as with agencies that may be collecting and propagating rare species. Included at the end of these guidelines is a list of contacts who may be contacted to consult on reintroductions. These guidelines have been broken into sections guiding actions before during and following the actual transplanting of a plant.

Prior

1. Prior to the reintroduction of a plant, there are some issues that must be considered to ensure the health of the species, the individual transplanted plant and the surrounding habitat. This must include considerations of the reproductive biology of the species to be reintroduced.
 - a) Genetic Stock: The agency or individual that is reintroducing a plant must coordinate with the agencies or individuals responsible for the collection, and propagation of the plant. This must be done to ensure a healthy and balanced genetic composition. In addition a population geneticist may be consulted about strategies and alternatives when dealing with especially rare species or those with specific reproductive qualities. This is of course of special concern when dealing with depleted wild populations with remnant genetic stock. It should be the shared responsibility of all agencies and individuals involved to leave an easy-to-follow paper trail back to the source plant. (i.e. Rare Plant Monitoring Form, greenhouse accession numbers) Reintroduction is the last chance to make sure what we are propagating and planting represents a sufficient amount of the genetic composition of the species. Recalcitrant seed-producing plants may be taken as cuttings and helped into seeding in a greenhouse to increase the overall genetic base of the outplantings. Plants used in reintroduction should be as close to the collected field stock as possible. Plants that have been in the greenhouse for multiple generations may have been selected for different conditions than the reintroduction site and may have high

attrition rates when planted. The pollination biology of each species must be researched and considered before reintroduction. Of special concern are pollen dispersal, autogamous (capable of self-pollination on a regular basis) and dioecious species, using propagules or plants from multiple year collections and mixing populations.

- When reintroducing a species that is an outcrosser, one must consider the method of pollen dispersal. For example, wind pollinated species need to be planted close enough to ensure successful cross-pollination and species which require a pollinator must be planted in an area where an appropriate pollinator is known to exist. In a situation where one needs to keep a reintroduced population distinct from a wild population the site must be far enough to not allow cross-pollination. How far is enough depends on the method of pollination (i.e. wind, insects, and birds).
 - One needs to determine if the species they intend to reintroduce is obligatively autogamous. Obligatively autogamous species tend to have genetically similar individuals due to their inability to outcross within a population. When collecting propagules for reintroducing an obligatively autogamous species, it is important to collect representatives from as many distinct populations as possible as opposed to getting representation from many individuals in one population as you would for an outcrossing species. If one intends to reintroduce an autogamous species it is important to maintain those distinct populations and not mix them when reintroducing. When reintroducing dioecious species one should plant equal numbers of male and female plants. If the plants are not yet mature and cannot be sexed, one should plant larger numbers of individuals to increase the effective population size.
 - When selecting the plants to be used in reintroduction, one must consider the age and year the stock was collected. Using propagules or plants from multiple years ensures better age class representation and possible genetic variety of stock.
 - Care should be taken not to mix gene pools that may be distinct and have local or microhabitat adaptations. A site with mixed stock should not be close to a population in which you seek to preserve representatives of geographically isolated subsets.
- b) Maps: Prior to the reintroduction of a species, the area should be precisely mapped. Maps should include the historical and present range of the species, locations of known populations and proposed outplanting sites. A GIS database can also be used as a permanent record of the source of a particular population and to track the propagules. This will help ensure a genetic balance throughout the historical range.
- c) Threat Abatement: Threats to a population should be noted on the Rare Plant Monitoring Forms used to monitor rare species. An entity involved with reintroduction must obtain copies of the Rare Plant Monitoring

Forms to track the genetic composition of their plants. As always, consulting with anyone associated with the monitoring, collection and propagation of the species is necessary to get any other information. A management strategy addressing the threats compiled from the Monitoring Forms should be in place before plants are reintroduced. Strategies should include measures to control the most likely threats of ungulates and competition with non-native plants. Management activities must be conducted carefully as to not further degrade the habitat for reintroduction. All threat control techniques can be pathways for pathogens and other contaminants and must be executed properly. Weeding around an outplanting site may only proceed after careful considerations of the intent. Changing light regimes and soil composition can negatively impact the habitat for reintroduced plants. Also threats to a outplanted population may be different from those affecting the wild populations. For example, a wild population from which propagules are collected may be fenced and weeded but an ideal outplanting site existing off site within historical range may not have any management. Reintroduction should only proceed once a management strategy for the site has been established.

- d) Site Selection: Once the historical range of the species is known and a management strategy is established, a suitable site for outplanting within the range must be selected. Again coordination with the collectors and propagators is essential. A site should be chosen according to the biotic and abiotic elements that comprise the habitat for the newly transplanted population. A careful review of the Rare Plant Monitoring Forms may provide all the information available on the source population. However, before outplanting, an agency or individuals should seek any additional information from anyone associated with the monitoring, collection, and propagation of the species. When interpreting historical range, one must consider that recent alterations of the habitats may have left the sites inhospitable for reintroduction. Invasion by alien species and other threats may have left the habitat within historical range unsuitable due to changes in moisture regimes and soil composition. In such cases reintroduction may be most successful in sites outside known historical locations that have maintained the critical biotic and abiotic elements necessary for successful reintroduction.
- e) Reintroduction scenario: Sites for reintroduction can be placed in at least three categories each having special considerations.
 - i) Reintroduction of a species within historical range: Agencies must consider what distinguishes populations from one another for each species that is to be outplanted. The site must be able to support a distinct population or one is only augmenting the adjacent population which may have different ramifications. Specific information about the habitat characteristics of the source population must be matched as close as possible with the outplanting site to provide the best chance for survival. This should

be done by consulting anyone associated with the collection and propagation of the species and referring to the RPMFs.

- ii) **Augmentations:** This involves introducing propagules or plants into existing wild populations. This type of reintroduction must be considered on a case by case basis for each species. This reintroduction must be done carefully as to not harm the existing population with contaminants or physically altering the soil structure or existing roots. Augmentation may negatively alter the genetic composition of the population with propagules or plants from a single source or ones that have been raised through multiple generations in the greenhouse if not carried out strategically. Alternative scenarios are preferred due to the difficulty in ensuring a successful reintroduction. The complex problems involved with preventing pathogens from invading the wild population lowers the desirability of this option. It is especially important to contact as many individuals or agencies as possible for comments before augmenting a population.
- iii) **Introduction of a species to a site outside the known historical range:** Agencies or individuals considering this type of introduction need also to consider the possible negative effects on the species. Establishment of a healthy viable population may be hindered by loss of genetic variation being at a site away from other populations. Possible hybridization may occur when bringing a species outside its historical range and into the range of another related species. A site outside the known historical range may lack the habitat characteristics necessary for establishing a healthy population. Contrarily a site outside of the known historical range of the species may be the only place safe from the threats that brought the species to the remnant state we find them in today. In some cases, these sites may also offer the best management option for a particular species. It is also possible that the historical range is incomplete or no longer contain the most appropriate habitat including suitable moisture and soil composition.
- f) **Site Preparation:** Once a proper site has been selected there are steps the agency or individuals can take to prepare it for reintroduction. In accordance with the management strategy for the species and site, it may be initially necessary to construct a small scale enclosure and/or weed non-native competitors around the site. These actions should be taken in concurrence with protection of the greater habitat, which is critical to the success of an established population. The season in which to plant must be considered. Generally mesic and dry plant species would face less challenges if planted during a wet season. If drought conditions persist for more than a year, it may be beneficial to wait for a better year if storage conditions allow. Techniques for preparing the soil to receive and support a new plant differ depending on the species. One should consider digging

holes in advance and composting material on site to provide a favorable substrate. Composting materials should come from on-site and ideally be from native material. Soils may also be tested to guide soil preparation and future fertilization schemes. Coordination with the propagators is essential to ensure the fertilization and pesticide application schemes used in the greenhouse are adopted in the field. A catchment and watering system may also be considered.

During

2. The successful reintroduction from the greenhouse to the ground requires several issues to be taken into account.
 - a) Sanitation: Coordination with the propagator and collector is necessary to ensure that all aspects of rare plant handling is done with attention to sanitation. Collection should be done with sanitized tools and proper propagation techniques practiced to eliminate possible contaminants. Agencies and individuals involved with reintroduction need to coordinate with the propagator before the date of planting to make sure the propagules are prepared to go out. This may entail use of pesticides to ensure no foreign contaminants are transported to the site. The risk of spreading aliens via reintroduction activities must be adequately addressed and effectively eliminated. Seeds, slugs, disease, parasites, flatworms and other unintended inoculates must be prevented from being transported to the site by any aspect of the operation: protective management activities, materials, personnel and the plants themselves must all be completely free of contaminants. Care should be taken to clean all gear (boots, packs, planting tools, etc.) prior to arrival at the site to assure no contaminants are spread unknowingly.
 - b) Transport: Use caution when transporting fragile plants. Some species may need water or protection from the sun and wind during the transport. The most secure place in a vehicle for transporting plants is directly in back of the driver's seat.
 - c) Planting: Those involved in the planting of rare plants should be briefed before heading out to the site. Agencies and individuals directing reintroduction need to consider the techniques to be used in getting the plant from the container to the ground. Of special consideration is the decision to use a fertilizer in addition to any on site composting. In areas of low rainfall initial watering may be essential in easing the shock for the new plantings. Building up a pile of mulch around the base of a new plant can help to slow evaporation and keep water near the roots. A layer of cinder an inch thick placed around the base of a new planting can prevent slugs from reaching the plant.

Post

3. Following the reintroduction, monitoring is essential to maintain the health of the plant and the surrounding habitat.

- a) **Monitoring:** Coordination with the agency or individual responsible for monitoring the existing populations may be necessary to see that a reintroduced population gets on a regular monitoring schedule. It is recommended that the site be monitored daily for a week after reintroduction. This close monitoring will insure that if there are problems with pests or other unforeseen threats such as drought, they can be addressed before they affect the plants. Use of the Rare Plant Monitoring Form (RPMF) will give important information pertaining to the location, phenology, population structure, habitat characteristics and threats to the new population. Individual plants may be labeled or tagged and tracked using the RPMF. The goal of a successful reintroduction is the establishment of a viable population that maintains the genetic variability of the species and produces successful offspring. Recruitment in the wild is necessary for the reintroduction to be deemed successful. Monitoring a new population is essential to tracking the lineage of the population and to maintain local genotypes. A consistent monitoring schedule will also reduce the chance of a contaminant affecting the population or surrounding habitat. Recording the watering, fertilization and pesticide application schemes will help guide future reintroductions. CPC is currently working on a database to track safety net species including outplantings. Information on reintroduced populations should be transferred into the database.
- b) **Maintenance:** Watering, fertilization and pesticide application may be necessary to ensure success. Supplemental watering especially in dry areas will greatly improve chances for a successful reintroduction.
- c) **Management:** Actions after reintroduction must be taken in concurrence with a habitat management strategy. Reducing competition for resources with non-native plants by weeding may be necessary. A necessary ungulate exclosure may require maintenance.

List of Contacts

Marie Brueggemann USFW--541-3441--marie_brueggemann@mail.fws.gov

Rick Warshauer USGS--967-7396--rick_warshauer@nbs.gov

Lyman Perry DOFAW--974-4381 dofawhi@interpac.net

Bill Garnett DOFAW--wiliwili@lava.net

Kapua Kawelo USAG-ENV--656-7641--kawelok@schofield-emh.army.mil

Steve Weller UC Irvine--sgweller@uci.edu

Cliff Morden UH Manoa--cmorden@hawaii.edu

Vickie Caraway CPC--cpchinet@lava.net