



Working together to protect and sustain the forests, waters, and people of the Koolau Mountains.

FOR IMMEDIATE NEWS RELEASE: January 9, 2023

FORESTERS MAKING MOVES TO REDUCE THE THREATS OF ALBIZIA TREES ON OAHU

(HONOLULU) – For the past seven years, the Koolau Mountains Watershed Partnership (KMWP) has treated over 11,000 albizia trees (*Falcataria moluccana*) across the Koolau Mountains to reduce their threat to the watershed and community.

Albizia is one of the fastest-growing trees in the world and impacts the urban, agricultural, infrastructure, tourism, and priority watersheds sectors on Oahu. This invasive tree poses a major safety risk and costs stakeholders millions in repairs annually. Albizia trees dominate significant portions of Oahu's low-elevation forest and are becoming established in priority watersheds. Its naturally brittle, fast-growing limbs make these trees prone to structural failure.

On Oahu, albizia trees rapidly spread along significant thoroughfares, urban stream corridors, and private properties. Because these trees grow so rapidly, they can quickly attain a size that becomes a hazard, which becomes a financial burden to remove. To put it in perspective, one mature albizia tree can cost over \$10,000 to cut down and remove by an arborist.

KMWP works across landowner boundaries to eliminate threats to the watershed such as habitat-modifying weeds and other invasive species. This is accomplished by using a combination of adaptive management strategies and established conservation practices. Albizia is one of the high-priority invasive species that KMWP works to manage across the watersheds of the Koolau Mountains. Through detection, treatment, scaled management, community, and partnership strategies, KMWP is actively targeting albizia across 23,000 acres and has surveyed over 57,000 acres to detect and document populations.

Boots on the ground efforts have become safer and more efficient due to the imagery and aerial surveys available. This has led to the regional eradication of albizia from significant watersheds like Moanalua, Halawa, and portions of Waiawa. KMWP continues work in additional important watersheds like Manoa, Haiku, Poamoho, and other priority watershed areas. Though preventative and control efforts go largely unnoticed, it is easy to imagine that were it not for the effort of KMWP, how different the H3 freeway would look if there were 100 ft albizia overhanging the roadway.

“Stopping albizia trees from populating the summits of the Koolau Mountains is crucial. These trees are dangerous and quick to populate Hawaii. We can see it quickly spreading in our urban areas now,” states the KMWP Field Crew Supervisor, Jordan Lewis.

As KMWP support staff continue efforts in the summit watershed regions to remove albizia populations, community members are volunteering to identify, assess, and remove non-hazard albizia trees. These teams, known as the Rapid Albizia Death (RAD) Hui, are trained volunteers established in Manoa, Kahaluu, and Waiahole. Public presentations and educational materials are available from KMWP.

To increase watershed health, KMWP will restore forest zones in Waihee and Manoa with 250 native Hawaiian plants in each site. Continued maintenance and care will be led by KMWP with volunteers to plant, educate, and increase public awareness of the impacts of nonpoint source pollution on water quality in the Waihee and Ala Wai watersheds. Efforts to increase watershed health are supported by partners like the Department of Health (DOH), the Honolulu Board of Water Supply (BWS), and the Hawaii Invasive Species Council (HISC).

To get involved with a RAD Hui, volunteer, or learn more about watershed management of the Koolau Mountains, resources can be found at koolauwatershed.org.

About KMWP

The Koolau Mountains Watershed Partnership (KMWP) is a voluntary alliance of major public and private landowners committed to the protection of the native Hawaiian forests of the Koolau Mountains. KMWP works across landowner boundaries to eliminate threats to the watershed such as habitat-modifying weeds and ungulates using a combination of adaptive management strategies and established conservation practices. To learn more or request information, visit <https://koolauwatershed.org>.

About this project

This project has been funded in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) under an assistance agreement to the Hawaii State Department of Health, Clean Water Branch. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the EPA, nor does the EPA endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial projects mentioned in this document.

###

Links to download high-resolution photos are provided below for your consideration along with captions and appropriate photo credits.

Link to image: <https://imgur.com/a/5VirSWf>

Photo Credit: KMWP

Caption: KMWP field crew eradicating invasive albizia trees in Manoa summit areas.



Link to image: <https://imgur.com/V1plcMz>

Photo Credit: KMWP

Caption: Community members of the Rapid Albizia Death (RAD) Hui treat non-hazard albizia trees to protect green spaces and public infrastructure.



Link to image: <https://imgur.com/a/dseuQ8d>

Photo Credit: KMWP

Caption: Views of non-hazard albizia tree skeletons (white trees with no leaves) treated by KMWP to protect watershed resources.



Link to video of albizia: https://youtu.be/F3sJsff7A_I

Media Contacts:

Contact: Brad Suenishi, Administration Assistant

808-426-8071

Email: koolaupartnership@gmail.com

Contact: John-Carl Watson, Manager

Email: kmwpmgr@hawaii.edu

For formatting purposes, all diacritical markings have been removed from this news release. Mahalo for your understanding.