



Monthly News & Updates

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June, 2019



PMKCA President Joe Clarkson

President's Message

Rapid Ohia Death Spreading in Pau'uilo Mauka

A few weeks ago, I noticed several dead ohia trees on the Hilo side of Pohakea Road and seeing the orange flagging tape fastened at the base of the trees I suspected that they were the markings for trees confirmed killed by Rapid Ohia Death (ROD). I contacted J.B. Friday, PhD from the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, who confirmed that the

process is the creation of very fine sawdust (frass) ejected from the beetle tunnels. The fungal spores can survive in this sawdust and be carried many miles by the wind. The spores can then infect a new tree, usually through a recent wound in the bark.

If ROD is confirmed or even suspected in trees on your property, there are steps that should be taken to help prevent further spread. The latest ROD newsletter from the UH Cooperative Extension Service suggests the following steps be taken with any dead ohia tree.

"Keep wood onsite. Don't turn it into mulch as that creates more material to spread disease. If felling a tree, cut with a sharpened tool on a low-wind, drizzly day to keep infectious material from moving around. Make as few cuts as possible. Wood can be safely burned in an imu, barbecue, smokehouse or fireplace. Otherwise, keep it covered with a tarp to keep boring ambrosia beetles from attacking or escaping from the wood."

It is recommended that all vehicles and footwear be scrupulously cleaned before moving from any location with

trees in question were indeed killed by ROD.

I received the following information by return email from Dr Friday -

“Sad to day, the more virulent species of the fungus, *Ceratocystis lukuohia*, has been found in Kalopa State Park. Crews from the Big Island Invasive Species Committee have been felling the trees in hopes of reducing the local spread. Crews have also been sampling and felling where appropriate on nearby state and private lands.

A limited number of additional trees, about 12 to 18, have tested positive in Pa'auilo Mauka. Crews are working to fell these where it is safe to do so. Some have been right along the roads under the power lines.

Only the less virulent species, *Ceratocystis huliohia*, has been detected in Ahualoa.

We are prioritizing Pa'auilo Mauka, so if people have any additional suspect trees it would be great if they could contact Bill Buckley (budkleyw@hawaii.edu) of the Big Island Invasive Species Committee, or me, so the trees could be tested. Again, suspect trees would be trees that die suddenly and hold on to their brown leaves for a couple of weeks.”

Dr Friday may be contacted at jbfriday@hawaii.edu.

ROD first appeared in Puna. Where it came from is uncertain. The two fungi, *Ceratocystis lukuohia* and *Ceratocystis huliohia*, are related to fungi in South America and Asia, but they are not identical to them. It is suspected that they may have been present in Hawai'i for many years and only mutated into virulent, ohia-killing forms more recently.

The spores of both fungi can only

soil contact to any other place. Keeping our shoes clean is pretty easy, but I suspect that few people have the capability of thoroughly cleaning the tires and underside of their vehicles after every bit of off-pavement travel.

It is also unfortunate that frass can be spread by vehicles that drive in frass-laden soil and carry it from one location to another in tire treads or on vehicle undercarriages. Our shoes and boots can also transport spores from one place to another by picking up frass in dirt and having the dirt drop off the shoe in another location.

We can help prevent the spread of ROD by helping to prevent the spread of beetle frass and avoiding any wounding of ohia trees during landscaping or other maintenance operations. Unfortunately, nothing much can be done to prevent the thousands of small wounds that come from windstorms breaking twigs and small branches off ohia trees.

Next PMKCA Meetings

The next quarterly meeting of the PMKCA board of directors is scheduled for 7 pm, Thursday, July, 11th, 2019, at the Hawaiian Vanilla Company. At this meeting, we'll firm up plans for our annual General Membership meeting and Picnic to be held at the Kalopa State Park on July 27th. The general meeting will include updates from invited elected officials and others on issues affecting our membership area and the larger Hāmakua coast. Also to be approved and voted upon will be bylaws changes needed to reorganize our standing committees.

You don't need to be a board member or committee chairman to attend this next board meeting. It's open to all

survive in the wood of a tree that has been infected. Once a tree dies, it becomes the habitat of the ambrosia beetle, which burrows into the dead tree. Unfortunately, a side effect of this natural part of the decomposition

members and we welcome participation and contribution by everyone. Members of the public are also very welcome to attend our meetings.

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