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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 18, 2019

Pacific Island Foresters Gather for Workshop in Honolulu

HONOLULU, HAWAII – Forestry leaders from across western Pacific Islands came together April 15-18, 2019 for a workshop at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's East-West Center. This workshop was co-hosted by the Pacific Islands Forestry Committee (PIFC) and the USDA Forest Service.

The PIFC is a committee of the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition and serves as a platform for technology transfer, training, and cultural information exchange related to the unique forest management challenges of the U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands. The PIFC is comprised of forestry leaders from Territory of American Samoa, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Territory of Guam, State of Hawaii, Republic of Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The USDA Forest Service's Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry and Pacific Southwest Region are also members of the PIFC.

Every two years, the executive team of the PIFC organizes a professional development workshop that brings forest management staff together for a one week series of forestry short courses designed to build knowledge and capacity within the islands.

"The Pacific Islands are separated by great geographic distance, but we have so much in common with each other. This workshop provides forestry and natural resource professionals with an opportunity to meet face-to-face to discuss shared issues and challenges," said Irene Sprecher, PIFC Chair and Forestry Program Manager with the Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife. "One of the primary goals of PIFC is to build capacity in the islands where access to technology, education, and resources are limited. Everyone participating in this workshop is going home with new knowledge, technology and data they can use to manage their forests in their islands."

This year's workshop included almost 80 individuals from across the Pacific Islands. The USDA Forest Service also had several representatives in attendance. Partner organizations in attendance included the Coral Reef Research Foundation, the Ebiil Society, the Micronesia Conversation Trust, the National Association of State Foresters, and Smart Trees Pacific.

The four-day workshop kicked off with a field tour on the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa campus. Attendees discussed breadfruit propagation, innovative uses of Albizia for housing, and participated in a fire equipment display and demonstration with the Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife. The afternoon of the field tour included a rotation of stops across campus

to learn about hazard tree control, Pacific pathogens, Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle, Citizen Science, the Little Fire Ant, and the safe use of pesticide chemicals.

Keynotes included Suzanne Case, Chairperson for the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources and Magaly Figueroa with the USDA Forest Service International Institute of Tropical Forestry.

The workshop was centered around three themes: 1) Tools for Program Success, 2) Tools for Disaster Preparedness & Valuing Trees, and 3) Tools for Maintaining Healthy Forests Through Fire, Drought & Pests. Agenda items included Forest Action Plans, Forest Inventory & Analysis, iTree (urban and rural forestry analysis and benefits assessment tool), agroforestry systems, program management, drought, fire, forest health monitoring, invasive species, and a variety of breakouts.

Contact information for PIFC members and more information about forestry in the Pacific Islands is available at <http://www.thewflc.org/committees-task-forces-networks/pacific-islands-forestry-committee>.

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About the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition

The Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC) represents a unique partnership between the Council of Western State Foresters and federal government forestry leaders. WFLC is comprised of 34 members from across the federal and state agencies of the West which include: 23 state members (also known as the Council of Western State Foresters) which include State, Territorial, and Commonwealth Foresters of the West and U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands; and 11 USDA Forest Service members, which include: seven Western Regional Foresters, three Western Research Station Directors, and one Forest Products Lab Director.