

# National Fire Plan

## Environmental Workforce in Hawaii

### Pacific Southwest Region

#### Hawaii

#### 2002



In fall 2001, Hawaii's pest problem captured the attention of the general population, federal agencies and political leaders. Due to the wide spread concern, the "Environmental Workforce" (EW) program was created to improve the environmental health of Hawaii's land and economy. Many federal programs including the National Fire Plan funded the program.

The State of Hawaii allocated 1.5 million dollars to assist with the displaced tourism workers. For the protection of the lands, 230 former tourism industry workers were hired and trained to combat fire ants, Shrieking Coqui frogs, mosquitoes and other species and plants. These EW combat crews supplemented ongoing efforts with The Invasive Species Committees (ISC) crews. The ISC coordinated the search and destroy missions, provided leadership and trained the EW teams. However, if the ISC had not already existed, there would not have been sufficient infrastructure to handle this large new workforce efficiently and effectively.

The EW program has been successful. The EW squads have been placed in the field, on the islands of Maui, Hawaii, Kauai, and Oahu. After only a few weeks on the job, the EW crews had very few workers drop out of the program and a few minor injuries. Some EW crews were able to sweep 150 acres of overgrown agricultural lands killing approximately 2,500 Miconia sapling and trees and uprooting another 11,000 seedlings.

