



## CITIZENS TAKE ACTION TO LIST MAUNA KEA WĒKIU BUG AS ENDANGERED SPECIES!

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Protecting  
Native Hawaiian  
traditional and  
customary rights  
and our  
fragile environment

Honolulu, Hawai'i. KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance filed a petition with the Secretary of the Interior and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today to list the wēkiu bug (*Nysius wekiuicola*) as an endangered species with critical habitat designation. The petition was filed under the federal Administrative Procedures Act and Endangered Species Act.

The wēkiu bug is known to exist only on the summit of Mauna Kea, Island of Hawai'i, above 11,000 feet. The wēkiu bug lives in the interstitial spaces between cinders and other volcanic rock. It emerges from the rock to feed on the edges of melting snow, eating insects and other organic matter blown to the summit from lower elevations.

"The wēkiu bug and its habitat face serious threats posed by the telescope industry, tourism, recreation, and alien species," said KAHEA executive director, Cha Smith. "Unless protective measures are taken, it is unlikely that the bug or its habitat will survive unabated telescope construction and associated industry activity on the mountain," said Smith.

Since the 1960s, when the first modern road to the Mauna Kea summit was bulldozed, approximately 62 acres of wēkiu bug habitat have been destroyed by astronomy development. More than two-thirds of the bug's potential range is unprotected from future telescope development. Prime habitat for the bug already has been destroyed on Pu'u Wēkiu, Pu'u Hau'oki, and elsewhere. Introduced spiders compete and may be preying on the wēkiu bug.

In addition to listing the wēkiu bug as endangered, the petition requests that critical habitat be designated, as required by the Endangered Species Act. Petitioned critical habitat includes the summit area of Mauna Kea above 11,700 feet (the lowest reported occurrence of the wēkiu bug at this time), including all locations from which the wēkiu bug has been observed or reported, and any unoccupied habitat deemed necessary to recover the species. As provided in the ESA, federal agencies cannot destroy or harm designated critical habitat.

"These amazing insects have antifreeze properties in their blood allowing them to inhabit the alpine zone," said KAHEA program associate Marjorie Ziegler. "The wēkiu bug and its habitat on Mauna Kea are unique components of the Hawaiian environment and culture," Ziegler said. "They deserve as much protection as the current law allows."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated the wēkiu bug as a candidate for listing as threatened or endangered, which means the Service has sufficient biological information to indicate that listing the wēkiu bug may be warranted.

Upon receiving KAHEA's petition, the Secretary of the Interior has 90 days to determine whether it has substantial information to consider listing the wēkiu bug with critical habitat designation. If such a determination is made, the Secretary must then make a final determination within 12 months. If the Secretary proposes to list the wēkiu bug, a final listing decision must be made within 12 months of that proposal.

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