

**DRAFT Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors**

**Thursday January 18, 2024**

**4:00 – 6:00 pm**

**Location: 80 Stone Pine Road, Suite 100, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019 and via Zoom**

Directors: Barbara Kossy, Adrienne Etherton, Michelle Weil, Steve Stielstra

Associate Directors: Zahra Kassam

RCD staff: Kellyx Nelson, Cesar Aguilar, David Cowman, Erica Harris, Eddie Sanchez, Ainé Javier, Stephanie Macdonald, Timothy Federal, Amy Kaeser, Barb Kipreos, Ryan Silsbee

NRCS staff: Jim Howard

**1. Call to Order**

- Kossy called the meeting at 4:03 pm.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

- Nelson requested that agenda items 5.1, 5.2, and 5.4 be removed from this agenda and on next month's agenda
- **ACTION:** Etherton motioned for approval of agenda, as amended, Stielstra seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**3. Introduction of Guests and Staff**

- All in attendance introduced themselves.
- Nelson introduced Javier, the new Conservation Associate, and Silsbee, the new Conservation Project Manager
- Kossy suggested that board members, staff, and guests read the staff page on the website to familiarize themselves with new staff bios.

**4. Public Comment**

- There was no public comment.

**5. Consent Agenda**

- **ACTION:** Wiel motioned to accept the consent agenda with 5.1, 5.2, and 5.4 removed. Etherton seconded, motion passed with no abstentions.

**6. Regular Agenda**

**6.1. Discussion about biological control of cape ivy in San Mateo County with Erica Harris, Conservation Ecologist.**

- Harris introduced the RCD, programs, and partners.
- Harris explained how invasive the plant cape ivy is, and how difficult it is to remove.
- Harris explained how it escaped cultivation after being brought to the coast in the 1950's.
- Harris explained that biocontrol involves reducing pest populations through natural enemies such as parasitoids, predators, pathogens, antagonists, or competitors suppress pest populations.
- Harris explained that the USDA has stated that biocontrol is a practical option.
- Nelson asked for an explanation on what target specific means.
- Harris explained that target-specific biocontrol is a strategy used to get rid of a target specific organism without harming others. An example would something that would only target mosquito larvae, wouldn't kill dragonfly larvae or frogs' larvae.
- Harris explained that extensive research is now done to make sure bio control will only impact the invasive species in question.
- Harris shared examples of non-target-specific biocontrol that harmed ecosystems, like the mongoose released in Hawaii to control rats in sugar cane fields. It was not considered target-specific biocontrol because the mongoose did not eat just the rats, but also the birds. There weren't enough studies done prior to the release to make sure it would only target rats.

- Harris introduced the cape ivy gall fly, a target-specific biocontrol that lays eggs in cape ivy to form galls and stunt its growth.
- Harris summarized the USDA released the cape ivy gall fly in 13 locations from Humboldt to Santa Barbara County. If anyone sees the galls, send coordinates and photos to her email as it could be vital information.
- Kossy summarized a WMA presentation about biocontrols as a good strategy to have habitat-wide control since they are not constrained by fences or borders.
- Stielstra asked if the gall fly is dependent on cape ivy. Harris said it won't use other plants as host plants, which is what the USDA tested for over 7 years before releasing it.
- Kossy asked if they are always red or if they can be green.
- Harris answered that they can be both and advised no one to remove the gall because it would cause it to shrivel up.
- Wiel asked if the cape ivy disappears, would the flies die out. Harris said they would.
- Harris said another option that could be released is the stem-boring moth that looks promising. Could be 1-3 years before released
- Nelson asked if the moth kills cape ivy or slows the spread if introduced. Harris said she believes it to be the same since it's stem-boring and stunts growth.
- Kossy asked if there is any RCD project specifically dealing with cape ivy control. Nelson said there is, but it is difficult to get funding because cape ivy is ubiquitous and aggressive. The RCD uses mitigation funds strategically to protect patches of quality habitat near cape ivy.
- Ketcham asked why cape ivy is found growing in carport gutters. Harris said she's not sure, but has observed juvenile red tailed hawks picking up cape ivy and dropping it.
- Wiel asked if cape ivy removed at home should go in the compost. Harris said if you can keep an eye on the compost, yes, since temperatures can get high enough to kill it, but it's recommended to bag and throw in the trash. Nelson elaborated that you would need to be experienced in composting and be measuring temperature, otherwise, bag it and throw it away.
- Kossy asked if private landowners can come to the RCD for assistance. Nelson said the RCD has offered technical assistance to private landowners removing cape ivy.
- Kaeser asked where we should send pictures. Harris said to send them to her or upload them to iNaturalist or send them to USDA with coordinates.
- Nelson asked if the USDA will release cape ivy gall fly in more locations. Harris said she is not sure, but likely not, since they haven't taken in many places.
- Etherton asked for a recommended plant to replant after cape ivy has been removed. Harris said she recommends following up treatments and try to get it out entirely before you attempt replanting.
- Stielstra asked if goats eat it. Harris said she doesn't know, but goats do eat English ivy.
- Kossy said that since it took the USDA 20 years to develop this one biocontrol, and it is not dispersing as well as they hoped, it shows how long it takes to do a thorough job.
- New attendees were introduced, including Zahra Kassam, a new associate director at the RCD, and Dave Olson, who has worked on cape ivy removal and the past and was hoping to catch the talk. Nelson said Erica can fill him in after if he reaches out ([erica@sanmateoRCD.org](mailto:erica@sanmateoRCD.org))

## **6.2. Reports and discussion about California Association of RCDs' 2023 annual conference.**

- Nelson gave an overview of what the conference is, shared that there was a lot of energy, and asked if staff had reflections.

- Kipreos said she learned about several RCDs have created a working group to share best practices when working alongside unhoused populations.
- Javier said she liked hearing about other RCDs' focus areas.
- Sanchez said there were a lot of shoutouts to our RCD and Nelson specifically and it was great to see how many people and RCDs were there.
- Silsbee said he enjoyed seeing how each RCD has a different focus and role in their community, depending on community concerns.
- Howard said he enjoyed seeing the evolution of different RCDs over time and the diversity of those who attended. He observed there being more young people than in the past. He enjoyed Eliza Milio and Kevin Watt's presentation about their training event on regenerative agriculture.
- Kossy asked how we can make sure more board members can go next year. Nelson said to respond sooner, since it was first asked in summer 2023, and board members can also register themselves and get reimbursed.
- Kossy shared that she went to a CARCD conference in the early 2000s, and is excited to hear about there being more diversity in participants. Kossy thanked RCD staff for attending.

### **6.3. Board will consider allocation of 2023 earnings for eligible employees to the Employer Sponsored 401K Plan.**

- Nelson reviewed the [memo](#) in the board packet.
- Board discussion included appreciation for Nelson's leadership and that one of the RCD's greatest strengths is how it supports staff; how risk-taking to support staff has benefited the RCD, constituents, and stakeholders; how supporting staff minimizes risk, rather than increasing it, and pride to be part of that; and why staff under 21 and people working less than a year can't participate (it is determined by the financial institution's rules).
- There was no public comment.
- **ACTION:** Etherton made a motion to approve the allocation of 2023 earnings for eligible employees to the Employer Sponsored 401k plan, Weil seconded, motion passed unanimously.

### **6.4. Executive Director's Report**

- The County has promised to notice the RCD board vacancy; please let Nelson know if someone might be a good candidate.
- Noah Katz is moving on from the RCD. The position will be revised as a specialist rather than a program manager and the water quality program will join the Water for Farms, Fish, and People program into the new Water Resources Program area. Jarrad Fisher has been promoted to Water Resources Program Director.
- Kasey Butler, RCD Agricultural Stewardship Senior Project Manager, is leaving next week, and she had generously stayed on much longer than she had wanted with a commute from Carmel. She is going to Monterey RCD. We offered glowing recommendations for her and hope to partner with her in her new role. We have been receiving great applications for the position, but she will be missed.
- Stephanie MacDonald is moving to North Carolina in April. She has agreed to stay on and work remotely for a period of time, particularly as Jarrad will be on paternity leave and she is a key member of his team managing a number of complex projects.
- Two vacant positions are to be filled soon for the forest team and ag team.
- Nelson introduced Silsbee and Javier.
- CA's budget deficit is \$37.8 billion dollars, though significantly less than the deficit that had been projected. It was largely driven by the steep decline in the stock market that took place during 2022 that finally showed up in November when 2022 tax filings were made do, as the IRS had provided extensions to people filing in 55 of CA's 58 counties. To balance the budget, the Governor is proposing a mix of tapping into state reserves, reductions in spending that may affect us, internal borrowing, delays in payments fund shifts, and deferrals.

- There is no mention of a climate bond, which many of us have been hoping for. It was not quite the hit to the climate budget that we anticipated and very little being cut from the nature-based solutions funding- primarily WCB, which is a significant funder for our work. There is significant proposed cuts to watershed climate resilience, coastal protections, sustainable agriculture, and some reductions to wildfire programs. We have already seen some grant programs get cancelled or reduced.
- Staff are working on getting into contracts as fast as possible before any claw backs. Trying to lock in funding that has been awarded but not yet received.
- Nelson is on CARCD's legislative committee. Its current focus is on Division 9 of the Public Resources Code, specifically amending the landownership requirement for prospective district directors. She was also appointed to the bylaws committee (7 people, including 3 members of CARCD board) to update CARCD's bylaws to better enable formation of committees and other aspects of CARCD to improve their advocacy efforts on behalf of RCDs.
- Nelson is thinking and planning for Jim Howard's retirement.
- In the next month or two Nelson will present the 2023 Year in Review with updates from specific programs. Over the next 2-3 months, we will hear from Adria, Eliza, and report on First Flush this past fall.

#### **6.5. USDA NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) Report**

- Howard gave updates on the Inflation Reduction Act. They are trying to accelerate output, but there are capacity issues. There are IRA funds earmarked for work on working lands, such as for carbon sequestration and increasing organic matter.
- Howard talked about his retirement and transition. It is Allan Curry's job to replace him. They might hire a soil conservationist to overlap their positions. Hiring will be open to the public. Howard will support Nelson's involvement in decision-making and input for replacement.
- Nelson asked if Howard will join ACES retired annuitant program to continue work after retirement. Howard said yes.
- Etherton asked when he'll leave. Howard said he will leave at the end of April 2025.

#### **6.6. Directors' Connection and Directors' Reports**

- Kossy shared her appreciation for the RCD's work on JEDI issues, including board support and training, and having DEI in the strategic plan.
- Etherton: Brisbane is creating an equity style guide and thinks the RCD's JEDI strategic plan should also include one. The Brisbane Dark Skies Ordinance should pass soon. There is a winter planting day on San Bruno Mountain on February 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Kassam is working for a site plan for the Mushroom Farm and is working with the RCD for removing invasive species.
- Weil gave an update on the website. From April 2023 to today, there were 9,000 visits. The most visited page is the homepage, then staff and job opportunity pages. The most visited project page is the Chipper Program page then the Water for Farms, Fish, and People page. It was very clear that visitors are people who are purposely looking us up rather than encountering the page.
- Stielstra presented the recent budget and let us know that the finance committee is ramping up.
- Stielstra states that he will be at the CERCAL conference in May. There is future collaborations from the other JEDI committees that are being looked at.
- Stielstra expressed that the regional meetings from the Central Coast Region of RCDs was poorly planned. There was only a couple weeks' notice and they didn't have a compelling agenda.
- Stielstra also expressed frustration with the CARCD meeting for delegates at the conference that was held through Zoom. It was very disorganized with many people showing frustration on the chat and a lack of IT support. It was cancelled and supposed to be deferred to the next day but there was no place to call in. Kossy wanted to know if they rescheduled. No one was sure.

7. **Adjourn Meeting**

Kossy Adjourned the meeting at 6:15.

DRAFT

# *Cape Ivy Biological Control*



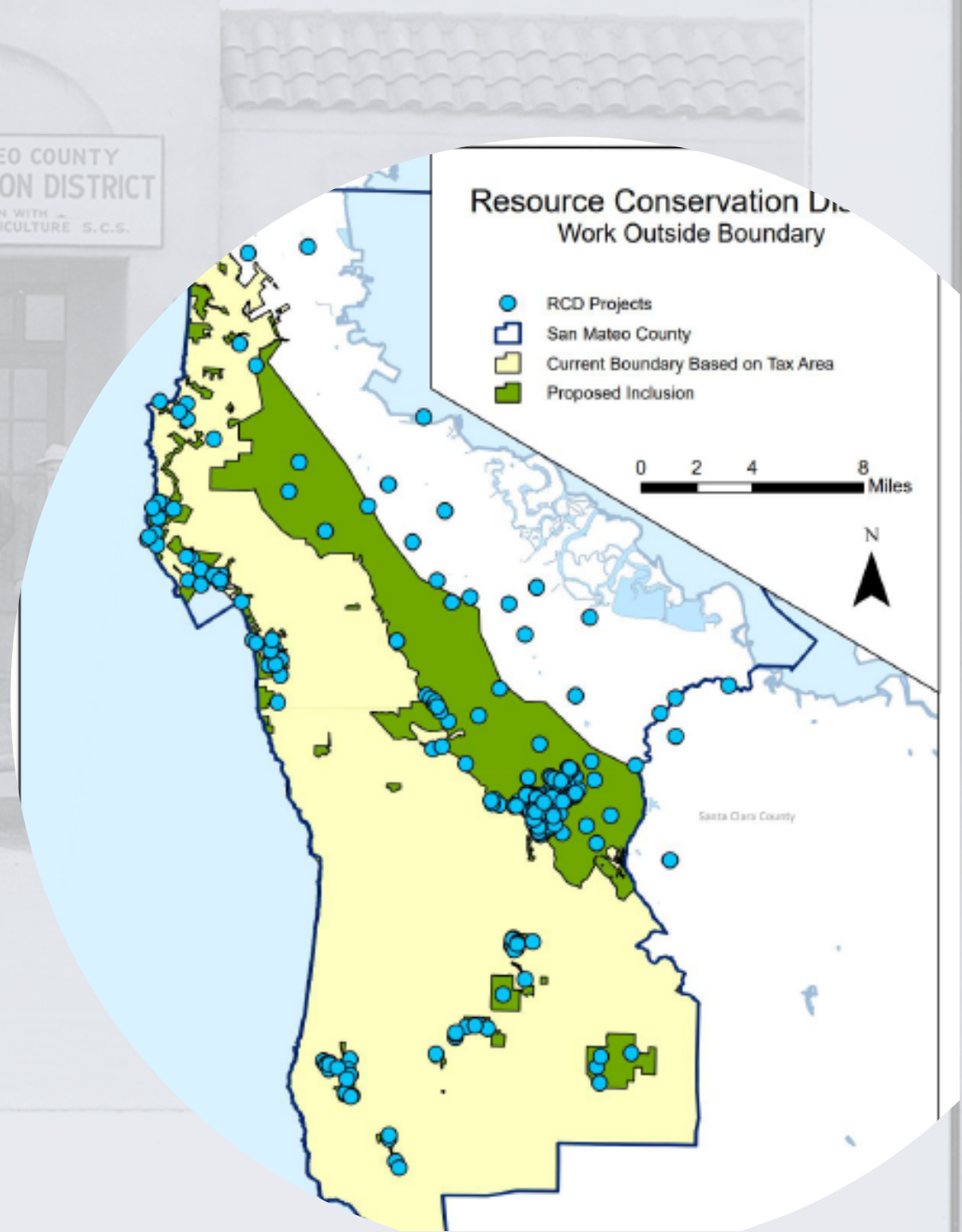
SAN MATEO

RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



# San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD)

- Special district to help people help the land
- Since 1939
- With USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service





## What we do

- Work in partnership
- Local hub for natural resource conservation
- Nonregulatory- work where invited
- Primarily grant-funded







Water



Climate



Wildlife



Agriculture



Forest Health & Fire Resiliency







# Everything done in partnership



RESOURCE  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY



Coastal Regional  
Prioritization Group

Santa Cruz Mountains  
Stewardship Network



# Cape Ivy (*Delairea odorata*)

- Brought to California in the 1950s as a landscape ornamental
- Highly Invasive vine that covers vegetation
- Especially problematic in coastal riparian areas
- Forms dense mats, blocks sunlight and smothers plants and trees underneath
- Reduces biodiversity – toxic to animals and fish
- Clogs water flow, interferes with flood control and consumes water resources







# ARS releases first biocontrol insect for Cape-ivy

Biocontrol insect released to fight the invasive weed known as Cape-ivy has become established

PUBLISHED ON **NOVEMBER 11, 2020**



*ARS scientists have established a reproducing population of shoot tip-galling flies at Glen Deven Ranch (Big Sur Land Trust) as a biocontrol for Cape-ivy, one of the top ten worst invasive weeds in California. (Photo by Scott Portman)*



# *Biological Control*

Biological control (biocontrol) involves the reduction of pest populations through the use of natural enemies such as parasitoids, predators, pathogens, antagonists, or competitors to suppress pest populations.

-USDA

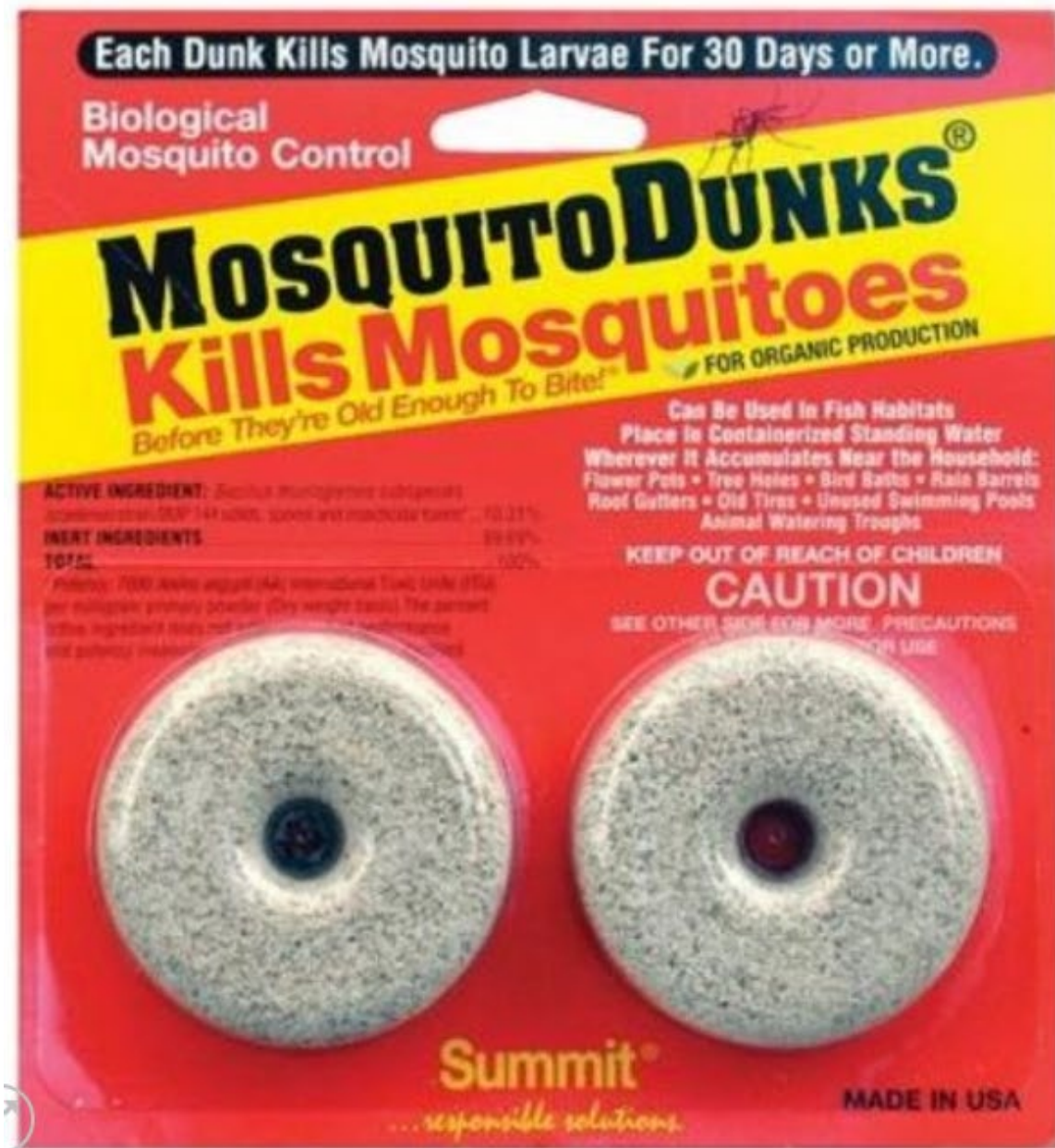




# *USDA says Biocontrol is a Practical Option*

- it is easy and safe to use
- it is a very cost effective and environmentally sound, especially compared to the broad-spectrum pesticides often used
- it reduces the use of conventional pesticides
- it can be implemented as part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program
- once established, populations are self-sustaining, and
- it is target specific





HOME / ALL PRODUCT

## Mosquito Dunks Ready To Use Tablet Mosquito Killer (2-Pack)

\$4.00

10000 in stock

-	1	+
---	---	---

ADD TO CART

SKU: 018506001025

Category: All Product





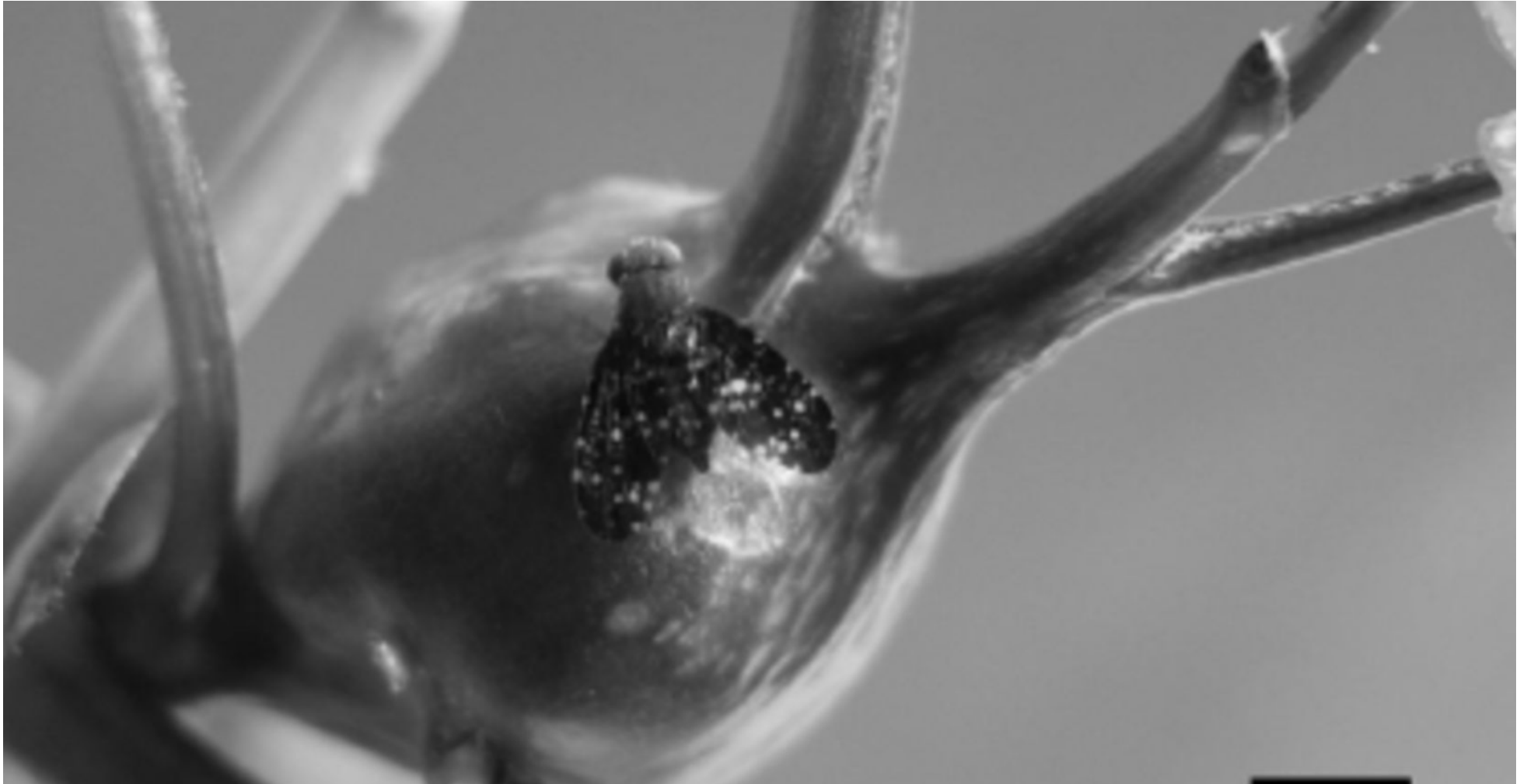
# Can it go wrong?

- Biocontrol is a robust scientific field
- Research is done to identify a predator or pest of a given invasive species from its home range
- Extensive research is done to determine whether the predator or pest would ONLY impact the invasive species in question





# Cape Ivy gall fly (*Parafreutreta regalis*)



# Galls – be on the lookout









# What Next?



- Stem boring moth that is looking promising (*Digitivalva delaireae*)
- 1-3 years before a release permit is available
- Gall fly rearing protocol available from County Ag





**QUESTIONS ?**