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JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SECURES CONSULTANT TO CONDUCT JOINT FACT FINDING PROCESS

HONOLULU – The Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) announced today that noted Honolulu planner and mediator, Peter Adler, PhD, has been selected to facilitate a process that will examine possible health and environmental impacts associated with the use of pesticides applied to genetically modified agricultural products. The County of Kauai will be a full partner in the project by providing funding support and collaborating with the state and the consultant throughout the process.

“This is an important effort that could be used in other counties to address both the controversial and divisive issues surrounding pesticides and the cultivation of genetically modified crops, as well as other science-intensive political questions,” stated Scott Enright, chairperson of the Hawaii Board of Agriculture. “Peter brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in fact finding and mediation and has assembled an impressive team to assist him with the process. In addition, the state truly appreciates the support and cooperation of Mayor Bernard Carvalho and the Kauai legislative delegation in this effort to bring more clarity to these very complex issues,” added Enright.

Adler will utilize a joint fact finding (JFF) method which is an analytic deliberation process designed to gather facts pertinent to a specific problem. The JFF process does this in a disciplined manner and through courteous but rigorous evidence-based debate. It also uses a carefully designed working group structure made up of experts who often have diverse political and policy opinions, but are willing to engage in robust and healthy factual discussions.

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“Sorting out facts – what we know and can say with reasonable confidence, what we don’t know, and what we might reasonably need to know in the future – is challenging, but not impossible,” stated Adler, who successfully used the JFF process to address issues ranging from geothermal energy to community transportation. “The overall goals of any JFF are to illuminate the factual assumptions behind a controversy, map areas of factual agreement that all parties can respect, put those areas in a proper context, and help inform policy making,” added Adler.

Kauai Mayor Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr. applauded the state for taking the lead on this project. “For the past year we’ve been working with the state and the seed companies to hold all entities accountable for addressing these issues,” said Carvalho. “With the help of our state legislative delegation, we have disclosure and buffer zones through the Good Neighbor Program. Now, we’re moving toward the environmental public health impact study and this effort shows the county can support the state as it carries out its legal responsibilities,” Carvalho added.

According to Adler, the first step in the process will be selecting nine or more individuals to voluntarily serve in the JFF group. To the greatest extent possible, the group will be composed of not fewer than nine knowledgeable individuals from Kauai who have pertinent backgrounds, experience or detailed understandings of agriculture, environmental health, epidemiology, toxicology, biostatistics, medicine or other related disciplines.

It is anticipated that the process will start in January 2015, if not sooner, and be completed in not more than 12 months. Funding for this project totals \$100,000 and is being equally shared by the County of Kauai and HDOA.

Further details are contained in the attached project description.

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