

I MINA'TRENTAI SAIS NA LIHESLATURAN GUÅHAN
RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No.	Sponsor	Title	Date Intro	Date of Presentation	Date Adopted	Date Referred	Referred to	PUBLIC HEARING DATE	DATE COMMITTEE REPORT FILED	NOTES
94-36 (LS)	Sabina Flores Perez Clynton E. Ridgell	Relative to supporting Government of Guam agency efforts to secure federal technical assistance and funding to eradicate snakes from Dãno', also known as Cocos Island, to protect and recover Guåhan's native species, and to commit to removing brown treesnakes from Guåhan.	5/21/21 4:39 p.m.	TBA						

I MINA'TRENTAI SAIS NA LIHESLATURAN GUÅHAN
2021 (FIRST) Regular Session

Resolution No. 94-36 (LS)

Introduced by:

Sabina Flores Perez 
Clynton E. Ridgell 

Relative to supporting Government of Guam agency efforts to secure federal technical assistance and funding to eradicate snakes from Dãno', also known as Cocos Island, to protect and recover Guåhan's native species, and to commit to removing brown treesnakes from Guåhan.

1 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMITTEE ON RULES OF *I***
2 ***MINA'TRENTAI SAIS NA LIHESLATURAN GUÅHAN:***

3 **WHEREAS**, the species of snake identified as *Boiga irregularis* or brown
4 treesnake (“BTS”), known locally as *kulepbla*, is invasive to Guam; having been
5 established following the end of World War II as a stowaway in cargo transported by
6 US military vessels, and having been a major factor in a modern extinction episode
7 beyond its native range and unprecedented in its scope, with the extirpation of most of
8 Guam’s endemic and native terrestrial vertebrates, including fruit bats, lizards, and
9 thirteen of the island’s 22 native breeding birds, with the most significant impact on
10 native forest birds, of which ten of 12 have become locally extinct; and

11 **WHEREAS**, after more than 70 years since initial discovery of the BTS in
12 Guam, the BTS continues to pose a major threat not only to the island, but to
13 surrounding islands and atolls in the region; and

14 **WHEREAS**, the absence of natural population controls, an abundance of
15 vulnerable prey on island, and a climate that allows the BTS to reproduce year-round

1 has caused the BTS to have devastating ecological impacts, and, at present, pose a
2 significant threat to the wildlife of Dãno', also known as Cocos Island; and

3 **WHEREAS**, BTS predation on native and endemic species has resulted in a
4 severe decline in Guam's biodiversity, making our island more prone to climate change
5 impacts, such as storm surge activities which directly impact Dãno' and other low-lying
6 areas of Guam; and

7 **WHEREAS**, Dãno' is an 83-acre atoll located 1.5 miles off southern Guam
8 within the Merizo Barrier Reef, and is part of the Malessó' village municipality; and

9 **WHEREAS**, Dãno' is a culturally and historically significant place to the
10 Malessó' community, which relies on the health of the Cocos Lagoon and other natural
11 habitats for subsistence; and

12 **WHEREAS**, Dãno' had remained relatively snake-free seventy years after
13 Guam was invaded by the BTS, and is free from cats, rodents, feral pigs, and deer,
14 allowing for native fauna to flourish and provide habitat for endemic and native species,
15 and is home to the only free-living population of the endemic *ko'ko'* (Guam Rail,
16 *Gallirallus owstoni*) in the Territory of Guam; and

17 **WHEREAS**, Dãno' is considered by the residents of Guåhan and the scientific
18 community to be an incredible sanctuary for wildlife that nest and reproduce there,
19 including shorebirds, seabirds such as *chunge'* (White Tern, *Gygis alba*), *fahang* (Black
20 Noddy, *Anous minutus*; and Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*) which are protected under
21 the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the locally-endangered *sãli* (Micronesian Starling;
22 *Aplonis opaca guami*) the endangered *haggan betde* (Green Sea Turtle, *Chelonia*
23 *mydas*), and on occasion, the endangered *fanihi* (Mariana Fruit Bat, *Pteropus*
24 *marianus*), and notably, Dãno' is the site chosen to reintroduce the locally-extinct *sihek*
25 (Guam Kingfisher, *Todiramphus cinnamominus*); and

26 **WHEREAS**, Dãno', Cocos Island, is one of the only safe refuge areas for geckos
27 and skinks which are rare in the Marianas and no longer found on Guåhan due to
28 predation by the BTS, including the endangered Mariana Skink (*Emoia slevini*), Tide-

1 pool Skink (*Emoia atrocostata*), Azure-tail Skink (*Emoia cyanura*), Micronesia Saw-
2 tailed Gecko (*Perochirus ateles*), Oceanic Gecko (*Gehyra oceanica*), and the Snake-
3 eyed Skink (*Cryptoblepharis poecilopleurus*); and

4 **WHEREAS**, prospects for successful recovery are dependent on eradicating the
5 BTS at various spatial scales and the presence of BTS could negatively impact all
6 wildlife that call Dãno' home, as both active (e.g., geckos) and inactive (e.g., eggs) prey
7 are eaten opportunistically, including almost all vertebrates and carrion of a suitable
8 size; and

9 **WHEREAS**, the Government of Guam Department of Agriculture (“DoAg”) and the
10 Department of Parks & Recreation (“DPR”) are responsible for managing the
11 natural resources of Dãno' Park on Cocos Island, and DoAg is an active member of the
12 BTS Technical Working Group, which coordinates BTS research and control activities
13 to prevent the spread of the snake and restore Guåhan’s native ecosystem; and

14 **WHEREAS**, a 2021 DoAg survey in Dãno' of the population of *sãli*, which is
15 one of the two remaining native forest birds in Guåhan, revealed an alarming 80%
16 decline in population from an estimated 200 individuals to 40 individuals; and

17 **WHEREAS**, in January of 2020 the discovery of a BTS skin, shed on Dãno',
18 Cocos Island, was reported to DoAg and the United States Geological Survey (“USGS”)
19 BTS Rapid Response Team (“RRT”), and in September 2020 local fishermen found and
20 killed several BTS; and, further, in October 2020 a population of BTS was documented
21 by the USGS RRT; and

22 **WHEREAS**, with the assistance of local and federal partners, an immediate
23 response to remove snakes was initiated to protect the native wildlife in Dãno', and if it
24 were not for the careful attention and reporting of local residents, this population of
25 snakes would remain unknown and its expansion left unchecked; and

26 **WHEREAS**, while long-term planning for eradication efforts is ongoing, it is
27 acknowledged that removing snakes from Dãno', Cocos Island, will be challenging and
28 that the effort will require multi-year federal funding resources and community

1 involvement which incorporates well-trained volunteers, and that members of the BTS
2 Technical Working Group recognize that eradication of snakes on Cocos Island is
3 possible and can demonstrate how BTS control efforts may be integrated to protect
4 native species from extinction; and

5 **WHEREAS**, in response to the invasive threat that the BTS poses to Guam, the
6 United States Congress established the *Brown Tree Snake Control Committee* and
7 included section 1209 of the *Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control*
8 *Act of 1990*, and furthermore, a multi-agency Brown Tree Snake Control Memorandum
9 of Agreement authorized a cooperative program to control the BTS outside of its
10 historic range and to develop an integrated pest management approach that would
11 eradicate or contain new populations as soon as detected, was signed in 1992 and
12 renewed in 1999 and 2011; and

13 **WHEREAS**, under the reporting requirement standards established by the 108th
14 US Congress and outlined in the *Brown Tree Snake Control and Eradication Act of*
15 *2004* (Public Law 108-384), the *Brown Tree Snake Technical Working Group* was
16 subsequently created and tasked with ensuring that federal, state, territorial, and local
17 agency efforts concerning the BTS are coordinated, effective, complementary, and cost-
18 effective, to include preventing escape of the BTS from Guam to other locations,
19 suppressing and controlling BTS numbers to reduce their impact on Guåhan and
20 restoring the island's ecosystem, and eradicating the BTS from Guam; and

21 **WHEREAS**, the last major directives regarding the *Brown Tree Snake Technical*
22 *Working Group* were initiated in 2004 with the *Brown Tree Snake Control and*
23 *Eradication Act* (Public Law 108-384) and in 2009 with the *Duncan Hunter National*
24 *Defense Authorization Act* for FY-2009 (Public Law 110-417 [Division A], Title III,
25 Section 316, October 14, 2008, 122 Statute 4356), which required the Secretary of
26 Defense to establish a comprehensive program to control and eradicate the BTS
27 population from military facilities in Guam and to ensure that military activities do not
28 contribute to the spread of BTS; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Dãno', Cocos Island, is an invaluable educational and research
2 destination for students and scientists to observe and study wildlife that is either scarce
3 or non-existent on Guåhan, and is an important tourism destination for the village of
4 Malesso' which sustains local business economies, provides jobs, and is part of the
5 cultural heritage of southern Guam; and

6 **WHEREAS**, the training and capacity building of Government of Guam
7 personnel and community partners to identify and respond to BTS is a long-term
8 investment into Guam's ability to combat the spread of BTS; and

9 **WHEREAS**, plans for species and habitat recovery on Dãno' should also include
10 climate change contingency plans to mitigate impacts of natural disasters; and

11 **WHEREAS**, although current efforts have ensured BTS are actively being
12 removed from Cocos Island and the snake population is being assessed to protect against
13 extant native species, and it is a mission moving forward, that we continue to work
14 towards the restoration of our own environment and continue in the direction of
15 reclaiming the connection to our lands; now, therefore be it

16 **RESOLVED**, the eradication of snakes from Dãno', Coco's Island, is an
17 environmental emergency that requires decisive, well-coordinated, and immediate
18 action, with sincere and equitable partnership between federal and Guam agencies to
19 avoid the tragic loss of endemic and native species, many of which are both locally and
20 federally listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act; and be it further

21 **RESOLVED**, such actions must include the direct and meaningful involvement
22 of the Malesso' community, the Guam DoAg, and the free, prior and informed consent
23 of the people of Guam to be effective and culturally responsible; and be it further

24 **RESOLVED**, subsequent to eradication of the BTS from Dãno', what must
25 follow is consistent and thorough biosecurity, monitoring, analysis, prompt public
26 reporting of native and endemic species counts, and active preservation work, to ensure
27 that these species do not disappear from Dãno' as they did from Guåhan; and be it
28 further

1 **RESOLVED**, as the Guam DoAg is the lead agency in the effort to eradicate
2 BTS, new and significant federal findings regarding BTS and other invasive species
3 should be shared openly with the agency and the people of Guam; and be it further

4 **RESOLVED**, Dãno', Cocos Island, does hold great potential to become a local,
5 regional, and international example of successful endemic and native species recovery
6 and conservation efforts, which would elevate and showcase the stewardship of the
7 people of Guåhan; and be it further

8 **RESOLVED**, that the successful and rapid eradication of snakes from Dãno',
9 Cocos Island, will provide a demonstration of how BTS control and eradication efforts
10 can be integrated to protect endemic, native, and endangered species, and how such
11 efforts could lead to eliminating BTS from Guåhan, further expanding the possibilities
12 of one day reintroducing the island's native birds back to the land and recovering the
13 island's cultural heritage; and be it further

14 **RESOLVED**, that *I Mina'trentai Sais Na Liheslaturan Guåhan* recognizes the
15 impact a singular invasive species can have on an environment and the ecosystem that
16 sustains it, and further implores the larger community, both governmental and non-
17 governmental, to mutually commit and work together to protect Guam's native
18 endangered and threatened species from the catastrophic harm of the BTS, develop
19 more effective and environmentally sound control and eradication strategies and
20 methods that will protect endangered species and other wildlife from BTS predation;
21 and be it further

22 **RESOLVED**, that the Committee on Rules of *I Mina'trentai Sais Na*
23 *Liheslaturan Guåhan* does hereby, on behalf of the people of Guam, support the
24 eradication of snakes from Dãno', Cocos Island, including compliance by all persons
25 accessing Dãno' with the Biosecurity Protocols necessary to keep Cocos Island safe
26 from further intrusions by snakes, rodents, cats, chickens, or any other organism that
27 provide any risk to Guam's native species; and be it further

1 **RESOLVED**, the eradication of BTS from Dãno', Cocos Island, be determined
2 as a priority legislative action and additional funding initiatives through grants,
3 contracts, reimbursable agreements, or other mechanisms locally and federally, be used
4 to explore resources for the continued support of existing programs and the
5 development of new programs surrounding the detection, control, monitoring, and
6 eradication and interdiction of invasive species in Guam; and be it further

7 **RESOLVED**, that the Speaker and the Chairperson of the Committee on Rules
8 certify, and the Legislative Secretary attest to, the adoption hereof, and that copies of
9 the same be thereafter transmitted to the Assistant Secretary of Insular and International
10 Affairs, the United States Department of Agriculture, the United States Geological
11 Survey, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Guam Department of Agriculture,
12 the Guam Invasive Species Council, the Brown Tree Snake Technical Working Group;
13 and to the Honorable Lourdes A. Leon Guerrero, *I Maga'hågan Guåhan*.

**DULY AND REGULARLY ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE ON RULES OF I
MINA'TRENTAIS NA LIHESLATURAN GUÅHAN ON THE DAY
OF MONTH YYYY.**

THERESE M. TERLAJE
Speaker

TINA ROSE MUÑA BARNES
Chairperson, Committee on Rules

AMANDA L. SHELTON
Legislative Secretary