

Environmental News Service

Diversa Will Mine Biodiversity in Hawaii

HONOLULU, Hawaii, June 11, 2002 (ENS) - Diversa Corporation, a biotechnology company, has signed an agreement with the University of Hawaii to seek novel, commercially valuable genes in Hawaii.

The biodiversity access and research collaboration agreement, between the Marine Bioproducts Engineering Center (MarBEC) at the University of Hawaii - Manoa in Honolulu and Diversa, gives Diversa the right to discover genes from existing material collections and from environmental samples collected by MarBEC researchers in and around Hawaii.

"Diversa continues to discover unique molecules from the unusual environments within our biodiversity access network," said Dr. Jay Short, president and chief executive officer. "This network has contributed to the success of our proprietary discovery program and, in combination with our DirectEvolution® technologies, has shown that it can deliver product solutions that are superior to those derived from evolution technologies alone."

Recognized as the most isolated group of islands in the world, Hawaii is the ninth biodiversity hotspot represented in Diversa's gene collecting network. Hawaii features unique environments representing most of the world's climatic zones, including the snow capped mountains of Mauna Kea, Maui's alpine desert, and miles of coral reefs that encircle the islands.

Of the more than 22,000 known species that inhabit Hawaii, 8,850 are found nowhere else in the world.

Diversa Corporation is seeking genes from these species that could be used in new drugs or in agricultural, chemical and industrial applications. The company has formed joint ventures with The Dow Chemical Company and Syngenta Seeds AG, focused on commercialization of products for the industrial and agricultural markets.

Diversa is also collaborating with Celera Genomics, GlaxoSmithKline plc, Invitrogen Corporation and Syngenta Biotechnology, Inc.