



FY 2023 NRCS PIA ANNUAL REPORT



OUR MISSION:

We deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.



One Mission. One Team.

We are stronger together

OUR VISION:

Resilient islands with clean and abundant water, healthy soils, and thriving agricultural communities.

[PIA Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#)

It's hard to imagine that working in the Pacific Islands Area (PIA) can be both challenging and extremely gratifying at the same time. Yet it is. Outsiders think that because it is so beautiful here, that our work to conserve our natural resources is a walk in the park. Since serving as NRCS PIA Director this past year, I've learned nothing could be farther from the truth.

Conservation, no matter the beauty of our surroundings, is difficult but important work. Especially at NRCS PIA where the agriculture is as diverse as the producers we serve.

PIA is a melting pot of diversity of different cultures and different people that live on islands sometimes thousands of miles apart. We have different time zones, different languages and different backgrounds.

But we all have the same goals to protect our natural resources and feed a growing world.

We have experienced catastrophic tragedies such as Typhoon Mawar and the Hawai'i Wildfires due to extreme weather. Together, we mourned the loss of neighbors who perished in the Maui Wildfire, the deadliest wildfire in our country's history.

During this time of grief, I saw the aloha spirit in the resilience of our communities. Many of our staff stepped up to shelter,

feed and support those directly impacted by the wildfires. PIA immediately established disaster response teams to assess the destruction and worked closely with our partner agencies to form a detailed strategic response, resulting in USDA approving \$15.9 million in emergency funding. NRCS continues to play an important role, not only in the recovery but also for the future of clean and abundant water, healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and thriving agricultural communities.

This year also brought NRCS Chief Terry Cosby to Hawai'i during our OneUSDA/OnePIA operational meeting. This three-day meeting brought together our entire agency from all 12 service centers to join with the Farm Service Agency. It was an opportunity for coworkers to share ideas for improvement with thoughtful conversation and team building exercises to grow a stronger PIA. Seeing everyone together in one place was a fitting end to another challenging year.

I look forward to 2024 with our dedicated staff as we continue to carry out our critical mission of conservation to all of PIA.

J.B. Martin
Director
NRCS Pacific Islands Area

Pacific Islands Area Strategic Approach to Conservation

NRCS PIA had a total of **238** Conservation Contracts Obligated



EQIP

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

is NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.

This page highlights some of the EQIP categories throughout PIA which includes Hawai'i (Hilo, Waimea, Kealahou, Kahului, Kaunakakai, O'ahu and Lihue), American Samoa, Guam, Saipan, Palau and Pohnpei.

137
Contracts

\$12.4M
Obligated

13,569
Acres


Hilo



High Tunnel Systems

22 Contracts
\$614,149 Obligated

Hilo Waimea



National Water Quality Initiative

5 Contracts
\$589,273 Obligated

HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED FARMERS & RANCHERS

127 EQIP Contracts
\$10.6M Obligated
10,547 Acres

(Data below reflects overlapping categories)

Beginning Farmers & Ranchers
77 Contracts
\$5.1M Obligated



Conservation Incentive Contracts

3 Contracts
\$365,777 Obligated

Hilo




Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Initiative

(Partnership with U.S. Forest Service)

1 Contract
\$191,406 Obligated

Waimea



WaterSMART Initiative

1 Contract
\$117,478 Obligated

Socially Disadvantaged
96 Contracts
\$8.1M Obligated

Limited Resource
30 Contracts
\$2.1M Obligated

Veterans
5 Contracts
\$134,055 Obligated

FY 2023 Investments in Conservation



CSP

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

is the largest conservation program in the United States. Thousands of people voluntarily enroll in the program because it helps them build on existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operations.

This page highlights some of the CSP categories throughout PIA which includes Hawai'i (Hilo, Waimea, Kealahou, Kahului, Kaunakakai, O'ahu and Lihue), American Samoa, Guam, Saipan, Palau and Pohnpei.

99
Contracts

\$1.8M
Obligated

2,083
Acres



Pest Management Conservation System

80 Practices



Adding Food-Producing Trees and Shrubs

42 Practices

HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED FARMERS & RANCHERS

99 CSP Contracts
\$1.8M Obligated
2,083 Acres

(Data below reflects overlapping categories)

Beginning Farmers & Ranchers
30 Contracts
\$779,266 Obligated



Mulching w/ Natural Materials in Specialty Crops for Weed Control


29 Practices



Cultural Plantings

26 Practices

Socially Disadvantaged
69 Contracts
\$893,004 Obligated



Management Intensive Rotational Grazing

22 Practices



Mulching

21 Practices

Limited Resource
15 Contracts
\$339,287 Obligated

Veterans
1 Contract
\$7,500 Obligated

CSP - INFLATION REDUCTION ACT

offers a historic, once-in-a-generation investment and opportunity for the agricultural communities. IRA funding helps producers stay on the farm and promotes climate-smart agriculture by increasing access to conservation assistance.

21
Contracts

\$568K
Obligated

FY 2023 Investments in Conservation



AMA

AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE

helps agricultural producers manage financial risk through diversification, marketing or natural resource conservation practices. AMA is available in 16 states, including Hawai'i.

2
Contracts

\$308K
Obligated

48
Acres



**Irrigation System,
Microirrigation**

8 Practices



High Tunnel System

4 Practices

**HISTORICALLY
UNDERSERVED
FARMERS &
RANCHERS**

Socially
Disadvantaged
2 AMA Contracts
\$308,774 Obligated



Maui Producer Featured in Farmers.gov

■ Fridays on the Farm: Building Healthy Soil for the Next Generation

By Terri Dux
NRCS PIA Public Affairs Specialist

Meet Michael Marchand of Lapa'au Farm in Olinda, Hawaii. Located in Upcountry Maui, Michael established the regenerative farming operation in 2017, growing a variety of organic crops offered through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and sold to local Maui restaurants and stores.

Crisp cool air and sweeping hills thriving with bountiful seasonal organic crops like luscious salad greens, brassicas, oyster mushrooms, and other root vegetables. It looks like a field of dreams, but it didn't start out that way.

Michael's original goals included a mushroom operation and stone-fruit agroforestry. But when things didn't work out with his original business partner, he had to shift gears and learn how to grow quick crops to generate income.

"I learned what crops grew well, what the market wanted, what was profitable, and what I enjoyed growing," Michael said. His operation grew to include salad mix blends, baby arugula, turnips, carrots, beets, and radish.

In 2019, Michael relocated his farm to a neighboring property, which he says was "the biggest blessing of my farming career." In the past two years, Michael focused

his successful operation to include mushrooms, baby greens, cauliflower, and root vegetables, while diversifying edibles to his CSA members and restaurants.

Michael contacted U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with a goal of building an ecosystem on the farm with more perennial plants and native habitat while growing more food in a controlled high tunnel system to reduce crop loss from the heavy rainfalls and pests. To help Michael achieve this, NRCS Soil Conservationist Jason Hew designed conservation plans through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. [Read the full article.](#)

Guam and CNMI in the Aftermath of Typhoon Mawar

Super Typhoon Mawar passed north of Guam on May 24th as a Category 4 hurricane. The devastation shredded trees, torn-off rooftops, and left 150,000 people without power. Fortunately, no fatalities were reported. According to NOAA, the central and northern parts of Guam received more than two feet of rain as the eye of the storm passed.

Prior the storm, President Biden granted emergency declarations to both the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and Guam. The declarations authorize FEMA to supplement territorial and local response efforts to help save lives, protect property, public health and safety.

NRCS provided financial resources through Environmental Quality Incentives Program to help with immediate needs and long-term support to help recover from natural disasters and conserve water resources.

NRCS PIA administered the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program which responds to emergencies created by natural disasters.

The EWP Program is a recovery effort aimed at relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural disasters. The program addresses erosion-related watershed impairments. These include, but are not limited to:

- debris-clogged waterways,
- unstable streambanks,
- severe erosion jeopardizing public infrastructure,



- wind-borne debris removal, and
- damaged upland sites stripped of protective vegetation by fire or drought.

NRCS PIA traveled to the affected areas to assess the needs and concerns of agricultural producers, landowners and forest stewards.

Emergency Funding in Response to Maui Wildfire

USDA has approved \$15.9 million in emergency funding to help mitigate widescale environmental damage in Upcountry Maui caused by the Olinda, Pulehu and Kula wildfires in August.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the Pacific Islands Area requested and received approximately \$13.8 million to provide financial assistance and anticipate soon receiving the approximately \$2.1 million requested to provide technical assistance under the federal Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, which offers vital recovery options for local communities to help people reduce hazards to life and property caused by major storms, wildfires, floods, and other natural disasters. The Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) of Olinda-Kula, West Maui and Central Maui will manage the emergency response projects. The disastrous wildfires left behind thousands of acres of loose and exposed

soils and massive quantities of debris – conditions that present a significant risk of heavy soil erosion, flooding and infrastructure damage during a major rain event.

The primary priority of the EWP funding for Upcountry Maui is to stabilize the landscape to help protect communities and ecosystems located downslope of the burn zones.

Due to the magnitude and nature of the disaster damage, the response plan will involve multiple endeavors including removing large quantities of debris from difficult terrain; establishing fire breaks; developing sediment traps; revegetating scarred areas with appropriate plants; implementing feral deer control measures to protect new plants; and applying storm water runoff control measures.

Shortly after the Aug. 8 wildfires, NRCS



and SWCD disaster response teams conducted weeks of comprehensive assessments of the disaster damage and connected with landowners whose farms, ranches and other properties were directly impacted by the wildfires.

Once implementation begins, all emergency response work will be done with the landowners' consent and in compliance with applicable state and county requirements.

FY 2023 Sharing the Mission of Conservation

PIA Produces First Public Service Announcement

Working with 'Olelo Community Media, PIA recorded a public service announcement (PSA), narrated by J.B. Martin. The one-minute informative spot shares the mission at NRCS as well as the dynamic islands PIA serves. It features the Service Center staff and local producers working in the field.

The PSA aired on Olelo stations in Hawai'i, channels 49, 53, 54 and 55. It also aired on Hawai'i TV major networks KHON, KITV, KHNL, KGMB, KHET and KMEB (Maui).

The full PSA is posted on [YouTube](#) for viewing.

Image	TIME	AUDIO	VISUAL
1	:00 To :09	JB: Aloha, I'm J.B. Martin, Director for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for the Pacific Islands Area.	(video) J.B. on camera (graphics) J.B. Martin Director USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Pacific Islands Area USDA logo (background) taro and bananas
2	:10	v/o: The Pacific Islands Area includes the state of Hawai'i, territories of American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Micronesia, the Republic of Palau and the Republic of Marshall Islands.	(graphics) Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Micronesia, Palau, Marshall Islands
3	:25	v/o: As an agency of the USDA, NRCS is unique as we accomplish conservation through incentive-based voluntary participation.	(video) Louise, Frank, Kevin (video) HI_Broll 01:20-01:26
4	:35	v/o: We help people help the land so that we can all enjoy the benefits of healthy soil, clean water, safe air, abundant plants and animals.	(video) group (video) harvest daikon (video) taro (video) goats
5	:45	v/o: We support landowners and agriculture producers who are interested in protecting our natural resources and food supply.	(video) Mariah_Cane (video) HI_Broll 03:58-04:03
6	:51	JB: For more information about protecting our natural resources, visit our website at nrcc.usda.gov	(video) J.B. on camera (graphics) nrcc.usda.gov USDA is an equal opportunity provider, supplier and lender. USDA logo



Filming for the Conservation At Work Video Series



With the goal of filming conservation practices in every state, the Conservation at Work video team filmed three practices on Maui in 2023: Forest Farming, Vegetative Barrier and Herbaceous Wind Barriers.

The hours of footage filmed over two days will be edited into three 90-second segments. The spots will make for quick

viewing by the public on a global scale, accessed at [farmers.gov](#). The segments are currently in post-production.



FY 2023 Improvements in Conservation

Increasing Efficiency with Quality Assurance Reviews

PIA conducted three Quality Assurance Reviews (QAR) in FY 2023, which is more than the minimum requirement. Onsite QARs were conducted by a team of statewide specialists who reviewed programmatic, engineering and administrative business operations at Service Centers in Waimea and Hilo on Hawai'i Island and American Samoa.

The team ensured policies and streamlined business practices are being followed, identified deficiencies and improvements needed for the service centers, and incorporating all corrective actions and lessons learned into a final PIA Annual QAR report for area wide improvement and information sharing.

In the Lihue Service Center where staff currently do not have office space, an in-depth programmatic review was conducted by the Assistant Director for Programs and the Assistant Director for Field Operations. Staff performed corrective actions

and participated in training to ensure programs continue to be implemented within regulations and policy. A formal QAR will be held after office space has been procured.

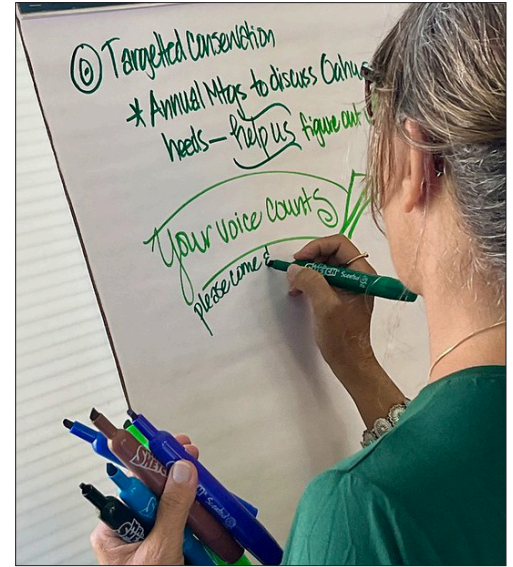


FY 2023 Building Partnerships

Expanding Impact Through Increased Partnerships

Partnerships remained a priority for NRCS PIA in fiscal year 2023 as it entered into six new agreements with partner organizations, totaling more than \$2.9 million and funding 26 positions. One agreement resulted from a congressional directive to build community capacity for land restoration. It centers on training future leaders in the skills needed to protect cultural resources and restore eroded and degraded environments to make them healthy and productive again. This project supports 'aina-based conservation and education on the islands of Moloka'i and O'ahu. Two contribution agreements advocate increased conservation delivery and outreach in our Kealahou and O'ahu

field offices. One national agreement encourages the perpetuation of good land stewardship, open space, local food production and culture on Hawai'i's rangelands by educating rangeland managers. PIA also entered into two agreements for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG). One CIG aims to enhance soil health and quality through the application of biochar made from invasive species. This promotes eradication and clearing of arable-lands by improving the quality of biochar-assisted composting, which elevates crop production, reduces critical area soil erosion and preserves soil health on rangeland using rock dams, fertilizing and native seeding.



FY 2023 Increasing Team Building

Connecting To Build a Stronger, Responsive PIA



With 12 service centers spread throughout the Pacific Ocean, PIA achieved a remarkable accomplishment by bringing all employees together for an operational meeting in Honolulu.



techniques to increase successful partnering, recruitment and outreach strategies, employee wellness and opportunities to build a strong OneUSDA relationship with FSA.

The conference focused on team building, increasing operational knowledge, learning

NRCS Chief Terry Cosby and U.S. Representative for Hawai'i's 2nd Congressional District Jill Tokuda were featured guest speakers among other motivational coaches. "It's important for me to be here because we need to show the employees the importance of working for an agency like we have and the important work that we do," said Cosby.

After day one with FSA, days two and three of the conference, themed One-PIA, centered on NRCS issues. Teams held engaging group sessions to provide feedback of PIA day-to-day challenges and successes.

The conference marked the first in-person gathering of all PIA employees since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. It provided an opportunity for employees to "see that we actually support their struggle in trying to implement conservation programs and to make sure they understand we care about their wellbeing," said NRCS PIA Director J.B. Martin.

