

## After the Tsunami in American Samoa

USDA NRCS made \$500,000 available through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program to American Samoa. The funds will be used towards debris removal following a devastating September 29th earthquake and tsunami. American Samoa's Governor, Togiola Talalelei A. Tulafono signed an agreement with USDA NRCS Pacific Islands Area, on October 8, 2009.

The Governor was extremely grateful to receive this much-needed 100% federal funding so quickly after the disaster. The debris includes vehicles and building materials that were hurled into streams by the tsunami. Its removal will eliminate the risk of storm runoff clogging streams, causing floods that would further endanger people and property. American Samoa experiences up to 200 inches of annual rainfall, with heavy tropical storms common this time of year, making debris removal a critical task for the American Samoa Government.

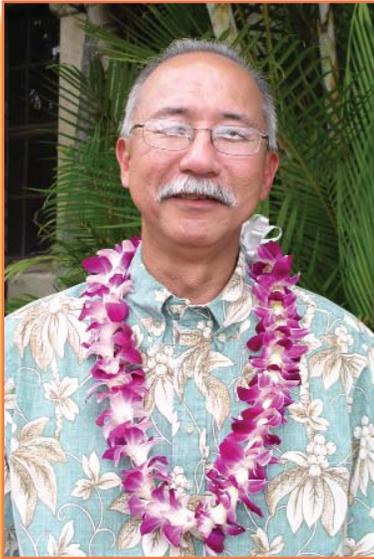
While the NRCS office was damaged and inoperable, thankfully, our employees and their families in American Samoa were not harmed. District Conservationist John Womack, Soil Conservationist Sarah Tanuvasa, and RC&D Coordinator Brian Peck were temporarily working out of John's home. Bill Hollingsworth, State Conservation Engineer in Honolulu (bottom picture sitting next the Governor) hand-carried over 200 pounds of toiletry items on his trip to American Samoa immediately after the tsunami hit. The Asian Pacific Islander Organization reimbursed him for the \$500 expense. *(See page four for more details.)*



*Top: tsunami devastation, Middle: government vehicles were destroyed; Bottom: American Samoa's Governor Togiola Talalelei A. Tulafono signed an agreement which provides \$500,000 through EWP.*

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# Message from the PIA Director

Well here we are with another new year already upon us. This last year, FY 2009, was again a very difficult year. But we came through it with flying colors. This year the Pacific Islands Area met 100% of our performance goals. We also made tremendous progress increasing the rate that our Farm Bill contract conservation practices were applied and payments were made. Your efforts were incredible. But our work is not done.

We now have the new Farm Bill that was passed by Congress. We need to deliver the NEW programs that the new Farm Bill has brought to us. Congress also passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) that provided funding for the Kagman Watershed Project. The ARRA project is a very high priority to the Agency.

Therefore in FY 2010 our priorities will be:

## Priority #1 – Implement the ARRA Kagman Watershed Project

### Priority #2 – Delivery of Farm Bill Programs

- D Outreach to New and Previously Underserved Clients
- D Conservation Planning to Enhance Farm Bill Program Delivery
- D Developing Quality Contracts
- D Contract Implementation and Completion

### Priority #3 – Performance Goals & Congressional Mandates

- D Timely Progress Reporting
- D Accurate Data

Let’s always remember that the Farm Bill contracts we develop are promises we make to both our clients and the U.S. Congress. Our job is to follow up to help our clients implement these conservation practices. Doing this will also help us meet the implementation goals of our programs. Let us all work to insure that we meet those commitments. Let us all focus on our task of “Helping People Help the Land.”

  
Lawrence T. Yamamoto, Director

*Current Developments* is a newsletter for employees and partners. You may submit articles and photos to:

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Frank Bordon Jr. (left) and Jari Seumalu (right) are presented with NRCS jackets and appreciation certificates by Kawika Duvauchelle (center).



PMC and Nature Conservancy staff participate in team building activity at Wailau State Park on Molokai.

## Earth Team Volunteers at the Plant Materials Center

By Glenn Sakamoto, Plant Materials Center Manager

The Hoolehua Plant Materials Center (PMC) was pleased to have two hardworking Americorps volunteers for the summer of 2009. Frank Borden Jr. and Vaoia (Jari) Seumalu joined the PMC crew in June of this summer and worked until the end of July. The two were a significant asset to the PMC by contributing more than 500 combined hours at the PMC. Their duties included, assisting PMC staff with their routine maintenance program of weeding, spraying, mowing and plant propagation. One of their biggest tasks during their short stay here was the removal of hundreds of *Leucaena luecocephala* trees from windbreak lines at the PMC. *Leucaena* or more commonly called Haole Koa was a major pest and competitor with our ironwood and cook island pine windbreaks. The back breaking job included the cutting, hauling and clipping of trees that were at times larger than 12 inches in diameter and over 50 feet tall.

Frank is a local Molokai resident and currently attending the UH of Hawaii at Hilo majoring in Secondary Education and was also returning Americorps volunteer at the PMC. Jari is also a Molokai resident attending College in Arizona on a full Volleyball Scholarship. Their hard work and good work ethics was greatly appreciated by the PMC crew. On behalf of NRCS we would like to thank both Frank and Jari for a job well done and wish them the very best in their future endeavor.



Molokai High School Students, Molokai Environmental Preservation Organization (MEPO) volunteer to help shrink-wrap piligrass bales.



Na Pua Noeau students of Queen Liliukalani Children's Center help with weeding PMC fields prior to the planting of native plants.

# Employee Spotlight



*James Eller,  
Saipan District Conservationist*

Much has changed since my first days as an NRCS SCEP student in Hawaii and Alaska, but my dedication to conservation and the Agency remains the same. I feel very fortunate to be part of the NRCS team. Working in several field offices has strengthened my appreciation for our mission and the people we work with. NRCS is truly a progressive agency that is widely respected among the general public, universities and other government agencies. Many people look to our unique skill sets to accomplish their conservation objectives.

I am confident that my new position as the District Conservationist in Saipan will enhance my knowledge as a conservationist and provide a unique opportunity to assist islanders with their conservation needs. I am fortunate to have a dedicated and knowledgeable staff here in the CNMI. It is great to be back in the Pacific Islands Area and I look forward to working with you all again.

James Eller graduated from the University of Hawaii at Manoa with a Bachelors of Science in Natural Resources and Environmental Management, with a focus in Soil Conservation. He has worked in a number of Field Offices located in Hawaii, Alaska, Colorado, and the Northern Marianas.

# Tsunami Response in American Samoa

Immediately after the tsunami, NRCS staff and AmeriCorps volunteers helped USDA-Rural Development (RD) with the retrieval of a safe and case files from their destroyed office. The files were placed in a secure room to prevent loss of any personal information and later destroyed by RD staff.

*John Womack*, District Conservationist set up a temporary office in his living room so NRCS critical operations could continue. Since IT Specialist *Chuck Reeves* was on island when the tsunami hit, he was able to set up VPN connections on the computers and offload server data to an external hard drive using a portable generator to power the server. "With a DSL connection and a Skype phone we were able to have most office operations, conference calls, email, reporting, and ability to process Farm Bill payments right from my living room." It also made a nice morning commute for John to the office since the only traffic was three kids in the hallway. Since the tsunami, John and his family spent some of their evenings and Saturdays helping his local church, Tafuna Baptist, with purifying water for affected villages.

*Brian Peck*, RC&D Coordinator along with the Council Board and staff members mobilized their resources in the cleanup and relief effort. A team of AmeriCorps Volunteers, administered by the Council, aided the Red Cross in distributing emergency supplies including water, food, and shelter. The ASRC&D has also removed debris from villages, shorelines, and from the coral reef. Recently, the Big Island RC&D Council contributed \$500 to support the ASRC&D humanitarian relief effort. Brian assisted a team of USGS scientists in collecting data and accessing remote areas of the island by boat. This data will be used to improve tsunami models, thereby protecting lives and property in the future. Brian and his wife also purchased and delivered over \$2,600 in supplies to the village of Poloa, which was completely destroyed, leaving all 21 families homeless. Family and friends have generously donated to this effort, which targeted the specific needs of each family.

*Pele Iuta*, who works for American Samoa Soil and Water Conservation District, has been instrumental in assisting NRCS with post-tsunami work. He assisted *Bill Hollingsworth* with damage assessment, providing local geographic information and in field translation. Pele provided traditional introductions of Bill and NRCS staff to the Governor when the EWP contract was presented and signed. Pele also assisted staff with debris removal monitoring and inspections. *Sarah Tanuvasa*, Soil conservationist helped to distribute the toiletry items that Bill brought over from Honolulu. Thank you everyone!



*(L-R) John Womack, Sarah Tanuvasa, Brian Peck, and Pele Iuta.*

# Mapping Remote Areas on the Big Island

By David Clausnitzer, PIA Forest Ecologist

The soil surveys we currently use in Hawaii were published in 1972 and 1973. You may have noticed that some of the map units have an “r” in front of their map symbol, for instance “rAK” or “rKYD.” The “r” means that those soils were mapped in a reconnaissance survey. This type of soil survey provides only general information about the soils in an area. You also will see map unit designations like “rVS,” which stands for “Very stony land” that was considered too rocky to be described as distinct soil series.

The new soil survey nearing completion on the Big Island is more intensive than the 1973 survey. Areas that had been reconnaissance mapped are now being mapped in detail, and areas that had been designated as Very stony land are being described as various and distinct soils that are important for grazing, watershed, and forest management. Ecological site descriptions are being developed and correlated with these soils to define vegetation types and management concepts.

The amount of field work necessary to do this is considerable, requiring long drives on rough roads and difficult hikes in remote areas. Still, a large area on the slopes of Mauna Kea above Hilo was inaccessible. There are no roads, rainfall is very high, bogs are widespread, and vegetation consists of dense forest and impenetrable thickets of uluhe fern. Soil survey staff tried to hike into this area from above and below but were never able to get very far. It finally was decided to contract a helicopter to drop Chris Jasper, Patrick Niemeyer, and myself in the middle of the area for a day of field work.

The helicopter was unable to set down on the ground because the only open areas are bogs with very wet, soft soils and open water. The pilot maintained power and just touched the ground so we could jump out. We were not able to walk very far from the drop-off point. No matter which direction we walked, we eventually were blocked by uluhe thickets. We spent the day digging holes, describing soils and landscapes, and identifying plants.

The general area, which had originally been mapped as rAK, Akaka silty clay loam, is now mapped as three distinct soil types: saturated soils in open bogs, less wet soils with small trees and uluhe, and elevated, better-drained soils with taller forest vegetation. Water flows slowly across much of the ground, eventually finding its way into small stream channels that coalesce into the rivers that reach the sea along the Hamakua coast. Some familiar plants from makai pastures are present, for instance broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus*), carpetgrass (*Axonopus fissifolius*), Glenwoodgrass (*Sacciolepis indica*), and tarweed (*Cuphea carthagenensis*). Common native trees are ohia (*Metrosideros polymorpha*), olapa (*Cheirodendron trigynum*), kolea (*Myrsine lessertiana*), and kolea lau lii (*Myrsine sandwicensis*). In the wet areas, live trees are mostly 10 to 20 feet tall. However, downed ohia trunks greater than three feet in diameter and dead tree fern trunks up to 10 feet long are present, indicating that some environmental fac-



*Looking up at Mauna Kea. Notice three different vegetation/soil types in foreground. Drier pasture, koa, and cinder areas are visible in distance, with observatories on summit.*



*The helicopter returned to pick us up at precisely 4 p.m. despite bad weather.*

tor has changed in the recent past. This change may have been climatic or, as some think, a gradual reduction in soil drainage rate due to soil development.

Not surprisingly, the day that had started with perfect blue skies turned to fog and drizzle long before our scheduled pick-up time. We had brought extra food and plastic tarps just in case the pilot couldn't navigate in bad weather. But at 3:58 we heard the distant sound of our helicopter. It touched down in the bog at precisely 4 o'clock as planned, sparing us a night camping out in the rain.

## Recognition Awards

Keepsake Awards: Tim Brasuell, James Eller, Chelsea Hansen, Eric Hansen, Keith Harada, Mike Hashimoto, Kevin Kinvig, Greg Koob, Susan Kubo, Jolene Lau, Martin Naputi, Athena Pratt, Lex Riggle, Ben Schmidt, Cheryl Scarton, Cynthia Shishido, and Jeff Wheaton.

Spot Award: Jocelyn Bamba.

Extra Effort: Kathleen Dobler.

Five Years Service: Bill Hollingsworth, Andres Juario, Karl Mikasa, and Leo Smock-Randall.

10 Years Service: Jackie Flores, Patrick Niemeyer, and Carol Sampaia.

15 Years Service: none

20 Years Service: Colleen Simpson.

25 Years of Service: none

30 Years Service: David Fischer and Laurie Ho.

35 Years of Service: Michael Bajinting.

40 Years Service: none

## Ag Advisor Recognition



Kathleen Dobler, Deputy Director, was recognized on July 17, 2009 in Washington, DC for her service as a USDA Agricultural Advisor who served in Afghanistan from September 2007 to October 2008. Thank you for your service and congratulations on your award Kathleen!

## Personnel Update

### Incoming:

Daniel Cahill, Soil Conservationist, Waimea;  
Chelsea Hansen, Summer STEP Soil Student Trainee, State Office;  
Eric Hansen, Summer STEP Soil Student Trainee, Kealakekua;  
Alberto Moravia, STEP Office Assistant, State Office;  
Morri-Ann Nagata, Conversion to Soil Conservationist, Lihue;  
Cheryl Scarton, SCEP, State Office

### Outgoing:

Chelsea Hansen, summer appointment ended from State Office;  
Eric Hansen, summer appointment ended from Kealakekua;  
Whitney Haraguchi, Career conversion/transfer to California;  
Hudson Minshew, transfer to California;  
Theresa Navarro, resigned from State Office;  
Athena Pratt, transfer to California;  
Sherman White, transfer to Florida.

## World Food Day in FSM



*Gibson Santos, Soil Conservation Technician in Pohnpei, distributed cinnamon and calamansi tree seedlings to promote reforestation at FSM's World Food Day Celebration in October.*

## RC&D Corner: Marianas

### Challenges and Opportunities for the Marianas RC&D through 2015

Over 40 percent. This is the projected population increase for the Marianas over the next five years. For Guam that's estimated 79,000 more people for a small island community of 176,000. It remains unclear what the full impact of these changes will be in the CNMI.

What are the challenges and opportunities for the Marianas RC&D? Planning is the primary initial challenge. This planning effort will be initially focused on a revised assessment of resource status and trends. The last MRC&D area plan was completed in 2002 when island economies in the Marianas were adjusting to global and regional economic challenges. To better support and meet challenges and opportunities to both conserve and develop the islands' resources, reworking the MR&CD long range plan is paramount.

It is anticipated that the bulk of the resource impact will occur on Guam. Approximately 3,500 acres of forest and scrub will be converted to development. The demand for water will increase and more wastewater and surface water runoff will need to be planned and managed for. More housing, more or upgraded roads, more hospital beds, and more schools and more people all mean more opportunity for MRC&D to help shape, guide and inform the direction of that impact. Significant challenges and opportunity will be faced over the next five years.

Anticipate and unanticipated changes will most assuredly create special challenges and opportunities. Island resources, for either conservation or development, are finite. Community input may conclude a greater imperative to prioritize projects to focus on resource conservation. The need for recreation opportunities, parks, and urban forestry will undoubtedly be greater. The MRC&D is uniquely positioned to support, inform and guide resource conservation and development. However, community participation and input is keenly needed and necessary to meet these challenges.

The opportunities for RC&D may focus more on improving quality of life due to the planned changes across the Marianas. The population, economic, and development impact across the Marianas will be uneven but it will impact all the islands in some form or fashion. To help ameliorate resource and infrastructure impacts and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by increased jobs and increased spending, it is especially critical that the people of the Marianas take an active role in their RC&D in this period of rapid change.

--Mark Defley, Marianas RC&D Coordinator

## Partners for Native Plants



*Top photo (l-r) Christopher Dacus, DOT Landscape Architect; Dr. Joseph DeFrank, UH CTAHR Weed Science; and Tony Ingersoll, NRCS Assistant Director for Technology. Middle photo is Dr. DeFrank being interviewed by KHNL. Bottom photo is emoloa, provided by the Hoolehua Plant Materials Center.*



*(L-R) Ginger Murphy, Associate Chief; Lawrence Yamamoto, PIA Director; Frances and Ernest Wusstig; and Louis Hernandez, President of the NOPHNCSE.*

## Farmer of the Year

*By Edwin Almodovar, NOPHNCSE*

For the past couple years, the National Organization of Professional Hispanics Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees (NOPHNCSE) has been rewarding Farmers and Producers across the nation, for their exceptional efforts and highest commitment to conserving, enhancing, maintaining, and protecting our natural resources.

This year, we received five nominations from across our great nation. Nominees were judged based on their conservation on their farms or ranch, the impact they have on their communities, their conservation leadership activities and the economic viability of their operations.

This year, the award was presented to a farmer halfway across the world. Ginger Murphy, NRCS Associated Chief, presented the award to Ernest Wusstig for his exceptional conservation work in Guam.

Ernest and his beautiful wife, Frances, owners of Island View Farms in Guam, were nominated by NRCS Guam Field Office for their efforts in conservation and impact they have made at the local level.

This year's recipient has also been an icon for many people for the way he has served this country and his community. His friends, coworkers and partners, have shared endlessly, that the recognition is most admirable to honor a farmer from Guam. NOPHNCSE was honored to present the 2009 Hispanic Farmer of the Year award to Ernest Wusstig.

## Kahului Update

*By Andrea Thompson, Kahului Field Office*

The Fire in the Kahului Field office has created a lot of extra work for everyone in the office. It even displaced everyone from their office work space for an entire week. During this time most NRCS employees were working from home, either working from NRCS laptops if available or doing site visits to cooperators properties. I was not issued a laptop therefore needed some field work to keep myself working. The planners had asked if I could get some GPS points for them while we were out of the office.

My first site visit was to my own family's ranch, where I needed to GPS an area for brush management. The area was heavily overgrown with Black Berry, and the cooperator would like to clear this area using a D6 Bulldozer and follow up with herbicide spraying. So I needed to get the boundary points for the area that was going to be cleared, this way we have an idea of the acreage and we are able to show the area on our conservation map. This was relatively easy; the biggest challenge is accessing the area. After 4wheeling for about 30 minutes we finally reached our destination. The area was so overgrown that it was almost inaccessible. However I got the points I needed, all four corners of the area to be cleared.

My next site visit was to an organic farm in Haiku. Here, I was asked to get the GPS points for several different practices that will be implemented on the farm as part of the NRCS EQIP program. I was asked to get the location of compost facilities, identify the existing irrigation mainline location, and locate the herbaceous wind barriers and the areas for pollinators, which improve crop health. Depending on what the points were for each location it could be a single point or multiple points. For example, the location of the existing irrigation mainline was one point, but for the pollinator areas I needed to get the perimeter around the field, therefore requiring multiple points. This all helped to keep me busy until we were ready to move into our temporary office.

The following week we needed to be at the old office for the moving of boxes, printers, and everything else. This took all day, the next day we were at the new office. I spent that whole day unpacking boxes and filing back all of our case folders. We are pretty well setup already and it is only the second day. We are still waiting on the internet and our phone lines, so work isn't totally back to normal. Within no time at all we will be back to work as usual.

# Jason Fox is a Conservationist Extraordinaire

By Robert Joy, PIA Plant Materials Specialist and Lester Suehiro, Soil Conservation Technician, Hilo Field Office

Jason Fox lives on the island of Hawaii and is a true conservationist at heart. He has protection and enhancement of the land at the top of his priority list. He received his training in agriculture by working with a service group called Community Supported Agriculture. The organization supported, in part, approximately 125 families in the Philadelphia area by providing fruits and vegetables in exchange for their labor on the farm.

Jason is a kind of Johnny Appleseed of vetiver systems. Seems everywhere he looks, he finds examples of where 'Sunshine' vetiver grass could be planted to prevent erosion and resource degradation. He's even ready to start talking to County Public Works officials about planting vetiver grass on their roadside cut banks.

Vetiver can be planted as slips, but its survivability and growth are enhanced if it is first planted in containers and allowed to develop a good root system. Dibble tubes are a popular planting container and are used primarily for tree seedlings because the seedlings develop the desired deep root system. However, they can be used for many other types of plants, such as vetiver, where a deep root system is beneficial for survival and growth. Dibble tubes take up little room and are easy to transport to the planting site. They measure approximately 1" in diameter by 6" long. As good as they are, they have a problem because they are made of polyurethane or high-density polyethylene that will take many lifetimes to break down.



Jason is trying different sizes of bamboo dibble tubes.



So far, this length bamboo culm seems to work best.

Jason says he can see the potential of mass plantings of vetiver and wants to use as little plastic as possible. That's how he came up with the idea of using the other amazing grass, bamboo, as nature's answer to the plastic dibble tube. For durability and longevity, he uses Guadua which is used in construction and is one of the world's great structural bamboos. He likes the large diameter culms and drills 4-5 holes in the bottom. He uses a soil/cinder mix as his planting medium. Most commercial potting mixes should also be satisfactory.

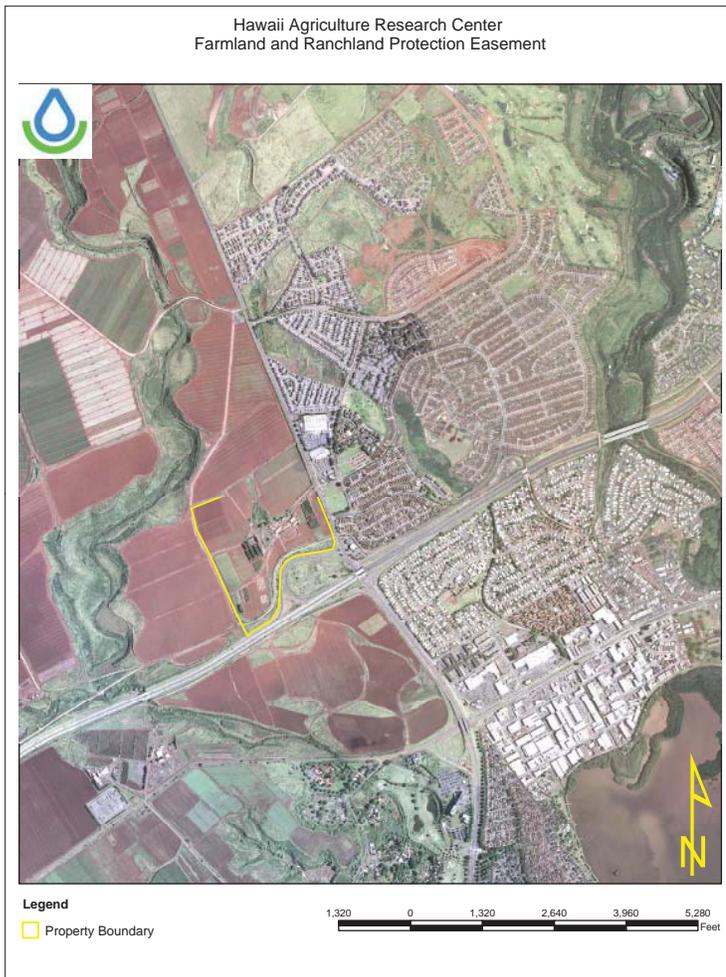
Jason would love to see more people using bamboo instead of plastic and would be happy to provide more details. He can be contacted at [bigislandsoil@gmail.com](mailto:bigislandsoil@gmail.com).

Hawaii became the first state to offer GIS software for K-12 students in public and private schools. This is an important tool that will help students get through this high tech job market. It is also a tool that most of the employees at NRCS use today. If any of our employees want to join up for the GeoMentoring program, it will help our cause getting this knowledge to the students and teachers in Hawaii.

Visit <http://edcommunity.esri.com/geommentor>

# Hawaii Agriculture Research Center Secured

By Mike Whitt, Resource Conservationist, State Office



how to mesh these two programs so that they complement each other to maximize the potential benefits. However, the dedicated staff of ADC, NRCS, and the Department of Land and Natural Resources, and a cooperative landowner ensured that the challenges were resolved. A great many thanks is owed to all who helped accomplish this project.

The importance of the agricultural easement largely rests in the property's location - Kunia. The Kunia area has been under development pressure for years. This property sits on the edge of that development. This property is now protected and establishes a model for the agricultural properties mauka of its location. As the old pineapple and sugarcane fields are sold many Oahu residents are concerned that the land will be developed thus losing the open, rural environments that they treasure. Agricultural easements, such as this, can help to preserve that treasure.

The first projects are always the hardest as there inevitably are a number of false starts when establishing new procedures. The agencies involved were fortunate to work with a proactive landowner who is also passionate about protecting Hawaii's agricultural land. HARC strongly advocated getting the Legacy Lands Conservation Program and the Clean Water and Natural Lands Commission to include agricultural lands. This helped pave the way for future Hawaii producers interested in applying for agricultural easements to protect their lands. HARC has been working for the last 112 years to maintain, improve, and advance agricultural production. They conduct research on and grow coffee, cacao, vegetable crops, tropical fruits, sugarcane, and hardwoods; as well as, support the development of diversified agriculture. With the support of this easement is anticipated that HARC will be able to continue its' century-old mission of service to the agricultural community.



The mission of the Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) is to ensure equity in areas of employment and programs. This mission statement has its roots in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972. In a policy statement made on February 25, 2009, the Secretary of Agriculture said, "I fully support the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) civil rights, equal employment opportunity, and diversity policies and programs. Improving civil rights throughout USDA is one of my top priorities and by pursuing this goal together in a transparent and ethical manner we can lead the way in making USDA a model organization". One way to achieve these goals is for the Federal Government to strive to emulate the civilian labor force in its employment statistics in its hiring practices. As a member of the PIA Civil Rights Advisory Committee, one of our duties as CRAC members is to compare employment in the civilian labor force with that of the agency and develop strategies to help close gaps in those statistics.

As Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager, I specifically work on issues surrounding the recruitment, retention, and advancement of Hispanics within the NRCS, the other Special Emphasis Program Managers work with their specific groups. Hispanics make up approximately 15% of the entire US population and are the fastest growing segment; Hispanics also make up about 13% of the civilian labor force. When the civilian labor force is compared to the USDA, Hispanics comprise approximately 7.5% of the workforce, looking at the NRCS; Hispanics make up only 4.5% of the work force.

Hispanic Heritage Month, as well as the other special emphasis months, is a time to reflect on cultures that are different from our own. It's a time to appreciate other cultures and how they make all of us better. For example, we all love to eat, just think of all the different cultural foods that we eat and how that makes our dining experience better. Think of technological advances that have been developed by peoples of different cultures which have made all of our lives better. Think of our friends, colleagues, and producers that are of different cultures and how they have ideas or thought processes that are different from ours and how the melding of all those ideas makes the final outcome better. From September 15 to October 15 each year we celebrate the Hispanic culture and all that it has done to make our lives in the Americas better.

The Federal Government strives to emulate the civilian labor force in its employment statistics, as NRCS employees we are all ambassadors and recruiters of potential employees for our agency. I would encourage each of you to recruit men and women of all cultures to look at the employment possibilities in the Federal Government, and specifically the NRCS.

*--Chad Kacir, HEPM*



*Joe Tuquero gives a talk about Cocos Island Forest Enhancement. Photo by Larry Cunningham.*

*By Joe Tuquero, Soil Conservationist, Guam*

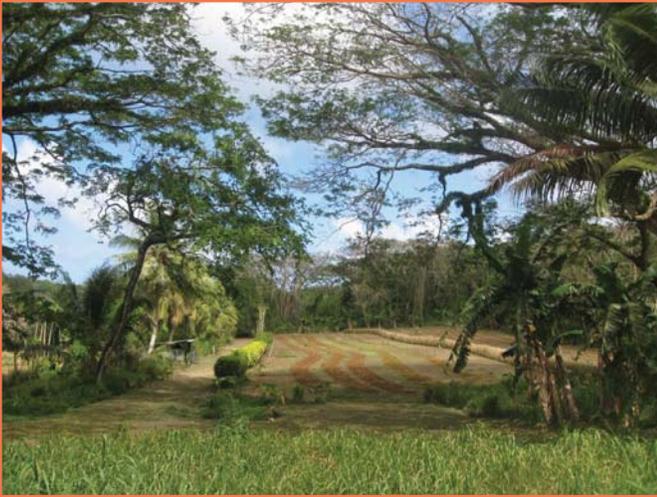
The Pacific Islands Bilingual Bicultural Association (PIBBA) is an annual event that occurs in island nations across the western Pacific. PIBBA conferences provide Pacific educators professional growth and cultural enrichment. This year's 28<sup>th</sup> PIBBA conference was held in Guam, with the theme being "La'su'on I Kinalamten I Fino' yan Lina'la i Pasifiku Siha." This theme, which is written in Chamorro, the native language of the Mariana Islands, translates to "Invigorating Languages and Cultures of the Pacific."

This year's conference included numerous traditional, innovative, and practical cultural presentations conducted by educators and cultural leaders from the Pacific.

Jocelyn Bamba, the Guam Field Office District Conservationist, and Joe Tuquero, Soil Conservationist, participated in this year's PIBBA conference. They presented on the Cocos Island Forest Enhancement project, which is implemented by the Guam Department of Agriculture staff. The project is funded by the Farm Bill Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. Approximately 20 participants from throughout Micronesia attended the session.

The presentation focused on how NRCS conservation practices invigorate native environments and cultures throughout Micronesia. Such practices include Forest Stand Improvement, Pest Management, and native Tree-Shrub Establishment. The presentation touched base with NRCS presence in the Pacific, its mission, and its available programs that are the tools to provide cooperators technical and financial assistance where applicable.

## Photo Contest Winners



Congratulations to Pam Aguon, Patrick Niemeyer, and Bob Gavenda for being this round of photo contest winners! The Leadership Team judged the photos on Appropriateness to Category, Composition, Creativity, and Aesthetics.

The winner for the Conservation category is *Pam Aguon*, Soil Conservationist in the Saipan Service Center. Her picture is of contour farming, strip till, and vegetative barriers.

The winner for the Scenic category is *Patrick Niemeyer*, Soil Scientist in the Hawaii Resource Office. His picture is of the Upper Wailuku River.

The winner for the Cultural category is *Dr. Robert Gavenda*, Assistant State Soil Scientist in the West Area Office. His picture is of Yap women dancing.

To view all the photos that were submitted for the contest, see [www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov/features/photo\\_contest\\_photogallery.asp](http://www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov/features/photo_contest_photogallery.asp). Thank you to everyone who contributed photos, to the judges, and to *Karl Mikasa* for creating the searchable database of images.

If you are interested in participating in the next contest, please email one JPEG or TIFF per category to [jolene.lau@hi.usda.gov](mailto:jolene.lau@hi.usda.gov). The deadline to submit photos for the next issue of *Current Developments* is due on January 31, 2010.



*Photo Contest Winners: Pamela Aguon (top), Patrick Niemeyer (middle), and Dr. Robert Gavenda (bottom).*

Happy Holidays,  
Wishing you all the  
best for 2010!