



Current Developments



Public Meetings Held

USDA Hawaii Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD) State Directors held a public meeting in Hawaii County on:

- Wednesday, November 7, 2012 at 5:30 pm at the Pu'u'eo Community Center on 145 Wainaku Street located in Hilo;
- Thursday, November 8, 2012 at 12:30 pm at the Kamuela Cooperative Extension Service Conference Room on 67-5189 Kamamalu Road in Waimea;
- Thursday, November 8, 2012 at 5:30 pm at the Kona Imin Center on 76-5893 Old Government Road in Holualoa.

The meeting purpose was to provide producers with an update on current FSA, NRCS and RD programs as well as discuss the Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher Claims Process. The claims period closes on March 25, 2013.

If you, or someone you know, believes the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has improperly denied you farm loan benefits between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic or female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation and should contact toll free (888) 508-4429 or visit the website to obtain a claims package at www.farmerclaims.gov.



Regional Conservationist Visits



Astor Boozer (right) at the HACD meeting on Maui.



Visiting an EQIP project at Frankie's Nursery on Oahu.

Inside This Issue:

150th Anniversary	3
Employee Spotlight	4
Hispanic/Female Notice	5
Maui Watershed Partnership	6
Summer Highlights	7

Signature of a Positive Leader:

*The life we lead creates our Signature.
The question is, "Am I creating my highest version?"*



Mr. Angel Figueroa, PIA Director

Message from the PIA Director

Dear PIA friends,

I am sure this was an eventful year for you as it has for me. Having my first full year in the PIA plus going on extended sick leave was a very challenging time for me. But I have survived and feel stronger than ever and very motivated to see to it that we are successful in delivering our services and programs to our clients, including our culturally diverse and limited resource farmers and ranchers.

We have been working with Farm Service Agency and Rural Development Agency to inform our Hispanic and Women Farmers on the claims process established for those who believe they were not afforded the same opportunities in accessing certain loans from USDA. We have been outreaching to students and farmers and ranchers to make them aware of NRCS services and programs, including Native Hawaiian, Chamorro, and American Samoan organizations and entities. And we have delivered our services and programs successfully last year, even when we had challenges along the way.

I look forward to the next calendar year that is well into our second quarter for FY 2013, as an opportunity to meet our goals and deliver services and programs fairly and equitably. Our tax payers expect nothing less of their Federal Government. We need to increase our conservation planning while we deliver all of our Farm Bill program dollars to the PIA. Hopefully, we will increase Easement Program participation and request EQIP Regional Equity so that the Pacific Islanders may receive their share of national services and programs.

We need every single NRCS PIA team member to contribute to our success this coming year and each and every Partner team member as well. We will continue our partnerships and build upon our common goals.

As I write this piece we still don't have our Continuing Resolution budget and have curtailed expenses to critical travel, services, and equipment purchases. We hope to have our CR budget and the annual allocation in the coming weeks and we will be able to provide full service to our clients in FY 2013. Have happy and safe Holiday Season or whatever you celebrate in your cultures.

I would like to welcome our new NRCS and SWCD employees to our family.

ANGEL L. FIGUEROA
Director
Pacific Islands Area

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

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Fond Farewell to Alan Muraoka

Our East and West Kauai SWCDs are saddened to announce that Alan Muraoka passed away peacefully on August 3rd, after a long illness. Alan was committed to conservation, and has worked in our Lihue Field Office as a Conservation Specialist for our East and West Kauai SWCDs since 2006. We will miss his many gifts and contributions.



Saipan Celebrates USDA's 150th

by Martin Naputi, Saipan Soil Conservation Technician

NRCS Saipan Field Office staff along with 20 Earth Team Volunteers whom majority are members of the Environmental and Natural Resources Organization (ENRO) from Northern Marianas College, Saipan and Northern Islands Soil & Water Conservation District (S&NISWCD), and Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) celebrated the USDA 150th anniversary by removing unwanted weeds around trees that were planted as part of the Laolao Bay Revegetation Project site.

The Laolao Bay Revegetation Project is a component of a three year, ARRA funded coastal habitat restoration project aimed at reducing sedimentation into the Laolao Bay marine environment as well as re-establishing in the area as a forest habitat with native plants.

20 NRCS Earth Team Volunteers along with the CNMI, Saipan Field Office Staff, hiked up to the planting area armed with sickles, machete, and cutters to remove grass growing around and killing the young trees in the area. Volunteers and staff enjoyed the activity regardless of the rain and muddy conditions! Good job folks.

Right after the maintenance activity NRCS Saipan Field Office staff along with the ETV's and SWCD celebrated the Asian American Pacific Islander's Month by enjoying a lunch Party-Q style (small lunch bbq) hosted by NRCS Staff. The "Party-Q" lunch was held at the Laolao Beach. Attendees were able to enjoy the different Asian and Pacific Island dishes prepared by staff and volunteers. Asian American Pacific Island dishes contributed included; fresh lumpia, different sausages, eggplant with marinated sauce, two kinds of cooked rice, local pastries, and different marinade styled BBQ! Thank you all for helping us to make the recognition event a special day for all USDA employees.



Pacific Islands Area

Guam Livestock Producers

by Rowena Mendi, Guam Earth Team Volunteer



As an Earth Team Volunteer, I assisted the Guam Field Office with flagging the fence posts at a livestock ranch. Before flagging the area of the fence, *Sam Taylor* briefed me and the landowner of the goal. He showed us the map and what we will be flagging. First, we found a known point, which was near the entrance of the ranch. Then, using the map, measuring wheel, and string, we were able to find exactly where the fence post will be. The fence posts that we were flagging are the corners of the fence. Sam flagged the first post and he helped me through the next four posts. Along the way, *Jocelyn Bamba* took GPS coordinates of each post. Next, we did the same to the sides of the area. The map of the ranch shows where the planned gates will be and also the existing gates. The ranch will have two holding pens, ten pasture paddocks, and a passageway. A measuring wheel (above photo) helped us determine where the posts will be. The string ensures that the posts will produce a good frame.

Employee Spotlight



(L-R) Chinese translator, Chinese farmer, and Jay Doronila.

My name is Jay Doronila; I am a soil conservationist for the CNMI field office, Saipan, in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Island (CNMI). I was born and raised on the island of Guam. Both my parents are Filipino from the province of Iloilo in the Panay Island, Republic of the Philippines. I am married to Jolene DLG. Doronila and we have three children; Tiana, Kyle and Kevin. I have been working with NRCS for almost 10 years now. I started as an Earth Team Volunteer on Guam, working around the NRCS Barrigada plant materials site. After receiving my B.S. Degree in Agriculture from the University of Guam, I was hired part time as a Soil Conservation Tech where I mainly worked on National Resource Inventory (NRI) data collection under the supervision of our Guam Soil Scientist. I later accepted a full time position as Soil Conservationist in the CNMI Field Office.

The CNMI is a diverse community with many different ethnic groups and communities. The two largest groups are Asian and Pacific Islander (most are of CNMI descent; indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian). Foreign contract workers from Asia (primarily Chinese and Filipino and some Nepalese) comprise over half of CNMI's population. Many of the farm laborers are foreign contract workers.

Providing assistance to NRCS cooperators in the CNMI has the occasional challenges in logistics (limited flights), language barriers and land tenure issues. Working for NRCS is a great and ongoing learning experience for me. Learning to be culturally sensitive is important no matter where you are in the world. Being culturally sensitive helps in the delivery of services and eliminates the barriers that may be in place because of ambiguousness.

I am excited to begin my service as the new PIA Civil Rights Advisory Committee's, American Indian/Alaskan Native Special Emphasis Manager. Currently I have a brief idea of what this position entails. I'm sure that I will have my work cut out for me. But none the less I am very proud to have been selected for this important role to support the Pacific Islands Area. During my term like others before me I hope to provide essential outreach, and promote awareness for the PIA American Indian/Alaskan Native special emphasis group.

Personnel Update

Incoming:

Diego Ayala, District Conservationist, American Samoa
Thomas Brandt, Office Assistant, State Office
Matthew Bull, Office Assistant, State Office
Phillip "Kipp" Cherry, Resource Conservationist, Kahului
Aaron Janz, Student Trainee, Kealahou
Taisha Kawamae, Student Trainee, Saipan
Rachel Malani, Student Trainee, Hilo
Shirley Nakamura, Assistant Director for Programs, Honolulu
Jan Reyes, Student Trainee, Hoolehua
Tiana Santos, Student Trainee, Kahului
Ben Schmidt, Assistant Director for Operations, Honolulu
Andrew Stout, Area Civil Engineer, Waimea
Brian Tom, Financial Technician, State Office
Sherman White, State Conservation Engineer, State Office

Outgoing:

Brenda Crabtree, Office Assistant, resignation
Kathleen Dobler, Deputy Director, retirement
Aaron Janz, Student Trainee, term ended
Taisha Kawamae, Student Trainee, term ended
Paul Lake, Resource Conservationist, transfer to California
Rachel Malani, Student Trainee, term ended
Alberto Moravia, Office Assistant, resignation
Lex, Riggle, District Conservationist, transfer to Nevada
Tiana Santos, Student Trainee, term ended
Andrea Thompson, Student Trainee, term ended
John Womack, District Conservationist, transfer to Tennessee

Recognition

Extra Effort Award: Gail Ichikawa, Ted McArthur, and Cynthia Shishido.

Time Off Awards: Lehuanani Angay, Katherine Greene, Jorge Guevara, Kori Hisashima, Pele Iuta, Jessica Newpher, Bobette Parsons, Nicholas Saumweber, Jessica Sternfels, and Lester Suehiro.

Length of Service Awards:

10 Years Service: Cameron Delligatti, Jay Doronila, Nicholas Gallo, Laila Jayyousi, Cheryl Lambert, Bernard Schmidt, and Antonette Tornito.

20 Years of Service: Lester Suehiro

Thank you to the 59 Earth Team Volunteers in 11 PIA offices that contributed 2,073 hours in fiscal year 2012!

NOTICE TO HISPANIC AND/OR WOMEN FARMERS AND RANCHERS

COMPENSATION FOR CLAIMS OF DISCRIMINATION

If you believe that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) improperly denied farm loan benefits to you between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic or because you are female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation. This means you may be eligible if:

- 1.** You sought a farm loan or farm-loan servicing during that period;
- 2.** The loan was denied, provided late, approved for a lesser amount than requested, approved with restrictive conditions, or USDA failed to provide an appropriate loan service; and
- 3.** You believe these actions were based on your being Hispanic or your being female.

In 2011, a claims administrator will begin mailing claims packages to those who have requested one through the Call Center or website. The claims package will have detailed information about the eligibility and claims process.

If you want to register your name to receive a claims package, access the Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher Call Center or website:

Call Center: 1-888-508-4429

Website: www.farmerclaims.gov

For guidance, you may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider in your community. **USDA cannot provide legal advice to you.**

If you are currently represented by counsel regarding allegations of discrimination or in a lawsuit claiming discrimination, you should contact your counsel regarding this claims process.

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June 2011



East Maui Watershed Partnership

by Ranae Ganske Cerizo, Kahului District Conservationist



Celebrating 20-Year Anniversary with Tree Planting Ceremony

Two hundred –fifty koa seedlings were planted in the Makawao State Forest Reserve recently to mark the East Maui Watershed Partnership’s 20 years of conservation work on Maui. East Maui Watershed Partnership awarded Certificate of Achievement to the USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service, Kahului Field Office and Maui SWCD District employees for dedication and support in protecting the East Maui Watershed. In addition, the partnership and its partners held a tree planting ceremony with organization Plant a Wish, where they planted an Ohia tree. Participants also read their wishes aloud for conservation and environmental ideas.

About East Maui Watershed Partnership

Since its inception in 1991 East Maui Watershed Partnership and its partners have 40,880 acres of actively managed East Maui watershed lands within the 120,000-acre conservation area. The East Maui Watershed Partnership is one of the most endangered forests in the world and has the highest amount of endemism per landmass. It also provides a source of water, culture, and biodiversity.

Summer Highlights



Ranae Ganske-Cerizo presents Tiana Malia Santos with a certificate in Kahului.

Aloha, my name is *Tiana Malia Santos* and I am a student at the University of Hawaii at Hilo pursuing a bachelor's degree in Agriculture; Agro Ecology and Environmental Quality. This summer I had the opportunity to intern with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the Kahului Office. I applied through the 7th Annual Governor Sunia Memorial Coral Reef Conservation Summer Internship and was ecstatic to hear I was chosen.

During my 12 weeks with the NRCS I was supervised by *Ranae Ganske-Cerizo* who showed great hospitality and a passion for conservation. My task upon completion of the internship was to create a conservation plan of my own. So to even get started, I needed some training. By working with NRCS employees I gained firsthand experience in what it takes to be a conservation planner. I studied the nine steps of conservation planning to understand the process. I shadowed Soil Conservationists, *Kahana Stone* and *Joe Takai*, where I learned to assess properties on their resource concerns. I was able to observe their different styles of connecting to a cooperator, which is important. They also taught me how to address resource concerns while incorporating the cooperators objectives to develop a solid conservation plan. I learned what practices to suggest, to eliminate or mitigate resource problems and how to implement them. I was also given the opportunity to shadow *Carl Hashimoto* and *Ryan Woolbright*, for more technical and engineering type of work.

I was fortunate enough to be able to receive some specific training from the state office employees. *Greg Koob*, the State Biologist, went over the Environmental Evaluation Worksheet with us. The Environmental Evaluation Worksheet is a crucial part to creating a conservation plan. Here is where resource concerns are listed and alternatives are mentioned and explained in how they will fix the problems previously identified. I spoke with *Valerie Russell*, the Cultural Resources Specialist, and learned in a nutshell what her responsibilities are

with the NRCS. She explained to me the procedures that are followed if a cultural resource is ever identified on a property in different circumstances. *Adam Reed*, the Water Quality/Agronomist, also came over to explain programs like RUSLE2 and WinPST. He also did a site visit where I learned how to determine slope and types of erosion.

With all of this training, knowledge and support, I was able to tackle a project of my own. I chose to do my grandfathers property in the Ukumehame area of West Maui. He is running a small goat operation and has an orchard of about 800 organic noni trees. I was able to go step by step in the planning process with him. I did a resource inventory checklist of his farm, made all types of maps using ToolKit and ArcGIS, identified useful appropriate practices and completed job sheets for each practice. Finally, I came up with a simple plan with four practices he could implement. These practices would enhance feed and forage for his livestock, and eliminate or mitigate the nematode problem throughout his noni trees. It then came time for the West Maui SWCD board meeting again and that was where I was able to present the plan I created.

I spent two weeks with the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under the supervision of Tova Callender, the West Maui Watershed Management Program Coordinator. The goal for this section of my internship was to contribute to the West Maui Ridge to Reef Initiative. The Kaanapali – Kahekili Watershed Management Plan (KKWMP) is a part of the West Maui Ridge to Reef Initiative, which was created to help mitigate the decline of coral reefs in the area. Phase I of this Ridge to Reef Initiative consists of Honokowai and Wahikuli watersheds. Patrick and I were given the assignment to assess the conditions of vertical roads in the Agricultural districts of Honokowai and Wahikuli for erosion. This took every hour of the two weeks traversing the roads, gathering and compiling data and summing up our conclusions. Hopefully our findings will greatly benefit the project and guide the next step of the Ridge to Reef Initiative.

The very next week I was off to Honolulu for the annual Hawaii Conservation Conference. It was my second time attending and in fact exceeded my expectations yet again. The rooms were filled with passion as well as knowledge for conservation. The bridge between science and culture is continuously being built.

On the Friday after the conference I had the pleasure to meet with and present my internship experience to a group of impressive men and women in the field of conservation. *Gail Ichikawa* from NRCS, *Wendy Wiltse* from EPA, *Jennifer Higashino* from USFWS, *Tova Callender* from West Maui Watershed Partnership, and *Takiora Ingram* from NOAA, just to name a few. It was a great way to wrap up my experience by sharing it with the people responsible for the opportunity that I was given.

Overall this internship was an incredible experience for me and invaluable information and skills added to my career path. I deeply appreciate all the knowledge and generosity that came from each and every person I had the pleasure of spending time with this summer. I hope to continue to broaden my horizons in the field of conservation and one day soon, make it back to the NRCS!

Irrigation Workshop Held

by Cheryl Lambert, Aiea District Conservationist



Bob Maglasang, Mike Bajinting, and Susan Kubo.

In spring of this year, Michael Bajinting and Susan Kubo, working in partnership with Robert Maglasang of the Oahu RC&D, conducted 2 workshops for Pacific Gateway Center (PGC) farmers at the Kunia Agricultural Park. PGC helps immigrants, refugees and low income residents of Hawaii gain access to opportunities and services through the building of skills that lead to self-sufficiency. As part of their incubator programs, they have made available twelve 5-acre farm lots in the Kunia Agricultural Park. The farmers are Thai/Lao immigrants who speak limited English. Oahu RC&D has been assisting Kunia Agricultural Park with conservation planning.

The sessions were held on Sunday afternoons. The first session shared with farmers conservation practices planned for their farms. Farmers received a maps of their individual farms showing soils and topographic information, as well as recommendations for terraces, waterways, direction of planting and other conservation practices. A pictorial guide of key practices for the farms was developed, translated into Chinese and Thai, and provided to participants.

The second session familiarized farmers with irrigation concepts and equipment. Farmers were given the opportunity to see and handle irrigation equipment, and to ask specific questions about how to improve the efficiency of their irrigation system. District Conservationist, Cheryl Lambert, attended the second session to meet farmers and observe the training.

Farmers and family members representing each of PGC's 12 farm lots were in attendance for both workshops. Nora Sisounthone, of PGC, served as translator for the sessions.

Tinian San Jose Fiesta Outreach

by Pamela Sablan Aguon, Saipan Soil Conservationist



Information & Education Booth set up near entrance to Fiesta Grounds. (R) Kendal Hicks, CNMI Field Office District Conservationist explains the common conservation practices shown on the display board to a potential cooperator.

The first weekend of May celebrates the Tinian San Jose Fiesta, the island's main event. Every year the island of Tinian draws a very diverse crowd including off-island guests to this main event. The celebration is in honor of their patron saint. The event is composed of various vendor booths and activities that include vendors such as local food stands, hand crafted souvenirs, games, and children's toys, informational and educational booths, performances by local musicians and various cultural dancers, a royal court and lastly sports activities and competitions. Competing booths were decorated using natural and recycled materials.

This year NRCS presence and outreach activity was held alongside the Head Start Program (Federal Funded Program) by the entrance of the fiesta grounds during the event to provide awareness and education of who we are and what we do. The outreach set up included displaying common conservation practices throughout the CNMI up on the display board including a photo album the entailed before and after NRCS assistance, careers and earth team volunteer program information, NRCS program and technical brochures and pamphlets, and other handouts. Also included was a short video on Dry-Litter System (copy provided by the NMC-CREES), playing on the side as the crowd gathers. NRCS emphasized the importance of the Conservation Planning process to individuals interested in conservation and gave examples of what field data needs to be collected to begin the planning process. Additionally, NRCS staff showed interested individuals samples of conservation practices that may be applicable to their sites based on the natural resource concerns assessed. Other emphasis was to reach out to Historically Underserved Producers and Female Producers and future generations to gain interest in NRCS as a whole.

The NRCS staff discussed NRCS Programs and Services to mainly Historically Underserved Producers, passed out brochure/handouts to teachers including Careers in NRCS and Earth Team Volunteer Programs. NRCS briefly met with the Grazing Academy Team and Cattlemen's Association members, the Mayor of Tinian, Department of Public Lands Director, and Department of Lands and Natural Resources Director while on-site.

Overall, the outreach activity was a success. NRCS was able to increase the number of CTA cooperators for the island of Tinian once again.

Olinda-Kula District Director Retires After 41 Years of Service

by Ranae Ganske-Cerizo, Kahului District Conservationist



Paul Otani with Ranae Ganske-Cerizo, District Conservationist and Maggie Kramp, SWCD Secretary.

Paul Otani volunteered as Olinda-Kula SWCD District Director since 1971. He was the chairman of the board from 1991 to 2001, and 2008-2012.

Olinda-Kula SWCD's major project is the Upcountry Maui Watershed Project, which was initiated by Elmer Cravalho, former chairman. Paul was on board as district director and continued to oversee the project. The initial intent of this Upcountry Maui waterline project is to provide agricultural water to small farmers.

Paul believes that conservation should be taught at a young age, so Olinda-Kula SWCD adopted Sammy Soil and Ruby Raindrop that were introduced to the board by Ranae Ganske-Cerizo when she was a soil conservationist. In addition to education, he strongly supports the Conservation Awareness Program. The Conservation Awareness Program teaches high school students about the lay of the land, and tests their knowledge through competition.

Mahalo Paul Otani for many years of dedication in the conservation movement.



Happy Holidays!

Wishing you all the

best for 2013!