



## Outstanding Teamwork Leads to Execution of two NRCS PPAs!

By Valerie Russell, Cultural Resources Specialist, State Office

On January 5, 2016, NRCS PIA executed two Prototype Programmatic Agreements (PPA) – one with the Hawaii State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the other with the American Samoa SHPO. The PPAs were entered into voluntarily by the SHPOs and allow the NRCS to streamline and expedite NHPA Section 106 cultural resources compliance activities.

The PPAs could not have been developed over the course of 2015 without numerous NRCS PIA, NRCS NHQ, SHPO, ACHP (Advisory Council on Historic Preservation) and NPS (National Park Service) staff input and collaboration. Individuals participated in the development of these PPAs in various capacities – some drafted agreement language, others managed the consultation process, some contributed technical expertise in the creation of new technical tools (Cultural Resources Technical Notes 2 and 4), while others acted as peer reviewers for the agreements and tools, and still others ensured that correspondence was routed in a timely manner and scheduled meetings. ***I want to personally thank each and every one of you for your contributions, no matter how great or how small, and recognize and celebrate our collective teamwork and achievements!***

NRCS PIA staff includes: **Tony Ingersoll** (Assistant Director for Technology), **Bruce Peterson** (PIA Director), **Adam Reed** (State Agronomist), **Sherman White** (State Conservation Engineer), **Jessica Schmelz**

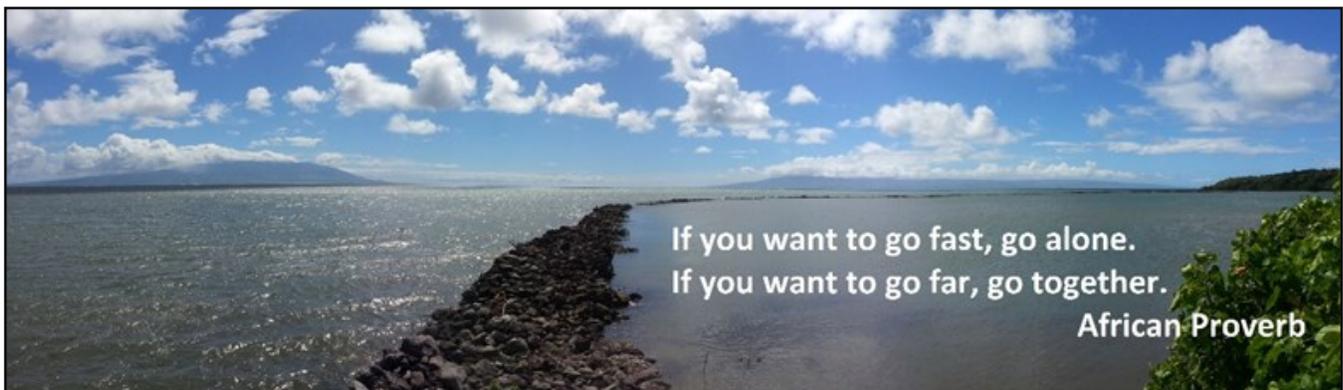
(District Conservationist), **Kori Hisashima** (District Conservationist), **Carolyn Wong** (District Conservationist), **Matt Wung** (District Conservationist), **Diego Ayala** (District Conservationist), **Jessica Ludgate** (Soil Conservationist), **Greg Koob** (former State Biologist), **Tom Brandt** (Office Assistant), **Darlene Cho** (Mail and File Clerk), and **Kara Nelson** (Resource Conservationist).

NRCS NHQ staff includes: **Sharron Santure** and **Andy Williamson** (Acting NRCS Federal Preservation Officers/National Cultural Resources Specialists).

SHPO staff includes: **David Herdrich** (American Samoa SHPO), **Susan Lebo** (Hawaii SHPD Archaeology Branch Chief), **Jessica Puff** (Hawaii SHPD Architectural Historian), **Alan Downer** (Hawaii SHPD Administrator and Deputy SHPO), **Nick Belluzo** (former Hawaii SHPD GIS Specialist), and **Cicely Lorenzo-Ganir** (Hawaii SHPD Secretary).

ACHP staff includes: **Ira Matt** (Program Analyst/NRCS Liaison).

NPS staff includes: **Stephanie Toothman** (Associate Director, Cultural Resources, Partnerships and Science), **Elizabeth Gordon** (Acting Pacific West Region Section 106 Coordinator), **Melia Lane-Kamahele** (Pacific West Region-Honolulu Area Manager) and **Jeff Durbin** (Section 106 Compliance Program Officer, WASO).





Bruce Petersen, PIA NRCS Director

## Message from the Director

Greetings, it was good to see many of you at the HACD meeting. Astor Boozer, my boss, came to the meeting and spent time with partners and staff. I always enjoy face time with Astor and was very grateful that he had time to visit with the DC's and leadership staff.

I want to update you on the current positions that I plan on filling. They are in various steps of the process including, planned, submitted for advertising, advertised, and offers made:

- 2 temporary part time Biological Science Aid positions, PMC, Molokai
- 1 Agronomist, Plant Material Center, Molokai
- 1 Soil Conservation Technician, American Samoa
- 1 District Conservationist, Saipan
- 2 Area Resource Conservationist, Guam, and \*State of Hawaii
- 2 Soil Conservationist. Kauai
- 2 Soil Conservationist, Hilo
- 2 Program Support Specialists, Hilo, Oahu
- 1 Assistant Director for Field Operations, \*State of Hawaii
- 1 Assistant Director for Programs, Oahu
- 1 Public Affairs Specialist, Oahu
- 1 Cultural Resources Specialist, \*State of Hawaii
- 1 Resource Conservationist for Programs, Oahu
- 1 Engineer or Civil Engineering Technician, Hilo

\*The location of these position in the state of Hawaii are yet to be finalized

Other personnel actions include;

- Karen Dearlove our Easement Specialist that we share with Alaska will be leaving to join the Easement Support Team.
- Jessica Smeltz, DC in Kealahou is currently detailed to headquarters assisting the Strategic Planning and Accountability division.
- Bernard Matatumua, Soil Conservationist Kealahou is detailed to American Samoa.
- Bernadette Luncsford, DC Oahu is currently detailed to Programs.
- Kara Nelson, Resource Conservationist for Natural Resources Technology is currently detailed to Programs.
- Nicola Giardina, Resource Conservationist Programs, Acting Assistant Director for Programs.
- Michael Bajinting, County Resource Conservationist Oahu, Acting DC Oahu.
- Pam Sablan-Aguon, Soil Conservationist Saipan, Acting DC Saipan.
- Jay Doronila, Soil Conservationist Saipan, Acting Area Resource Conservationist.
- Laura Nelson, Soil Conservationist Kealahou, Acting DC Kealahou.
- I will shortly issue an advertisement seeking a candidate to fill a 120 day detail to serve as acting Assistant Director for Field Operations.

Budget:

- We will be replacing about 13 vehicles. Mostly pick-ups with 4 wheel drive and off-road package options.
  - All computers that are coming up on expiring warranties are ordered and will be replaced this year.
- Farm Bill program contract obligation looks excellent, over 90% obligated  
I am working on contribution agreements with 3 conservation district.

We are in the final quarter of an interesting and challenging year. I hope you can look back and feel a sense of accomplishment for the great things you've accomplished. Thanks for your support.

Bruce Petersen  
PIA Director

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

Karl Mikasa,  
Program Assistant,  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
P.O. Box 50004  
Honolulu, HI 96850  
Jolene.Lau@hi.usda.gov

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## Area & Field Office Summary

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service encourages farmers and ranchers to submit application now for conservation programs." Every year, this announcement goes out to the Pacific Island Area's farmers and ranchers. By newspaper, radio and most effectively, by word of mouth, information about the NRCS financial assistance programs spreads. And every year, the Pacific Islands Area field staff succeed in delivering assistance to a diverse group: farmers, ranchers, orchardists, foresters to address a variety of complex resource concerns to promote clean air and water, healthy soil, and critical wildlife habitat. Pacific Islands Area NRCS and Soil and Water Conservation District staff and planners are an effective team working, collaborating and guiding the delivery of technical and financial assistance to local communities from the Republic of Palau to the shores of Puna on the east side of Big Island.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or Soil and Water Conservation District planners work closely with conservation program participants to address local resource concerns for their farm, ranch or forest land. If a setting has a flooding or storm water resource concern, the planner will help the landowner select from a suite of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation practices to address flooding and reduce erosion while improving soil health. "When we decided to go organic and use mulch instead of spraying weeds in the coffee field manual maintenance was difficult," says Bill Downes of Downes Grounds, a farmer in Holualoa, HI. "But we saw that with a permanent ground cover between the coffee fields and mulch around the trees, our soil was saved during the flooding and we have seen the biggest yield in years."

Many livestock farmers have become interested in not just improving the land for their animals but also expanding into silvopasture: planting trees within pastures to both add diversity to the landscape and provide shade for their animals. "NRCS has been an invaluable resource to us, since we started our farming endeavor with a vision but no agricultural background," says Peggy Piaskoski of Kapaau, HI. "With NRCS's help, we fenced off the pasture into four paddocks and now rotate the animals on a regular schedule. We have noticed the mix of grasses has improved and the pasture is more evenly grazed. NRCS also introduced us to the practice of silvopasture and we have now begun the process of planting shade trees, thereby reducing stress to our animals from the elements. NRCS agents have shown a high degree of knowledge, which they are eager to share, and they clearly care about preserving and protecting our farmlands. We are forever grateful to them for helping us make a dream come true."

Farmers and ranchers of Tinian, one of the three principal islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana

Islands, have also seen the benefits of NRCS programs. A local rancher said, "Without the help of NRCS and the financial assistance of NRCS Programs, namely EQIP, I would not have known where to begin or where would I get the money to improve my operation for the sake of my livestock. Once I got into the program, I started noticing the difference between how I was managing my operation before the program and after I started applying conservation practices within my operation. Very big difference. My operation looks really good now and my livestock looks healthier and happier, thanks to NRCS. I'm proud of my operation and very happy with the services and programs that NRCS has for us."

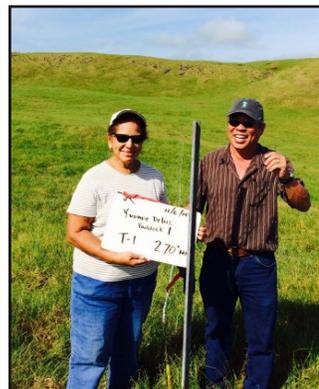
NRCS has been a true partner to our farmers and ranchers. Keoki Wood, livestock manager for Parker Ranch in Kamuela, HI, puts it best. "They [NRCS] are very practical to work with when meeting government regulations and operational concerns. Everybody is a winner, the livestock producer, the pasture productivity, the water cycle and soil stability. They make working with a government agency a very beneficial experience."

PIA NRCS has more direct impact on peoples' lives than anywhere else. A large percentage of PIA clients are historically underserved and the technical and financial assistance they receive is the tipping point in helping them stay in business, provide locally produced, healthy food, while protecting the environment. Farming in the Pacific Islands Area dates back thousands of years, but urbanization has changed access to local food for many communities. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts are able to help keep that farming culture going and to help people produce local food for cultures that otherwise would not have access to locally grown, nutritious foods. NRCS positively affects the quality of life, the livelihoods of our farmers, integrating both traditional ways of life and new technology to the people.

PIA NRCS truly helps people help the land



Judy Hancock proudly showing off her newly planted koa seedling.



Yvonne DeLuz, rancher, and Matt Wung, Waimea DC, showing the great benefits of prescribed grazing.

# Breaking Ground On A New School Garden

Excerpt from Pauline Sato, Mālama Learning Center Newsletter—December 4, 2014

It seems that gardens are now emerging at a number of schools in Kapolei and we are happy to help this trend grow! Last month, we broke ground on a new garden at **Kapolei Middle School (KMS)**, thanks to a grant from the **Natural Resources Conservation Service** and the KMS Garden Club. Teachers Scott La Chance, Nicole Maraglio, and Tino Gonsalves are spear-heading this effort and we are providing technical support. La Chance writes, "The KMS Community Garden Club has been fortunate that so many are pitching in to nurture our relationship with the Earth here. At KMS, the Math Club, Art Club, Industrial Arts are all giving time and talents to the garden project." We look forward to the fruits of their labor!



Kapolei Middle School Garden: Makai to Mauka (Lettuces, Radish, Plumeria, and lots more).

## Personnel Update

### Outgoing:

- ◆ Fujimoto, Jennifer, State Office, 04/29/2016
- ◆ Hicks, Kendal, Transferred to Arizona, 05/03/2016
- ◆ Lau, Jolene, State Office, 02/12/2016
- ◆ Nakamura, Shirley, State Office, 04/14/2016
- ◆ Uiagalelei, Joe, American Samoa SWCD, 03/2016
- ◆ Valerie, Russell, State Office, 06/16/2016
- ◆ Wong, Kylie, Hana SWCD, 05/09/2016

### Incoming:

- ◆ Collora, Anthony, Student Pathway Trainee, Hilo SC. EOD: 07/01/2016
- ◆ Higashino, Jennifer, State Biologist, Kahului SC. EOD: 04/04/2016
- ◆ Lake, Paul, Palau. EOD: 03/23//2016
- ◆ Stibbard, Mary, HACD Planner, South Oahu SWCD. EOD: 07/14/2016
- ◆ Sawdey, Sharon, Area Conservationist, Palau SC. EOD: 05/16/2016

## 20 Years of Service: Sam Taylor



*Please join me in congratulating Sam Taylor for 20 years of service to our agency. Sam is a valuable member of the Guam based staff and serves our country as a proud member of the Guam Air National Guard.*

*- Jocelyn Bamba,  
District Conservationist, Guam SC*

**Thank you to the ten offices with 37 active Earth Team volunteers contributing 950 Hours**