

Local Working Group Meeting – Conducted for USDA Program Compliance – 05/12/2016
plus individual interviews on 05/10/2016 Notes compiled by Pam Sablan-Aguon

Meeting attendance and interviewed individuals:

Lawrence Duponcheel (Rancher/T&A SWCD Chair); Pam Sablan-Aguon (USDA-NRCS Representative);
Jose M. Dela Cruz (Rancher/Tinian Cattlemen's Association President), Esteban M. Borja Jr. (Rancher);
Samson S. Palacios (Farmer/Rancher); Ignacio P. Aquiningoc (Rancher/Business); Brent Schumacher (PIA-AO Engineer)

Interviewed: I. Aquiningoc (Rancher); R. Dela Cruz. (Farmer/Rancher/Fisherman); FMDelaCruzJr (Rancher); DPL Director

The attendees/interviewees indicated that their resource concerns/issues are as follow in order of priority.

Water Quality; Soil Quality; Water Quantity; Air Quality; Noxious/Invasive Species Control; Pasture Health/Condition; Infrastructure Upgrades; Land Availability and Accessibility; Use of Locally Available Materials and Supplies; Equipment Availability and Services; Wildlife Habitat; and Energy Conservation.

- **Water Quality**
 - *Certain Ag. Operations are located in areas within Tinian that has the closest point from ground level to top of aquifer level near Marpo Valley or a.k.a Maui Well-move/relocate these Ag. Operations out/away from areas where aquifers are closest to ground level*
 - *Major concern with this is the Animal Wastes being flushed directly onto the ground.*
 - *Other major concern is the known application of illegal pesticides being applied on farm lands within this shallow area (Marpo Valley)*
 - *All parties are concerned of military impacts on the soil quality and water quality such as leaching, aquifer contamination, contaminants of unknown chemicals to be used if any during their practices*
- **Soils Quality**
 - *Impact of military activities on prime and unique farmland soils – military plans will affect these areas per T&A SWCD Chair*
 - *All parties are concerned of military impacts on the soil quality and water quality such as leaching, aquifer contamination, contaminants of unknown chemicals to be used if any during their practices*
 - *Move/relocate plans for use out of prime and unique farmland soils*
- **Water Quantity**
 - *Discussion of Military's Pledge to provide adequate water supply (distribution) to all land users within the D.O.D. Lease Back Area (LBA). Concern was brought up that rather than limit this to the LBA, they should look at the entire island.*
- **Air Quality**
 - *Objectionable odors coming from Ag. Operations such as Piggery Operations with no waste management system in place; small confined goat pastures – during rainy season manure odors are really potent; operation w/ the Biogas system in place reeks of stench especially in areas that have family dwellings*
- **Noxious and invasive species spreading**
 - *A new invasive species has been identified. First initial contact w/ this species was up by Runway Able, now it has spread to most of the island*
- **Pasture Health and Condition**
 - *As it relates to Animal Health*

- *Infrastructure Upgrades*
 - *Perimeter fence (program eligibility for repairs for functionality) – Notes from ranchers*
 - *Program requirements of cross-fencing – Notes from ranchers*
 - *Availability of required fence materials – Ranchers wanted to know if they could use locally available tree species and how to process those trees if approved for use so that it'll meet the program requirements or specifications.*
- *Land Availability and Accessibility*
 - *Longer term leases was mentioned that instead of 5 years it may be 10 years, pending confirmation of this proposal per one rancher*
 - *Thinning out secondary forests to open up areas for more forage for livestock*
- *Locally Available Materials not only restricted to fencing but including supplies locally available at hardware stores or other source of supply companies within the island.*
- *Equipment Availability and Services*
 - *Hard to complete projects on time*
 - *Hard to keep up w/ maintenance of pasture health w/ lack of equipment availability*
- *Requests were made for the possibility re-visiting the pasture ranking points and possibly increasing Pasture Ranking points due to Cattle ranches will be the main Ag. Operation on the island that would be contributing a lot of work towards the control of noxious/invasive species that will at the same time help the environment having these species inhibit/kill/suffocate other species of use/beneficial.*

Concern issued last LWG were requested to re-submitted:

- *The cattlemen also indicated that cattle drinking water distribution lines are also badly needed to help eliminate the need for hauling water in “water buffaloes.” The water typically is hauled at least 2-3 times per week and is an expensive, time-consuming process for the cattlemen. The cattlemen asked questions about how water lines could be installed to serve the various ranches, and if pipelines could be surface installed rather than buried.*

The cattlemen stated that multi-year permits were important to meet NRCS land control requirements.

- *The LWG participants discussed their concerns about the possible listing of new plant and/or animal T&E species. The existing T&E species limitations, thus impacts upon agriculture and/or ranching, are marginal. They are concerned that the listing of the Tinian Monarch or other species could create land use limitations and hardships, especially given they will have to re-locate to new areas for grazing. The new areas are largely unimproved jungle/grazing lands that could face complications related to T&E species if new species are listed as presently proposed (considered) by the USF&W Service. They may be interested, and willing, with NRCS financial assistance, to fence-off the areas of grazing lands along cliff lines to establish buffers designated as wildlife habitat improvement zones.*
- *The group also indicated that with a solid commitment from DOD and/or the CNMI DPL to provide longer term (5 year minimum) leases, there would be an increase in the interest level of ranchers to utilize the lease-back lands for cattle grazing. With longer, more stable leases, the cattlemen would have a more reliable return on their labor and material expenses required to improve the new DOD leaseback ranch lands. The Tinian cattlemen expressed they were confident this would also increase the cattle production overall on Tinian.*

The above notes in blue were compiled on 9/2/14 from last 2014 Tinian-LWG and last year’s 2015 Tinian-LWG, a re-submittal of these concerns were requested by the attendees, no additional changes requested, their decisions remain the same.