Message from the Director

As we look back on a challenging year, including a global pandemic, a complete change in our conservation delivery model, and working from home, I’m amazed at the resiliency of our team (both employees and partners) in their dedicated effort to accomplish our mission. It’s a testament of pride in our mission. Regardless of the obstacle, we’ll rise as a team to deliver conservation solutions to producers so they can feed a growing world.

2020 reminds me of an experience shared by an author who was lost at sea for several months, relying on a small, donut-shaped raft for safety, rainwater to quench thirst, and random, unsuspecting fish for food. While pondering his experience at sea, he noted that challenging times were periods of personal growth and progress toward his final destination. Steven Callahan writes, “Life is full of paradoxes. When the wind blows hard, I move well toward my destination, but I am wet, cold, scared, and in danger of capsizing. When it is calm, I dry out, heal, and fish more easily, but my projected journey lengthens and my encounters with sharks increase.” (Adrift: Seventy-six Days Lost at Sea). Perhaps the year 2020 is part of our rough journey to find success ahead. Each individual’s experience this year was unique. It’s true that everyone was impacted by the events of 2020 and will remember them for years to come. It’s all part of the journey of life, continuing to learn, grow, and dedicate service to the public.

Even though 2020 was perhaps our “stormy” year lost at sea, I’m particularly Continued on page 2

PIA Strategic Plan 2020-2025

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

Vision:
Resilient islands with clean and abundant water, healthy soils, and thriving agricultural communities.
proud of 2020 for various reasons and I’d like to highlight a few:

• We completed our strategic plan that focuses on our customers (Goal 1), employees (Goal 2), and partners (Goal 3). Particularly, I’m excited to see the outcomes of our Targeted Conservation Delivery (TCD) model designed in our strategic plan. It’s a comprehensive approach to how we deliver conservation solutions. Through utilizing the expertise of our local work groups, we’re enhancing the locally-led conservation process by prioritizing our efforts on targeted resource challenges for specific outcomes. I’m also excited to see that our employee-led committees such as Director’s Advisory Board (DAB), the Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC), the Training Committee, and the Employee Recognition Committee, are making lasting, profound impacts on the way we do business and improving our workplace. Our focus on “accelerating results through partnerships” has already doubled the number of partners doing conservation in the Pacific. The results are already amazing and I’m excited to continue the strategic plan through 2025. Here’s a link to learn more: STRATEGIC PLAN.

• NRCS rolled out a new way of doing business this year. No longer do we have Toolkit for conservation planning, but a new Conservation Desktop (CD) with an integrated resource assessment tool in CART (Conservation Application Ranking Tool). There was so much new information delivered by each division this year. We needed to ensure our teams were ready for the new way of doing business. I’m proud of our CD/CART training cadre led by Cynthia Shishido. They were flawless in execution of the training strategy. Our Leadership Team members each took different roles in various aspects of rolling out new technology. It was their collective unity and teamwork that provided the overall leadership to ensure everything was ready for our teams to implement. And of course, our District Conservationists and field teams were relentless at troubleshooting the new tools and figuring out how to make everything work. All of this happened in the middle of a global pandemic! I’m truly humbled to work with such a great team who is dedicated to excellence in mission delivery.

• Securing easements in the Pacific has been like the perpetual search for a needle in a haystack. We haven’t entered into an easement in more than 10 years! Fortunately, with the help of a strong conservation partner, we entered into two (2) new ACEP (Agricultural Conservation Easement Program) easements this year. I know many people worked on this project, but I’m truly thankful for Paul Lake (recently retired Resource Conservationist on the Programs team) for quickly learning the program and building a great relationship with partners. It was that relationship that helped us protect ag, land for future generations. I look forward to many more easements in the future, in our quest to have “resilient islands with clean and abundant water, healthy soils, and thriving ag. communities.”

• We had many team members step into new/acting roles this year. We’re always grateful to team members who apply for details, take a committee leadership role, and face new challenges in new positions. It is hard to recruit to the islands for various reasons. That’s why I consider PIA team members a cut above the rest. Of particular mention is Susan Kubo, who has been the acting State Conservation Engineer since Oct. 2019 while still working as the new Assistant Director for Partnerships. I’m constantly amazed at the work she produces and the relationships she builds. Her efforts to deliver mission and reach our vision will last for generations. Our partnerships will never be the same because of her diligent effort to achieve operational excellence. Susan is just one of many, exemplary employees who make PIA a workplace where others want to come work, live, and play.

Our team was amazing this year. Our accomplishments are highlighted in the pages to follow. Teamwork was key this year. The sum together is greater than individual parts. I look forward to further execution of our strategic plan in 2021 and more powerful examples of public service at its best from all our employees. For those who are new to NRCS and our mission, please contact one of our offices today to find out how you can be part of the greater conservation partnership across the Pacific.

Sincerely,

Travis Thomason
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY2020 Conservation Solutions</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **EQIP**  
Environmental Quality Incentives Program |
| ![Image](image1.png) |
| 11,110.8 Acres |
| 137 Contracts |
| ![Image](image2.png) |
| $9.13M Funding |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Tunnel</th>
<th>$223.5K</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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| **Agroforestry (CNMI)**  
NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to producers in CNMI, where agroforestry provides storm resilience and return to traditional cultural practices. NRCS worked with farmers to improve systems from a natural disaster. NRCS staff participated with site preparation, planting, and mulching. Read the full story [here](#). |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forestry</th>
<th>$2.21M</th>
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<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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| **Wildlife (Molokai)**  
This wildlife planting has more than 500 native species and 200 non-native pollinator flowers, and will provide habitat for pollinators including the Kamehameha butterfly. Read the full story [here](#). |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pasture/Range</th>
<th>$2.64M</th>
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<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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| **Pasture/Range (Maui)**  
A Maui rancher transformed former pineapple land to grazable pasture with EQIP assistance. Read the full story [here](#). |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livestock</th>
<th>$615.3K</th>
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<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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| **Confined Livestock (Guam)**  
The first ever dual animal waste management flush down/dry litter system in Guam installed. Read the full story [here](#). |
NRCS provides technical assistance to private landowners and managers. The conservation health and productivity of private lands depend upon the individual decisions these landowners make every day. Our conservation assistance is voluntary to our customers with science as the foundation. Our workforce includes many technical disciplines and our assistance is site-specific as natural resource concerns cannot be treated in isolation. We use a systems approach. The majority of funds for the CTA program is used for staff costs and essential infrastructure support. Products are conservation plans, technical consultations, and technical assistance to help customers implement conservation practices and systems.

With CTA as the foundation, we provide a substantive level of expertise and support for conservation. It enables other programs with conservation planning that results in implementing conservation practices and systems.

### Top 5 Practices by Count

1. Herbaceous Weed Treatment
2. Mulching
3. Fence
4. Brush Management
5. Watering Facility

### 58 Different Types of Practices Installed
- 171,348 feet of Fence
- 114,071 feet of Livestock Pipeline
- 41,560 acres Prescribed Grazing
- 193 Watering Facilities

### Conservation Stewardship Program (American Samoa)
Under CSP, farmers enhance conservation on their farm by adding fruit producing trees that provide habitat for wildlife. Read the full story [here](#).
FY2020 Conservation Solutions

**RCPP**
Regional Conservation Partnership Program

- **2,066 Acres**
- **5 Contracts**
- **$532K Funding**

**Partnership with RCPP**
The Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife in partnership with this RCPP-EQIP project, “Restore Native Forest Ecosystems for Watershed Protection and At-Risk Species habitat Benefits” works with managers of private forest or rangeland to install practices that establish and enhance native forest, promote aquifer recharge, and increase and improve habitat for at-risk species.

**National Water Quality Initiative**
$615.8K

**NWQI** The National Water Quality Initiative has been working to accelerate voluntary, on-farm conservation investments to improve water quality in Hilo Bay. In FY 20, the initiative awarded contracts for improvement of an eroding access road, construction of a deep litter piggery, construction of diversion and critical area planting, and improvements to a grazing system to reduce sediment, nutrient, and pathogen transport to Hilo Bay.

**Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Initiative (JCLRI)**
$386.7K

**JCLRI** The West Maui Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership Project combined resources of the Forest Service, NRCS, and partner, Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife to reduce wildfire threat and enhance wildlife habitat.

**CIG**
Conservation Innovation Grant

- **1 Grant**
- **$85.3K Federal**
- **$85.3K Match**

**CIG project with the National Tropical Botanical Gardens will look at revegetating challenging critical areas using drone technology. Read the full story here.**
Engineering
Emergency Watershed Protection Program
Piihonua Levee Project (Hilo)

Restoration of the Piihonua Levee, which sustained damage when Hurricane Lane hit the Hawaii island in August 2018, will safeguard lives and property from hazard of flooding. Total construction cost of $3M included $2.2M of federal funds and match provided the project sponsor, County of Hawaii.

Plant Materials Center

Soil Health

Soil Health continues to be a top priority nationally as well as in PIA. In 2020, PIA developed a Soil Health Strategic Plan that provides a detailed approach to accomplishing soil health priorities identified in PIA's overall Strategic Plan. By engaging customers, empowering employees, and collaborating with partners, PIA will be equipped to “Build Better Soils” through conservation practices and develop of soil health management plans. PIA established an interdisciplinary Soil Health Team to cultivate the experts needed to keep PIA at the cutting edge of new practices and technologies, while also addressing local challenges.

Top 5 Soil Health Practices:
1. Mulching
2. Conservation Crop Rotation
3. Prescribed Grazing
4. Cover Crop
5. Conservation Cover

Glicidica cutting trial completed

Glicidica sepium is a nitrogen-fixing tree with potential to rapidly reforest dry landscapes dominated by invasive brush species. The PMC study looked at Read full story here.
Cultural Resources Assistance (189 Contracts)

In FY 20, Cultural Resource Specialist Brian Wallace worked to restore a strong working relationship with Hawaii SHPD and, with the help of two ACES employees, whittled down a huge backlog of cultural resource reviews, processing reviews for 189 contracts in FY 2020. This work will pave the way for an updated programmatic agreement that will streamline future cultural resource reviews. Cultural resources review is required for all projects that receive federal funding including AMA, CSP, EQIP, and RCPP.

Conservation Grazing Studies

Forage Yield Studies

In FY 20, PIA initiated forage yield studies to correlate monthly forage production data with the key ecological factors that affect forage production in the islands: soil type, air temperature, precipitation, soil moisture, and solar radiation. This data will be used to validate and calibrate a forage production model for use in conservation planning on grazing lands. The study consists of three study sites throughout Hawaii Island and three sites on Molokai. Each site consists of a weather station surrounded by five clipping cages.

Field Planting Study

With the main goals to provide livestock producers with the best available tools and data, PIA initiated a field planting study to assess the effectiveness of broadcast seeding at three different planting rates of desired forage species over chemically suppressed undesirable vegetation. Grazing specialists Carolyn Wong and Elena Dosamantes and the Plant Materials Center are working with local producers to evaluate methods and rates. The information will be especially crucial to help producers respond to the damage brought by the Two-Lined Spittle Bug.

Revised Tool for Wildlife

PIA revised the primary assessment tool for wildlife, the Wildlife Habitat Assessment Guide, or WHAG. The previous version was based on North American wildlife and the revisions now better reflect the wildlife and habitat needs of Pacific Islands, and the special circumstances around various species and islands. Planners use this tool to determine baseline conditions and identify practices to improve habitat.
Toward our goal to accelerate results through strategic partnerships, PIA entered into Memoranda of Agreement with partners, offered 2 funding opportunities, and supported many national funding offerings including the National Collaboration Grant, Classic and Alternative Funding Arrangement Regional Conservation Partnership Program offerings, Classic and On-Farm Trial Conservation Innovation Grants, and a funding offering by partner National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Through the execution of contribution agreements, PIA is helping increase the capacity of partners to deliver conservation, is leveraging partner resources, and is realizing conservation outcomes through innovative projects and programs.

PIA thanks our partners:

In FY2020, PIA funded agreements with the following partners:
- Kona Soil and Water Conservation District
- Central Maui Soil and Water Conservation District
- Kauai Soil and Water Conservation District
- Ka’u Soil and Water Conservation District
- Mauna Kea Soil and Water Conservation District
- West Maui Soil and Water Conservation District
- Molokai-Lanai Soil and Water Conservation District
- Southern Guam Soil and Water Conservation District
- Oahu Resource Conservation and Development
- University of Hawaii
- Ridge to Reefs

These agreements support the addition of 20 staff, 13 of which will become certified conservation planners, to accelerate the delivery of Farm Bill programs and conservation implementation and will result in the development of 238 conservation plans, implementation of 661 conservation practices, and 192 Farm Bill program enrollments.

Agreements also support partner facilitation of locally led conservation input and planning efforts that support targeted conservation delivery.

Through the execution of contribution agreements, PIA is helping increase the capacity of partners to deliver conservation, is leveraging partner resources, and is realizing conservation outcomes through innovative projects and programs.

PIA provided Conservation Desktop (CD) and Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) training to 49 employees and partner planners.

Conservation Desktop replaces the Customer Service Toolkit planning software used by the agency since 1999 and will make conservation planning more streamlined and transparent as well as integrate NRCS’s technical and financial information and processes into a common user interface.

CART is a program-neutral, efficient application evaluation tool to facilitate conservation delivery. The new tool is intended to help producers and conservation staff begin an ongoing discussion about how to achieve land and water stewardship goals. It will modernize and streamline NRCS’ conservation planning and program delivery, reduce workload on field staff, and improve the customer experience by creating an efficient application process.

Five in-person and two virtual training sessions were conducted to train NRCS and partner field staff.
FY2020 Empowered Workforce

Creating A Better Workplace

The Director’s Advisory Board (DAB) was established to help improve employee satisfaction in PIA by bringing awareness to important issues identified by the employee viewpoint survey.

In 2020, DAB members Laura Nelson, Carl Hashimoto, Kurencio Ngowakl, and Genoa Starrs provided valuable field office perspective to the development of the PIA Strategic Plan, incorporating the results of the PIA employee viewpoint survey that DAB conducted in 2019.

DAB continues to work toward achieving PIA Strategic Goal #2: Cultivate an Empowered Workforce. Two highlights in FY 2020, were establishing the New Employee Meet & Greet and creating “Team PIA,” a shared workspace on MS Teams. Both ventures keep employees connected with each other as we navigate through teleworking and social distancing.

PIA Training Committee

In FY 20, the PIA Training Committee worked to develop the framework for a training program to support cultivation of an empowered workforce. The committee tackled the monumental tasks of inventorying all trainings (completed, requested, and required) for Conservation Planner Certification for all PIA and partner employees, and establishing a means for tracking training progress. The Committee developed Policy and standard operating procedures to inform and assist employees with requesting and obtaining needed training. They reviewed training needs and made provisions for making available needed training. Their work in FY 20 lays the groundwork that will move Conservation Planner certification forward and result in the achievement of Planner Certification of the majority of employee and partner planners in FY 21.

Recognizing Employee Excellence

Newly formed in FY 20, the Employee Recognition Committee worked to improve organizational morale and productivity through increased effectiveness and utilization of the NRCS-PIA awards and recognition program. In its inaugural year, it increased participation in internal and external awards programs by centralizing and clarifying materials on an Employee Recognition SharePoint site, facilitating the adoption of new FPAC employee recognition policy, and creating a streamlined submission process to simplify award nominations and peer-to-peer recognition.
Civil Rights Committee

In 2020, the PIA Civil Rights Committee experienced a complete turnover in membership, with new Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) and advisors appointed to three-year terms. During monthly meetings, the committee became familiar with their respective roles and set goals for the future. Based on input from the Deputy Equal Opportunity Officer, Director Travis Thomason, the committee will focus immediate efforts on Recruitment, Retention, and Employee Development in PIA. The committee played a key role in development of tactics for PIA’s Strategic Plan and will continue to work with leadership in the coming year to execute tasks related to these three priority areas.

COVID-19 Response

NRCS office continued to provide services to the public throughout FY 20, by phone appointments and field visits, observing mask wearing social distancing, and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces.

Farmers.gov

Farmers.gov provides agricultural producers with tools and technical support for addressing conservation concerns. It centralizes information from USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Services Agency, and Risk Management Agency, and is a one-stop shop for:

- information and news about funding opportunities
- programs and resources for managing risk, workers, products, and your land
- tools and programs available to help address conservation concerns
- information about disaster assistance programs for farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners.

Visit farmers.gov for more information.
American Samoa Service Center
Pago Plaza Building, Ste 211
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799
Telephone: (684) 633-1031

Guam Service Center
PACAIR Air Cargo Facility
770 East Sunset Blvd, Ste 270
Barrigada, Guam 96913
Telephone: (671) 300-8591

Hilo Service Center
154 Waianuenue Avenue, Rm 203
Hilo, Hawaii 96720-2452
Telephone: (808) 933-8381

Kaunakakai Service Center
15 Kaunakakai Place, Unit 7
Kaunakakai, Hawaii 96748
Telephone: (808) 213-0360

Kahului Service Center
77 Hookele Street, Ste. 202
Kahului, Hawaii 96732
Telephone: (808) 871-5500 + 3

Kealakekua Service Center
Central Kona Center (Building 9)
81-948 Waena’oihana Loop, Ste 101
Kealakekua, Hawaii 96750
Telephone: (808) 339-9069

Lihue Service Center
4334 Rice St. Ste 207
Lihue, Hawaii 96766-1801
Telephone: (808) 245-9014 ext. 3

Oahu Service Center
Prince Kuhio Federal Building
300 Ala Moana Blvd., #4-118
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850-0050
Telephone: (808) 600-2911

Waimea Service Center
Parker Ranch Shopping Center
67-1185 Mamalahoa Hwy, Ste H148
Kamuela, Hawaii 96743

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