



L - R: Diane Ley, Matt Wung, Chris Kanazawa, Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden, Jared Considine, U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono, and Carolyn Wong.

## Mazie Hirono & Krysta Harden’s Visit

*By Matthew Wung, District Conservationist, Waimea*

U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono invited Krysta Harden, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture to show her the effects and response that was done for those affected by the lava flow impacting Puna. She also saw first hand the challenges and diversity of Hawaii agriculture.

We were given the opportunity to show Ms. Harden what we do, where our service area is, and explain our agriculture water systems and what was done as far as repairs.

We also spoke about our office serving the Native Hawaiian community and plans for Waimea Nui.

### In This Issue

- Message from Director 2
- Civil Rights 3
- Kolonia Activity 4
- Maui Feature 5
- Soils Update 9
- Employee Spotlight 14
- Future Direction 16



**Bruce Petersen, PIA NRCS Director**

*Current Developments* is a newsletter for employees and partners. You may submit articles and photos to:  
  
Jolene Lau,  
State Public Affairs Specialist,  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
P.O. Box 50004  
Honolulu, HI 96850  
[Jolene.Lau@hi.usda.gov](mailto:Jolene.Lau@hi.usda.gov)

## Message from the Director

Aloha and Hafa Adai,

Since our last PIA Current Developments I got a chance to visit the west area and meet with producers, conservation districts, and island officials. I am looking forward to going to American Samoa in August. I have now had an opportunity to see most of the field offices and many of the islands that make up the PIA. You've introduced me to producers and partners and shown me many examples of the great work you are doing. I appreciate you taking the time from your busy schedules to provide me with those experiences.

I want to update you on a few operational items.

**Personnel:** The following employees made new career changes. Tony Rofles was selected as the state soil scientist for California, Glenn Sakamoto is retiring in July with 34 years of service, Jarred Considine was selected for a Forest Service position in Oregon, Jackie Flores was selected for a position with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Guam and Arlene Rosenkrans announced her retirement with 21 years of service. I wish them all the best and thank them for their service to the PIA.

**Programs:** We have recently began an EQIP TA Pilot that will direct some of our time and funding towards increased implementation and follow-up activities on EQIP contracts. Our success with this pilot will be measured by the number of practices we report. Guam and Hawaii islands are part of a feral swine pilot. Field office efforts to promote this opportunity should result in several EQIP contracts. Thanks for your work in getting contracts obligated. I have requested additional EQIP and AMA funds so there may be an opportunity to fund some additional contracts this year.

**Administration:** The final position on the Business Management team (Business Support Specialist) has not been filled. I anticipate re-advertising this position in the near future. Fiscal year close out can be a challenge, please pay attention to any directions from Business Management.

**Looking forward:** I have been asked "when are you going to fill the empty cubicle in our office". I have been told that it was not long ago that we had about 125 staff in the PIA. Today we have about 72, but in most cases we have qualified staff in adequate numbers to accomplish the workload. I think we struggle to meet our workload because our current situation is not functioning as it should. I see a need for improvement with a corporate attitude of cooperation, collaboration, communication, and clear expectations. I will continue to work on achieving this. I realize that there are some critical vacant positions that must be filled and with input from the Leadership Team, Future Directions Workgroup, and budget depending, I will be filling some critical vacancies.

In my observation, things have gone very well here and I hope we can continue with our successes. Please don't lose sight of the fact that what you are doing makes a real difference to the resources and producers in the Pacific Islands. I receive compliments all the time from producers and partners on the great work that the PIA staff is doing. Those compliments and praise while given to me should be directed to you. You have done some great things under some trying circumstances.

Thank you,  
Bruce

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# CRAC - Heritage Month

## June is LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Pride Month

By Valerie Russell, LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager



Many folks may be wondering why we are talking about sexual orientation and gender identity at work. 2.6% of USDA employees identified as LGBT in the 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. And USDA has offices in 2200 counties across the nation; LGBT people live in more than 99% of US counties. It is therefore reasonable to expect that our LGBT community members are our customers, our family members, and our employees. It is simply good customer service to reach out to the people who live and work in the communities we serve. We should also actively take steps to ensure that workplace discrimination on the basis of sex (including gender identity and expression) and sexual orientation is eradicated. For these reasons, I remain committed to ensuring that NRCS is a welcoming workplace to our LGBT customers and employees.

In celebration of 2015 LGBT Pride Month, I encourage you to support our LGBT community by becoming a LGBT ally. An ally can be defined as a member of dominant group in our society, in this case a 'straight' individual, who works to dismantle any form of oppression from which he or she receives the benefit. Here's some tips on becoming an LGBT ally:

- Ask questions. Especially when you aren't sure about the acronyms, terminology, or words to use when talking about your gay friends, family, colleagues, or acquaintances.
- Become informed. Learn about the realities, challenges, and issues affecting the lives of LGBT people through websites, books, documentaries, and educational materials.
- Speak up. When you hear derogatory slurs or jokes, like "that's so gay", say something – and don't tell them yourself.

The first step toward ensuring equal treatment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people is to educate ourselves and increase awareness about what it means to be LGBT. Many people are confused by or misunderstand the language and issues facing LGBT people. When we don't have the language or do not understand the issues, it is very difficult to have conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity.

On June 15, a webinar training on creating a LGBT-friendly workplace was held for PIA. Our goal was to define LGBT terminology, identify issues facing the LGBT community, and convey simple steps you can take to make the workplace more welcoming to our LGBT customers and employees. If you missed this training opportunity, please let me know, as I can schedule additional training sessions. Also, if there are particular topics relating to LGBT you would like to learn about, please contact me and I will happily refer you to resources materials of interest to you.

## Snorkel Day for People with Disabilities

By Alicia Greene, Disability Special Emphasis Program Manager



Alicia Greene

On April 10, I attended a Snorkel Day for People with Disabilities as the PIA Disability Emphasis Program Manager. The Snorkel Days is part of a series free events hosted by an organization called Deep and Beyond at various beach parks around the Big Island including Kahalu'u, Richardson and Spencer beach parks. The mission of Deep and Beyond is to create opportunities for people with disabilities to "explore nature, participate in adventure activities, and experience freedom".



I helped to set up prior to participant arrival. Set up included rolling out a large, grid-like rubber mat from the paved sidewalk to the ocean over the sand and putting together two beach mobility chairs. The mobility chairs had a mesh seat that could be submerged into the ocean and large plastic tires that allowed the chair to move on sand and float in the water. The chairs and mats provided accessibility to the water and the coral reef.

The participants arrived shortly before the event start time, armed with towels and smiles. They ranged in age from teens to late-40s. I was able to snorkel with several participants and befriended one woman in particular. The woman was in a car accident when she was in her 20's and now uses a wheel chair. She transferred herself to the mobility chair and a couple of the Deep and Beyond employees pushed her down the rubber mat and straight into the ocean. As they held the chair in the water, the woman scooted herself out of the chair and took off in a rapid front crawl to the other side of the bay. When she returned an hour or so later, she reported the types of fish and ocean life she saw and how much she appreciated being able to get into the ocean again.

The Snorkel Day for People with Disabilities was an excellent example of how reasonable accommodation provides equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Both reasonable accommodation and equal opportunity are key to a quality life. People with Disabilities are entitled to the same benefits and privileges as their neighbors, coworkers and friends.

# Kolonia Activity Report

By Arlene Rosenkrans, Resource Conservationist, Pohnpei

## NRCS Forester Provides Assistance to Pohnpei

State Forester, Michael Constantinides, from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Honolulu visited Pohnpei at the end of February. Michael provided technical assistance on windbreak establishment, composition and layout, and emphasized the importance of trees on their farms for nitrogen enrichment and shade.

One full day of his visit was used to train NRCS staff, Pohnpei State Forestry workers and a Community Conservation Officer on techniques for assessing vegetative cover in open areas and tree stand composition and density in forested areas.

This will enable these workers to obtain better resource inventory data on watershed clearings and forests for education and planning efforts.



State Forester, Michael Constantinides, second from left, providing technical assistance to farmers.

## NRCS Leads Farm Tour for UN Telefood Project Villagers

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been assisting 10 small farmers in Pohsoain village engaged in a United Nations Telefood project since late 2013.

On April 29, USDA NRCS and partners assisting with the Pohsoain Telefood Project presented farmer workshop training at the Wone Village. NRCS staff taught proper use and care of backpack sprayers, along with some tips on seed varieties, supply and marketing.

Poasa Nauluvula of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, demonstrated proper techniques for selection, collection and storage of vegetable seeds and explanations of open pollinated plant varieties versus hybrids.

As part of their education on vegetable farming and production, soil health and composting, twelve farmers visited a local commercial farm used by NRCS and the University of Hawaii for crop trials and composting demonstrations.

Saimon Mix, a local innovator, showed the farmers his crop varieties, crop rotations systems, trellises, composting bins and an irrigation system using a self-powered hydro-ram pump and drip irrigation. One farmer brought his workers back later to assist with the turning of the compost pile to get more first-hand experience for their farm.

Workshops will continue on a monthly basis with the local farmers, helping to build capacity, crop productivity and sustainable farms. The Pohnpei State Agriculture also offered advice and updates on poultry supplies for the area.



Kolonia farmers at a commercial farm used by NRCS and the University of Hawaii.



NRCS Agriculture Aid Rodasio Samuel teaching care & maintenance of backpack sprayers.

## Success Stories

The purpose and passion for conservation is shared among many. It is shared between NRCS employees and partners who help people help the land.

Our passion is manifested through the benefits derived from stewardship of private lands—benefits we all enjoy, such as cleaner water and air, improved soils and abundant wildlife habitat.

In most cases, the benefits of installing a conservation practice extend beyond the individual farmer.

This article is one of the many “success stories” that highlight the conservation efforts of few Pacific Islands Area (PIA) landowners, partners, and NRCS employees.



Steve Armstrong, owner of a 17 acre property in Keokea, Maui.

### Success Story: Steve Armstrong

*By Carl Hashimoto, Soil Conservation Technician, Kahului*

Here stands Steve Armstrong, owner of a 17-acre property in Keokea, Maui. Steve was an approved Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) applicant back in 2010 that helped him reach his objectives for the land: Timber and Forest restoration. Former Natural Resources Conservationist Service's (NRCS) Maui Conservationist, Leo Smock-Randall, was Steve's planner to reach his objectives. Steve had planned to remove (490-Tree/Shrub Site Preparation) all of the invasive plant species such as Inia trees (Indian Mulberry), Christmas berry trees, and other undesirable plants species. These undesirables were planned to be chipped (384-Woody Residue Treatment) and used as mulch (484-Mulching) for the Spanish cedar and Honduran mahogany trees (612-Tree/Shrub Establishment) that will be planted and grown for timber.

After Leo Smock-Randall left NRCS, I took over the EQIP contract implementation. Three of the five planned fields were already planted with the cedar and mahogany. This is when Steve was discussing other tree species to plant in the two remaining fields with Michael Constantinides, Pacific Islands Area-NRCS State Forester. Michael convinced Steve to establish a native forest using Koa, Koa'ia, 'Iliahi, and A'ali'i. Pictured standing in his native forest field is proud Steve Armstrong. The plants are near two years old and some stand about 15 feet. Steve stated to me that he is very grateful to have spoken with Michael and changed from the cedar and mahogany to planting the native species. "Thank you, Michael," from Steve.



**Volunteers at the Waikiki Aquarium staffed the NRCS outreach booth. Photo courtesy of Bernadette Luncsford, Aiea District Conservationist.**

## Earth Day Every Day!

*By Jolene Lau, Earth Team Coordinator (East Area and State Office)*

We celebrated National Volunteer Week which ended on April 18th, by thanking the ten offices, 21 active volunteers, and their supervisors for the contribution of 515.50 volunteer hours so far this fiscal year.

I want to extend my sincere appreciation to Nicola & Sarah Giardina, Bernadette Luncsford, and Mandy Chen for helping me at our outreach booth on Saturday, April 18th at the Waikiki Aquarium. Incredibly, 3,548 people came through the aquarium for that event and I could not have done this outreach alone. Additionally, for all the other offices with volunteers that were busy for Earth Day events, thank you for your service and dedication.

We also extend our condolences to Anton Tornito who passed away in May. We appreciated her years of dedication as the Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator for the West Area.

## Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month Event: Lei Day

*By Jolene Lau, National Asian Pacific Islander Female Representative*

May 1st is recognized as “Lei Day” in Hawaii to celebrate the legendary garland or string of flowers from our islands. While garlands of plants and flowers can be found elsewhere in the Pacific, the lei takes on a truly mythic status in Hawaii, showing up in legends, song and expressions. Not only are there a variety of techniques from stringing, to intricate weaving, there is meaning to the materials used. For instance, the fragrant maile vine, a sacred plant of hula or dance, is now used for special occasions like graduations and marriages. At its most refined, the garland can even evoke the feeling behind an occasion, perhaps even alluding to the nature of a relationship. In all, the lei is a unique and truly ephemeral luxury, especially as the most delicate will last only a day. In 1929, May Day officially became Lei Day in Hawaii. Even now, seasoned lei-makers and daring amateurs continue to show off their talents in the annual Lei Day competition at Kapiolani Park in Waikiki.



**Benton Pang (left) from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with our Director Bruce Petersen (right).**



**PIA Soil scientist Tony Rolfes (left) with James Kim (right) of USFWS learning one technique of weaving with ti leaves.**



**PIA Engineer Sharon Sawdey learning one technique of stringing plumeria flowers.**



Anton Tornito's Memorial

## Anton Tornito's Memorial

*By Bart Lawrence, Assistant Director - Western Pacific*

We miss her. Anton Tornito was our friend, our sister, our mother, our glue...our everything. For the better part of a decade Anton said, "good morning" to me; to all of us... and when she did, the day just felt better for it. She was a common link for all of the USDA Guam and NRCS Pacific Islands Area family, but most of all she was our Anton. I will miss her calm nature and ability to sense when I needed a gentle or even a more firm "chill boss it will all be okay." Though we may feel rudderless and a bit adrift, we shall find our bearings and keep to a course of work and support for each other, our partners, and our mission. She herself would say...enough now, time to get back to work.

The NRCS – PIA mission was something that she was very passionate about. Yes, the work she did and supported for us will be missed but it will be carried forward and completed, with her memory as our compass.

Anton was our friend, our sister, our mother, our glue...our everything.

# Role of the Special Emphasis Program Manager Training

*By Matthew Wung, Pacific Islands Asian American and Pacific Islander SEPM*

Special Emphasis Program Managers or SEPMs are our unsung heroes: work on a cause that benefits equal employment opportunity and civil rights for the underserved. During the week of January 13-15, 2015 several SEPMs from NRCS Pacific Islands Area, the United States Marine Corp, and the Department of Homeland Security; US Customs and Immigration Service attended "Role of a Special Emphasis Program Manager" a SEPM training. The training was held at the NRCS State and presented by Carrolle Rushford of Rushford and Associates.

Why do we need special emphasis program managers? Special Emphasis Program Managers are needed to carry out special emphasis programs in areas specifically required by regulation; specifically the Hispanic employment program, the Federal Women's program, and the program for persons with Disabilities. I am proud to say that NRCS in PIA is way ahead of other Federal agencies, we have SEPM's for many special emphasis areas that include not only Black, women, and disabled SEPMs but also for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, veterans, American Indian/Alaska Natives, and Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, and Transgender SEPMs as I found out that only a few Federal agencies have this many program managers which shows that NRCS is in full support of mandated programs in affirmative employment to ensure that minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities experience full participation in all occupations and at all levels of the organization.

What is the SEPM's role? We learned that the SEPM's role is to identify policies, practices, and procedures that may present barriers to the hiring and advancement of target group employees. The goal is to eliminate discriminatory practices and assure full participation at all levels. SEPMs need to be available and listen to concerns but cannot be a representative for the person with a complaint. SEPM's are an information source, training coordinator, and networking coordinator.

At the training, we learned about the many laws that were formed to prevent discrimination and the differences between EEO, affirmative action, and diversity which are different subjects but may overlap. For example the goal of EEO is to eliminate employment discrimination, the goal for affirmative action is to eliminate employment barriers, and the goal of diversity is inclusion by treating all people with respect and dignity. The coverage for EEO is the 8 prohibited bases: religion, race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, and genetic information as well as reprisal. The coverage for affirmative action is for EEO groups who experienced historical discrimination under one or more prohibited bases. The coverage for diversity is for all people, and differences. We learned about the complaint process and how to identify, as SEPMs when a situation should be raised to an EEO Counselor. Other duties that the SEPMs have are conducting outreach for recruitment and outreach for program participation; viewing hiring and retention practices; gathering data to identify employment barriers; education; recognition of special emphasis months; and gathering of data to produce a MD-715 report.

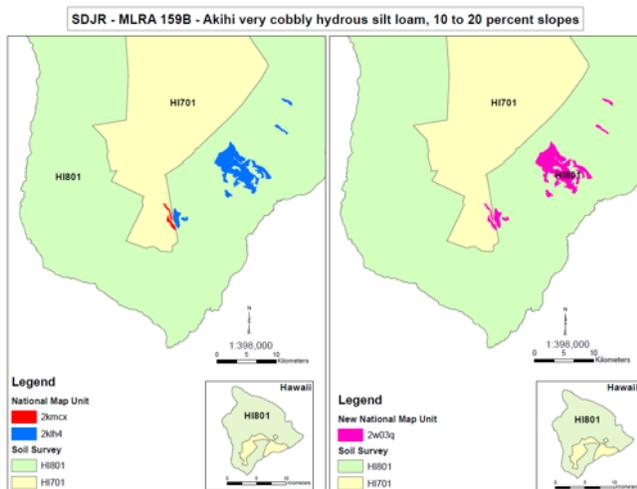
The MD-715 is a report on current practices and procedures that address EEO/Civil rights/affirmative action accomplishments and describes what our agency is doing to promote diversity in the workplace. This subject was covered briefly by Carrole as there was much to cover, so I did some research on this report and found a lot of information at the National civil rights website and the link to the FY 2013 report is: [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1248090.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1248090.pdf). It is a report to the NRCS Civil Rights Director that compiles CRAC reports from States to our agency head with oversight of EEO programs which include the Civil Rights Division, Employment Compliance Branch, Talent Management, National Federal Women's Program covering Title VI Affirmative Action, Section 501. and Complaint Processing. The MD-715 has more information about EEO issues that the average person can think of from total workforce distribution of race/ethnicity and sex to complaints, participation rates for GS grades, wage grades, and for major occupations, employee recognition, new hires, and much more. I encourage you to take a look at the MD-715 which will give you a different perspective on EEO and Civil Rights that this agency takes seriously.

Overall the SEPM training was very informative and I learned a lot including the fact that being an SEPM is not an easy job and many situations can be daunting. Luckily there are many resources available to help us understand the process and procedures that must be done to address situations. I would like to thank current and past SEPMs for their contributions in addressing the mandated efforts to reduce discriminatory practices and for going far beyond their own needs to help others.

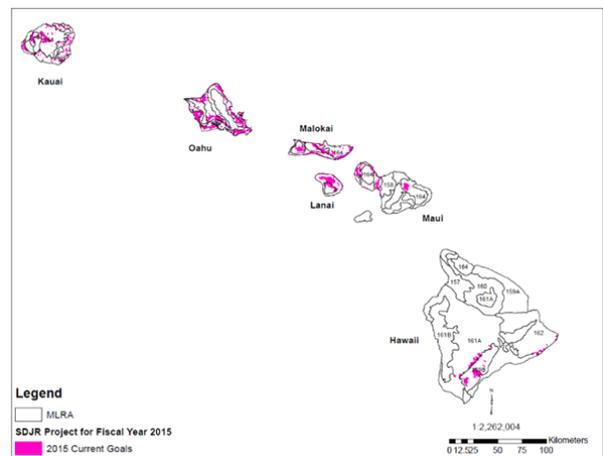
# Soil Data Join Recorrelation - Pacific Basin Region

By Jacqueline Vega-Pérez, MLRA Soil Scientist and Mike Kolman, Soil Scientist, MLRA Soil Survey Leader, USDA, NRCS, Kealakekua MLRA Soil Survey office.

The NRCS Soil Science Division started the Soil Data Join Recorrelation (SDJR) Project in fiscal year (FY) 2012. This initiative updates the soil database for the major land resource areas (MLRA). SDJR is the process by which soil survey data is reviewed and edited on an MLRA basis to better represent actual soil distribution across the landscape. The process of SDJR will essentially resolve “no-join” issues which have historically occurred at the county and state political boundaries. In doing so, soils data is “harmonized” throughout a geographic region, essentially eliminating a common (no-join) issue for watershed planners and other landscape modelers. After all, soils follow natural geomorphic boundary breaks and are not restricted by the confines of political boundaries. As the SDJR process continues, updates to soil surveys will be published in the Web Soil Survey at the end of every fiscal year. The Kealakekua MLRA Soil Survey Office (SSO) started work on the SDJR initiative in 2014 for the Hawaii and the Pacific Islands areas. At the end of this fiscal year, the Kealakekua MLRA SSO expects to complete 37 of the 67 assigned projects. The following figure illustrates the before and after effects of SDJR projects on the Island of Hawaii.



**Figure 1.** National map unit symbols for Akihi very cobbly hydrous silt loam, 10 to 20 percent slopes before (left) and after (right) SDJR.



**Figure 2.** SDJR projects for FY 2015.

Figure 1 shows that the most obvious result of SDJR is the correlation of the national map unit symbols. National symbols are unique symbols (number or letters) designated to each map unit on the soil map. For this project, two map units (2kmcx and 2klh4) were harmonized into a new single map unit (2w03q) after the SDJR evaluation. The new map unit data is updated and edited; and finally captured in the National Soils Information System (NASIS) when the harmonization phase is complete. The focus is to certify the soils information and then export the changes to Web Soil Survey.

Figure 2 shows the current goals for the Kealakekua MLRA SSO on the SDJR project. Over 37 SDJR projects are approved for work on 122,917 acres during FY 2015. At the end of the fiscal year, over 80 traditional soil survey map units will have been harmonized to about 37 new MLRA map units.

The National Soil Survey Center will continue to support SDJR after fiscal year 2017. The current goals for SDJR are set by the Regional SSOs to complete 700 million acres by FY 2017. Nationwide, Over 3,900 SDJR projects are approved for work on 2.9 million acres during this fiscal year. At the end of FY 2015, over 37,000 traditional soil survey map units will have been harmonized to about 7,700 MLRA map units; and nationwide, about 495 million acres will have been improved through this re-correlation effort. (NCSS newsletter, Issue 71)

Reference: Following is the URL for issue 71 of the NCSS Newsletter: [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/PA\\_NRCSSconsumption/download?cid=nrcseprd358420&ext=pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/PA_NRCSSconsumption/download?cid=nrcseprd358420&ext=pdf).

# A Walk in the Forest with Tim Tunison and Pat Conant

By Jill Ficke-Beaton, Soil Conservationist, Hilo

Retired Hawaii Volcanos National Park Chief of Resource Management and botanist, Tim Tunison and Pat Conant, retired Hawai'i State Department of Agriculture Entomologist, led Field Office staff from three of Hawai'i Island NRCS service centers on a training focused on native Hawaiian plants, rain forest ecology and restoration of native ecosystems. The group met at the Volcano Art Center that has fenced and managed a small section of native forest, the Niaulani Forest Project.

Tim began the day giving some history on the site, explaining that Hawai'i rainforests are described as being "upside down" compared to the typical rain forests located around the world. The majority of the diversity is near the ground, while typical rainforests have more diversity near the canopy. This observation plays a big part in how we plan for our wildlife and forestry projects.

The walk through the Niaulani Forest Project with Tim and Pat was enthralling, and not just because of their exuberant enthusiasm for the native plants, but also because of the beautiful specimens that we were able to see, feel, smell and even taste. The cool, damp, forest had first been fenced to keep out feral ungulates, a required step 1 according to Tim. The removal of the ungulates alone can sometimes initiate native plants to begin colonizing the area without intervention, but usually, removal of competitive invasive species is necessary. If a sufficient canopy is standing at the site, repopulating the understory with herbs, vines and shrubs is the next step. Tim provided us with a very helpful 'Identification Key to the Native Woody Plants of Niaulani'. The group successfully identified a number of species, such as Manono, Kanawao, and Olomea. Tim and Pat frequently pointed out many of the other plants found on the trail, such as Oha wai, Kolea lau nui and Mamaki. It was a treat to see the enormous Koa, Ohia and Hapuu snuggled into the dense forest.



Tim Tunison



Niaulani Forest



Pat Conant

The follow up site visits that Tim and Pat took us to were equally interesting. Tim has a beautiful restoration project well on its way at his residence and he recently purchased a lot across the street where he has had to do some extensive invasive species removal. It will be interesting to be able to photo document the site as his work progresses. Our last stop was at Pat Conant's property where he and his family have painstakingly fenced, removed ginger and other invasive plants, and followed up with planting the less common native plants suitable for his environment. It was a privilege to be invited to their personal paradise and to be educated by both of them on the plants, pests, ecology and challenges they have faced in their efforts to enhance their lands native forest.



A loulu palm in Pat Conant's forest.

On the right, a photo of Tim Tunison in front of his recently purchased land in Volcano Village and after the initial clearing of the invasive species. It will be an absolute must stop on my frequent site visits to Volcano to see and document his progress on this parcel. I am hopeful that we can continue to learn from Tim, expanding our training to dryland restoration ecology and techniques.



## Soils Outreach

### Maui 4H Dirt Devils head to Oklahoma City

By Amy Koch, GIS Specialist, Hilo

The winners of this year's Hawaii Conservation Awareness Contest, the Maui 4H Dirt Devils from Seabury Hall, competed at the 64th Annual National Land Judging Contests held in Oklahoma City May 5-7, 2015. The team placed 3rd in 4-H Homesite Judging and 10th in 4-H Land Judging. Kaitlyn Yamada won 5th individual top score in 4-H Homesite Judging, while Corin Nishimoto took 10th in the same category. Congratulations to the whole team on a job well done!



Award Ceremony (2nd L to R: Corin Nishimoto, Kaitlyn Yamada, Kiarra Burkitt, Brian Layongtheung, and Advisor Dr. Daryl Yamada).



4H Dirt Devils in Oklahoma - Brian Layongtheung, Kiarra Burkitt, Kaitlyn Yamada, and Corin Nishimoto. Photo provided by advisor Dr. Yamada.

### BioBlitz in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

By Amy Koch, GIS Specialist, Hilo

More than 6,000 people joined the National Geographic Society and the National Park Service at the Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park BioBlitz and Biodiversity and Cultural Festival, Friday and Saturday, May 15 and 16, 2015. During two-day event, teams of scientists, Hawaiian cultural practitioners, students, and the public joined forces to discover and inventory as many living plants and creatures as possible in the 333,086-acre national park.

Soil scientists Amy Koch and Jacky Vega participated as scientists and led a hike and soil inventory that focused on the relationship between soils and vegetation. They were joined by Earth Team Volunteer Janella Cruz (Soil Scientist, NRCS NY) on May 16. Participants included some budding young scientists that couldn't take their hands off the auger or their eyes off the ground (see photos below). Under the theme of "I ka nānā no a 'ike" ("By observing, one learns"), Amy and Jacky worked with a traditional Hawaiian cultural practitioner, or alakai'i, to take a more holistic approach to exploring the 'āina and understanding the intricate connection between soil and the plants that grow in it.



Top Left: Young participants use hand lenses to examine the surface soil and leaf litter. Top Right: Many little hands make for easy digging with the auger. Bottom: Jacky Vega, Amy Koch, and Janella Cruz (L to R) show off their soil profile during BioBlitz 2015.

# Application of Soil Data Viewer tool in ArcGIS for Technical Soil Services

By Jacqueline Vega-Perez, MLRA Soil Scientist, Kealakekua & Reese Libby, Geographer/GIS Specialist, Waimea

The “Soil Technology – Application of Soil Data Viewer” online training course provides the necessary skills to use the robust combined capabilities of ArcGIS and Soil Data Viewer (SDV) programs to participants. SDV offers easy access to soil interpretations and soil properties while shielding users from the complexity of the National Soil Information System database. Each soil map unit, typically a set of polygons, may contain multiple soil components that have different attributes and interpretations. SDV makes it easy to compute a single value for a map unit and to display results in a map, thus relieving the user from the burden of querying the database, processing data and linking to the spatial map unit. SDV contains processing rules to enforce appropriate use of the data. Thus, it provides the user with a tool for quick geospatial soil data analysis to assess resources and make management decisions. SDV is one of the most powerful tools in Technical Soil Services (TSS). In addition to providing soil data, SDV is an aid to map soil attributes (Figure 1).

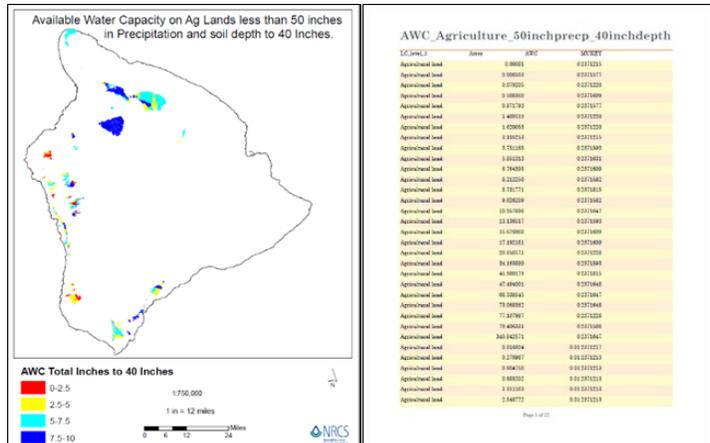


Figure 1. Available Water Capacity on Agriculture Lands with less than 50 inches of precipitation and soil depth to 40 inches shown in a spatial map (left) and a tabular report (right).

The SDV is a stand-alone application, or may be utilized as an extension to ArcGIS. SDV is used as a stand-alone program to generate tabular reports for selected attributes and interpretations. As an ArcMap extension, SDV has the option to join attributes of all records or a subset of records to the spatial map unit layer displayed in ArcGIS. Once mapped, these attributes can be exported and saved as permanent shapefiles. Refer to the [User Guide](#) for specific issues related to the operation of the program.

Figure 1 is an example of a product that can be generated in SDV, showing soil available water holding capacity on agricultural lands in areas with less than 50 inches of precipitation on Hawaii Island. According to Tony Rolfes, Assistant Director for Soils & Natural Resource Assessments, displaying this information on a map may help in identifying and or prioritizing lands that would benefit from soil health practices like no till, cover crops or residue management in order to become more drought resilient.

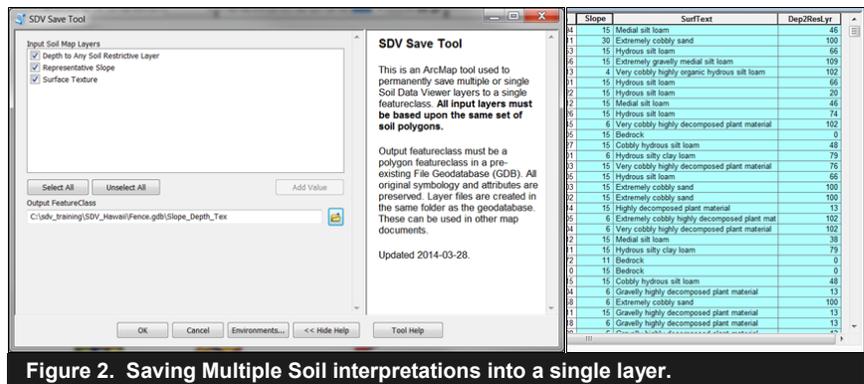


Figure 2. Saving Multiple Soil interpretations into a single layer.

The real power of SDV in providing technical soil services is analysis of several soil interpretations or properties together. To effectively do this, the user can store multiple Soil Data Viewer layers into a single feature class. The SDV Save tool can generate multiple soil interpretation layers and combine into a single spatial layer (Figure 2).

Figure 3 shows soil map units that contain one or more soil components that have limiting properties that would be difficult to overcome during the installation of a fence. The properties used to generate this layer were derived from the soil survey data of the Island of Hawaii Area, Hawaii (HI801) by using the SDV Save Tool. Only three properties were used to create this theme map for demonstration purpose: slope, depth to lithic bedrock, and surface texture.

Figure 3. Difficult Fencing Soil Map Units on Island of Hawaii Area (HI801) soil survey. The map shows map units with slopes of 20% or more; or depth to lithic bedrock within 24 inches of the surface; or surface textures that are very or extremely stony or cobbly.



# Students learn more about soil for their school garden

By Jolene Lau, State Public Affairs

In partnership with the Malama Learning Center and the West Oahu Soil and Water Conservation District, NRCS is actively engaged with the students at Kapolei Middle School's Garden Club. Conservation technical assistance and funds from a national initiative are helping this non-traditional, historically underserved community with vegetable production and erosion control. As with any NRCS project, the Resource Technology Staff completed the cultural resources and environmental compliance review. When all was clear, a groundbreaking ceremony was held with this brand new partner and class presentations were scheduled.

In April, as we celebrated International Year of Soils, the monthly theme was, "Soils clean and capture water." To demonstrate this theme, Tony Rolfe (our Assistant Director for Soil Science and Natural Resource Assessments) brought visual aids to their classroom. He covered soil texturing, pH tests, and the all too popular crowd attraction...the aggregate stability test. With two clear columns filled with water, teachers and students were amazed to see the difference between tilled and no-tilled soil samples. By the end of the class session, we had them so jazzed up on cover crops for their garden, they even downloaded the web soil survey app straight to their mobile devices!

Similarly, we were invited back in May to do another presentation on the national theme, "Soils support buildings/infrastructure." This time, Adam Reed (our Water Quality Specialist) brought a microscope that plugged into our laptop so it could be projected on the classroom monitor. The Garden Club took soil samples from their garden and around the classroom to see all the bio diversity living in the soil on campus. They were very excited to see moving creatures that were magnified and could better understand how valuable soil is and how to take care of it in school and at home. As the cooperative agreement nears closing, we look forward to a few more presentations with the Garden Club and completing another successful project!



The "before" picture of a garden area at Kapolei Middle School.



Tony Rolfe led a soils demonstration in April that was well received by the Garden Club.



Adam Reed brought the microscope and took a soil sample from their garden to show the living organisms projected on the classroom monitor.



Kapolei Middle School Garden Club started a few seedlings in new planter boxes.

# Employee Spotlight

By Glenn Sakamoto, Plant Materials Center Manager



Glenn Sakamoto

In the summer of 1979, I walked into the Hilo SCS Field Office looking for information about job opportunities with this agency. Larry Soenen, District Conservationist at the time quickly popped my bubble by telling me that there were no vacancies and if I wanted to work for SCS I'd have to apply with OPM and work on the mainland. "Okay I said, and thank you very much" and was out the door in less than five minutes. Gosh I thought to myself, he was kind of rude but I guess it was my fault. I should have made an appointment first. By the way, Soenen is a good friend of mine, but I guess at the time he had too much Highly Erodible Land (HEL) issues on his mind.

I went back to Hilo College that fall to pursue my Master's degree or at least earn credits towards it when I meet a cool local dude. He was kind of hippy looking with very long hair in a ponytail, "puka" blue jeans, a goatee and driving around in an old 60's VW van. I'd see him off and on, on campus and down at Onekahakaha Beach Park in his van and we talked briefly about school and things. During one of these talks he told me about SCS and how he was using his GI bill and working as a SCS Coop student and how great the agency was. Hmm, not

the best first impression I had a few months ago. He told me to call the State Office and talk to the State Administration Officer, Bill Mann and ask about job opportunities. Mann was great, he sent me forms to fill out and wouldn't you know, in September of 1980 State Conservationist, Francis Lum hired me as a WAE,GS-3 Soil Conservation Technician Aid in the Kamuela FO. There was no "big bucks" but I was glad to at least have a Federal job. The work was interesting and I felt I was doing something worthwhile since sugarcane and pasture was still big and I was happy to assist in putting in terraces and livestock pipelines in the Hamakua district. I learned a lot from my mentors in that office, Calvin Harada, Jerome Williams, Larry Shinshiro and Warren Kanai. By the way that local dude who pointed me in the right direction was our former State Conservationist, Larry Yamamoto. Who would of thought!

It wasn't soon after that I received a call from Mann again. He asked if I was interested in a fulltime position at the Kealahou FO as GS-4, Soil Conservation Technician. With no hesitation I said "yes". My starting date would be January 1981. That enthusiasm to be a fulltime "Federal Employee" was short lived as the week before my start date Mann called to say that the position would only be part time. There was no "big bucks" but I was glad to have a permanent position. Working in Kona was great. Coffee and macadamia nut orchards were coming up everywhere and irrigation design and groundcovers were the "in" thing. Of course pastures was still king but it was totally different than my previous FO.

In the summer of 1982, Francis Lum asked if I would be interested in a full time position at the Kauai FO as GS-5 Soil Conservationist. With no hesitation I said "yes". With high hopes I was thrilled to finally get a chance to work as a SC planner but that again was short lived when Mann called to say that someone else got the position. With that "let down" however, he did say that there was a position at the Hoolehua PMC if I was interested. This time and with reluctance I said "let me think about it." It took me about a week to decide to accept the position. They told me that this would only be a short term stint on Molokai and that I would probably be relocated in about one year. Oh yeah, and by the way that guy who got the Kauai position was our former State Conservationist, Larry Yamamoto.

Well it's been 32 years and I'm still here. I fell in love and married my Molokai sweetheart Cathleen and was blessed with two great kids, Chelsea and Jake. I guess my roots grew pretty deep here on Molokai. Molokai has been good to my family and I couldn't be more blessed.

Through the years I've seen many changes within our agency, not to mention 10 State Conservationists and six State Resource Conservationists. It's all been good, not perfect but good. The Plant Materials Program has given me the opportunity to work with many great professionals within and outside our agency. It has also taken me to many places within the PIA and the mainland and for that I am so grateful as I have learned so much valuable insight into what makes our agency so worthwhile to be a part of. As the PMC manager I've been a part of many things throughout my 32 years here, too many to count and besides it would bore you to no end. But if there was one thing I could take credit for, it would be that I hope I represented the PMC and PM Program well and if I did, then it's not because of me but the people that surrounded me that made it work. My sincere gratitude and appreciation to all of you who made it all worthwhile. Thank you to my past and current PMC staff, supervisors, specialists, FO, and SO staff for putting up with me and watching my back. I couldn't have done it without you.

After 34+ years of service it's time to go fishing, mend fences or maybe chase some white balls on the golf course. Yep, it's about that time. Oh yeah one more thing. I still haven't made the "big bucks" but it's sure gonna feel good making the "big bucks" and not working.

See you bumbai,  
Stretch

# PIA Future Directions Advisory Workgroup

By Reese Libby, State Geographer/Cartographer Technician & Michael Constantinides, State Forest Ecologist

The PIA Future Directions Advisory Workgroup Committee was formed at the request of Craig Derickson when he was Acting Director. Craig was interested in convening a committee that would serve as a sounding board from employees to the Director regarding morale and operational concerns they had, including those identified in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. There are nine committee members plus Director Bruce Petersen, who picked up where Craig left off: Michael Constantinides, Kori Hisashima, Susan Kubo, Reese Libby, Carolyn Wong, Drew Stout, Ryan Woolbright, Pamela Aguon and Joe Tuquero.



Following its first few meetings the committee identified and is focusing on four priority areas each of which will be reviewed followed by Committee recommendations to the Director:

1. Communication improvements
2. Leadership / Supervision
3. Team work / Team building
4. Recognition / Awards.

The first issue of Communications was discussed in the Committee's last meeting in May. Areas of importance include:

- Shortfalls in information sharing and notifications
- Concerns regarding controls on line and staff communications
- Clarifying PIA staffing structure and lines of authority
- Improving the effectiveness and professionalism relating to e-mail use

One suggestion for improvement involves setting up a Programs Advisory Committee with the purpose of the committee will be to improve communications and increase opportunities for field employees to be involved in program policy development. This idea was given to the Director for further review. We will be looking at other ways to improve the communications in PIA and making suggestions on improvement.

The Committee has also reviewed information on Emotional Intelligence and how important that is in Leadership roles and supervisors. There is a training video on AgLearn titled "Leadership Essentials: Leading with Emotional Intelligence". Bruce said it was a good video and would suggest it to everyone.

The Committee will next meet on June 22, where we hope to have guest speaker Warren Blank who is renowned for his books and training instructions on Leadership. Mr. Blank has also been one of the instructors for the Pacific Leadership academy here in Hawaii. Committee meeting minutes will be sent to all employees as they become available.

Leadership skills and qualities are important for us all, and we hope everyone in PIA will step up and get involved. Please contact anyone on the committee with suggestions, recommendations or comments on the four priority areas identified above or other issues of importance to you. Positive changes and improvements to NRCS PIA require your input and participation. We need everyone's feedback and support for re-establishing a good culture and work environment in PIA.

We know PIA can do it.

~ the Future Directions Advisory Workgroup Committee

# Tinian Agricultural Fair 2015 Outreach

By Pamela Sablan Aguon, Soil Conservationist, Saipan

The 2015 Tinian Agricultural Fair was held at the San Isidro Fiesta Grounds. Well over 400 hundred people were present to celebrate Tinian Agriculture and San Isidro, the patron Saint of Farmers and Ranchers. This year's fair included many information booths, competitions (i.e. fruits & vegetables, ornamental plants, and livestock divisions), a mango and shrimp cook-off, and many activities for the children.

Farmers and ranchers throughout the CNMI came to the island to support the Tinian Agricultural Fair. Local NRCS partners, the Tinian & Aguiguan Soil and Water Conservation District (T&ASWCD) and Tinian Cattlemen's Association (TCA) work closely with NRCS Saipan field office staff to showcase varied NRCS conservation programs and services. Many people from around the CNMI and Guam first learn about NRCS and our conservation mission of "helping people, help the land" at these local fairs and cultural festivities. Team USDA was represented by Pam Sablan Aguon, NRCS Soil Conservationist and Mr. Tom Camacho, FSA-Guam.

The majority of NRCS clients on Tinian manage beef cattle operations, and are highly successful and well managed. This year five Tinian NRCS cooperators took the top three places for Cattle-Bull; Cattle-Cow; Cattle-Bullock; and Cattle-Heifer. NRCS and the Tinian beef cattle operations are winning conservation combination. NRCS also works with other cooperators with varying agricultural operations such as: Confined piggery operations (dry-litter and wet-wash down systems), open-pasture swine operations, goat pastures, small tropical fruit orchards, multistory agroforestry operations, nut orchards, as well as traditional subsistence and truck crops farmers.

This year and in past years, NRCS staff have met with ranchers, farmers, kids and others to share NRCS conservation programs, services, opportunities and benefits. These one-on-one meetings at local cultural events are an important traditional mode of information sharing. These events have been very effective in helping NRCS staff reach out to engage with Historically Under-served/Female producers. The NRCS Pacific Islands Area public affairs team provides vital support ensuring current USDA program and technical as well as educational publications are made available to share. Tinian teachers, students, agricultural producers and local partners all appreciate this important service.

Effective outreach on Tinian and throughout the CNMI is important to help share the NRCS conservation mission of "Helping People, Help the Land." The over 200 elementary & junior high students who attended the 2015 Tinian Agricultural Fair were able to visit and speak with NRCS local staff, learn about the history of NRCS and the important work of NRCS in partnership with local agencies and landowners. With our Tinian partners at our side, NRCS recruited new cooperators, and helped to excite the next generation of farmers, ranchers and maybe even a future NRCS conservation planner or two about conservation ranching and farming on the remote island of Tinian. Overall, the Tinian agricultural fair was an outstanding success.



## Personnel Update

### Outgoing:

- ◆ Considine, Jared, Transfer to Forest Service 6/14/2015
- ◆ Gavenda, Robert, Retirement 1/10/2015
- ◆ Irwin, Preston, Transfer to NRCS Texas 12/14/2014
- ◆ Suehiro, Lester, Retirement 12/31/2014
- ◆ Torres, Roxane, Resignation 5/30/2015

### Incoming:

- ◆ Dunn, Jenna, District Conservationist, Lihue, Hawaii. EOD: 4/5/2015
- ◆ Elisara, Maryanne, Program Assistant, American Samoa. EOD: 6/28/2015
- ◆ Kinvig, Kevin, Financial Resources Specialist, Honolulu, Hawaii. EOD: 1/25/2015
- ◆ Petersen, Bruce, Director, Honolulu, HI. EOD: 3/8/2015
- ◆ Sweeney, Kyle, Student Intern (Soil Conservation), Pago Pago, American Samoa. EOD: 5/17/2015

### Awards:

- Length of Service - 5 years: Valerie Russell
- Length of Service - 20 years: Adam Reed

