

**United States Department of Agriculture**



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
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**Pacific Islands Area (PIA)  
State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting**

March 27, 2013  
1:00 – 3:00 PM

**MINUTES**

**Welcome & Introduction of Acting PIA Director, Angela Biggs – Shirley Nakamura**

**Partner Reports – Hot Topics & Pulse of Your Organization**

**Irene Sprecher – DOFAW**

- In January the Department released a news release on the Koa Moth and the recent outbreak in the Hilo and Hamakua regions of the Big Island. Nearly 30,000 acres of koa forest have been defoliated.
- Presently working with the US Fish and Wildlife in a process of identifying endangered species.
- Kauai Wildfire Restoration – Forestry to get financial and technical assistance for this. Next week, the BEAR Team of fire experts will be here to work with some of our local experts.
- CREP – We have been awarded a Grant to hire two new staff positions (conservation planners) for the Big Island and Honolulu areas. We hope to have these positions filled by April or May.
- Forest Stewardship Workshop – For forestry consultants to become FSP planners. Training on new software, mapping and putting together conservation plans. Also a brief overview of what consultants need to become a TSP.
- Recently returned from Guam, participating in the Pacific Islands Committee of State and Territory Foresters to discuss common issues in the Pacific.
- Staff changes – We have a new administrator, Roger Imoto. He replaces Paul Connery who retires in the end of May. The new branch manager on Maui is Scott Fretz. We are presently looking for a new branch manager on the Big Island.

**Steve Peterson – FSA**

- CREP
  - We have 12 applications approved (11 on Big Island and 1 on Maui). Total of 480 acres.
  - There are 6 applications with NRCS awaiting a plan on Big Island.
  - There are 3 where the producer is deciding on a plan (2 on Big Island and 1 on Oahu).
  - There are 2 that NRCS deemed not feasible on Big Island and 1 of these wants to include more acreage so there may be an update to the application.
  - There are 4 applications on Big Island being held at FSC waiting for WDC before processing.
- ECP
  - We are finally wrapping up all of the old ECP earthquake and old ECP VOG applications – Hawaii County. All remaining funds are being returned to the National Office for re-distribution.

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### Wendy Wiltsie - EPA

- Of general interest, all EPA employees have received furlough notices. We will be furloughed one day every other week starting in April.
- Coral Reef Protection on Maui – We are putting together a strategy/action plan for what we will do for this year. Priority site is in West Maui. Also doing a waste water tracer study testing treatment plants and tracing waste water to the ocean. Final report should be completed in June 2013.
- NPS 319 Study – Work with landowners through Department of Health. Also permitting for dredge and fill projects.

### Jean Brokish – Oahu RC & D

- We are wrapping up a 319 project in Honouliuli watershed. The report will come out soon. This project has been very impressive because there are many large farms in this area.
- We also have been awarded a Grant for the Waimanalo watershed. This project will start sometime next quarter.
- Cover Crop Seed Project – National CIG project with sun hemp seed.
- During the next couple of months, we will be having workshops on all islands promoting conservation easements and other topics.

### **EQIP, EQIP West Maui Coral Reef Initiative, EQIP Hilo Bay Water Quality Initiative Updates – Nicola Giardina**

- EQIP (Regular)
  - FY 2013 Funding Allocation - \$6,560,000
  - \$1,800,000 was selected in our 1<sup>st</sup> ranking period. Of these, to date 29 applications have been obligated for approximately \$900,000.
  - Signup is continuous and ranking is periodic on high priority applications
  - PIA funding pools are cropland, grazed lands, forested lands and animal feeding operations
  - We address the following resource concerns: soil (erosion and sedimentation), water (quality and conservation), air (quality), plants (invasive), animals (domestic & wildlife habitat), energy (headquarters & landscape)
- EQIP West Maui Coral Reef Initiative
  - FY 2013 Funding Allocation - \$250,000
  - The initiate area has been expanded for FY 2013.
  - 5 applications to date and to date 1 had been selected for funding.
  - Specifically looking at the following water quality resource concerns: sediment & turbidity, nutrients and pesticides.
  - FY 2012 Accomplishments – Total obligated \$313,717, on 251 acres.
- EQIP Hilo Bay Water Quality Initiative
  - FY 2013 Funding Allocation – \$361,000
  - FY 2013 there will be a continuation of the same watershed
  - We submitted 3 additional watersheds for consideration and are waiting to hear back from the National Office.
  - Within the application screening process, high priority applications are considered first.
  - Primary water quality resource concerns to be addressed: nutrients and organics, suspended sediment & turbidity, pathogens and pesticides.
  - FY 2012 Accomplishments – Total obligated \$375,026, on 2,133 acres of grazing land.

- EQIP – Application Deadlines
  - #1: October 19, 2012
  - #2: December 21, 2012
  - #3: March 15, 2013
  - #4: TBD – Available Funds
- EQIP – Obligation Deadline
  - July 1, 2013

**Question:**

Wendy Wiltsie asked regarding the West Maui Coral Reef Initiative and if abandoned agriculture land is eligible under the EQIP program? Nicola responded, that under EQIP we cannot treat roads on abandoned ag land, it needs to be cropland. We have been addressing some roads because of erosion and sedimentation issues, and depending on the situation we may fund improvements of the roads.

**EQIP Organic, EQIP Seasonal High Tunnel, EQIP Energy Initiative, EQIP-CIG, AMA, CStP, and WHIP Updates – Shirley Nakamura**

- EQIP Organic Initiative
  - FY 2013 Funding Allocation - \$100,000 (included in total EQIP allocation)
  - Applicants can apply in 2 categories: certified organic and organic transition (producers pursuing organic certification as transitioning to organic).
  - Payments or conservation practices may not exceed in aggregate \$20,000 per fiscal year or \$80,000 during any six-year period.
  - Received 5 certified organic applications for FY 2013. Unfortunately, no cost estimates have been developed to date.
  - Final deadline to obligate all contracts is July 1, 2013.
- EQIP Seasonal High Tunnel
  - FY 2013 Funding Allocation - \$140,000
  - Received 39 applications for FY 2013 and 4 applications have been obligated to date for a total of \$26,598.
  - Final deadline to obligate all contracts is July 1, 2013.
- EQIP Energy Initiative
  - FY 2013 Funding Allocation - \$11,672 (first time we have received funds for Program)
  - During FY 2013, this program is designed to assist producers in two ways:
    - Identify ways to conserve energy on their farms through an Agricultural Energy Management Plan (AGEMP) conservation activity plan (CAP)
    - Provide assistance to implement various recommended measures through the use of conservation practice standards offered through this initiative, such as Farmstead Energy Improvement
  - Approved resource concerns:
    - Inefficient Energy Use – Equipment and Facilities Energy
    - Inefficient Energy Use – Farming/Ranching Practices and Field Operations
  - No applications received to date.
  - Challenge for PIA is NRCS does not have staff certified to complete Agricultural Energy Management Plans. Technical Service Providers (TSPs) will be completing the plans.

- **EQIP CIG**
  - **National CIG Information:**
    - Pre-Proposal to be selected for potential funding due 3/22/13
    - Expected number of national awards = 60
    - Award Ceiling = \$1,000,000
    - Total Program Funding = \$25,000,000
  - **PIA CIG Information:**
    - PIA will not be holding a state signup for FY 2013
  - **FY 2014 Information:**
    - PIA plans to hold application period in Spring of 2014.
    - Total amount of funds will be a maximum of 10% of PIA EQIP allocation for FY 2014.
    - Maximum per application will be \$75,000.
    - Agreement lifespan will be a maximum of 3 years.
    - Category priorities: nutrient management, energy conservation, soil health, soil quality, sustainable and organic agriculture, productivity and environmental health of forestland, preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitat.
    - Irene Sprecher suggested pest and diseases, invasive species and Agroforestry.
    - Email Shirley Nakamura or Cameron Delligatti with further categories to consider.
    - CIG cannot fund research projects. Projects intended to test hypotheses do not qualify for a CIG grant. CIG is used to apply or demonstrate previously proven technology.

**Question:**

Jean Brokish asked why CIG not just for research? Shirley responded that the technology must be already tested, not for the gathering of initial research data. Basically it is in EQIP funded project and looking primarily for technology transfer in terms of a conservation practice. It is not taking something unknown to do research on.

Jean also asked if there can be an opportunity for applicants to consult with the Programs team prior to submitting an application during the developmental stage because it takes a lot of time to prepare an application. Shirley said that she will look into this to see if this might be a possibility in the future.

- **AMA**
  - FY 2013 Funding Allocation - \$110,000 in funding. \$5,700 was returned due to sequestration. New Balance is \$104,300
  - 13 applications received to date.
  - No contracts obligated to date.
  - Final deadline to obligate all contracts is July 1<sup>st</sup>
- **CStP – Conservation Stewardship Program**
  - All CStP activities and funding are suspended until further notice due to sequestration.
- **WHIP**
  - Only funding for WHIP for FY 2013 is under Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW)
  - NRCS and FWS have selected 8 at-risk species whose decline can be reversed given sufficient resources and landowner participation.
  - PIA submitted requests to National Headquarters for species to be considered for FY 2013 but our species were not selected for this fiscal year. PIA has a large number of threatened

and endangered species, but NHQ selected species that cover large areas and have potential for a large number of landowners/applications in those areas.

- Greg Koob mentioned that National is looking for multi state species and this makes it hard for PIA and suggested that more support we can get through our federal and state partners would be wonderful. It may take some support from our partners to convince National that our scale is just as important as the multi states.
- Irene Sprecher suggested a group or subcommittee be started to discuss the selection of species and work toward a unified voice.
- Proposal would be submitted in March of 2014.

**Easement Programs - FRPP, GRP, WRP Updates – Shirley Nakamura**

- We are presently looking for an Easement Specialist because Mike Brady has taken a position in Colorado.
- FRPP
  - FY 2013 Funding Allocation - \$3,885,442
  - Voluntary program to help farmers and ranchers preserve their ag land.
  - Currently have 1 application and will be working through process in FY 2013.
  - Applications are being accepted from cooperating entities.
- GRP
  - FY 2013 Funding Allocation – PIA did not receive GRP funds for FY 2013
  - Provide assistance to landowners to protect grazing uses and related conservation values.
  - Applications are being accepted.
- WRP
  - FY 2013 Funding Allocation - \$300,000
  - Program to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands while maximizing wildlife habitat benefits.
  - Funds to be used for restoration agreements only on existing enrollment.
  - Currently, no funds are available for new enrollments but applications are being accepted on a continued basis.

**Fencing Technology to Exclude Feral Ungulates (Discussion) – Shirley Nakamura**

We are requesting staff on field, our partners, and other organizations for perimeter fencing costs for feral ungulates. NRCS fencing costs may be low and fencing cost justification is needed. Other agencies that know payment schedules and can provide cost receipts, please email Shirley.

**Closing Remarks – Shirley Nakamura**

- Next scheduled meeting is August 21, 2013
- New agenda items are welcome. Email suggestions to: shirley.nakamura @ hi.usda.gov
- Suggestion for future meetings to have one of our partners “spotlight” their conservation programs

**Attendees:**

|              | <b><u>Name:</u></b> | <b><u>Agency:</u></b> |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Oahu:</b> | Shirley Nakamura    | USDA-NRCS             |
|              | Angela Biggs        | USDA-NRCS             |
|              | Nicola Giardina     | USDA-NRCS             |
|              | Jenny Fujimoto      | USDA-NRCS             |
|              | Kevin Kinvig        | USDA-NRCS             |
|              | Ben Schmidt         | USDA-NRCS             |

**Oahu continued:**

Irene Sprecher  
Jean Brokish  
Wendy Wiltsie  
Steve Peterson

DLNR-DOFAW  
Oahu RC & D  
EPA  
FSA

**Hilo:**

Jessica Newpher  
Aileen Yeh

USDA-NRCS  
Puna SWCD/FSA

**Kahului:**

Ranae Ganske-Cerizo

USDA-NRCS

**Lihue:**

Ben Vinhateiro

USDA-NRCS

**Guam:**

Joe Tuquero  
Roland Quitugua

USDA-NRCS  
Guam SWCD