



Soil Health and Sustainability for Field Staff Recap

By Jared Considine, Waimea Soil Conservationist

“Outstanding”, “the best one [soils workshop] I’ve ever attended”, “we’d pay to attend the full 2.5 day training”. Needless to say the public Soil Health Workshop held in Waimea on the evening of July 29th was an entirely successful event with community support. There were over 70 people in attendance. We asked the audience how they found out about the workshop. The majority said the flyers and word of mouth were the top two ways they heard about the workshop.

In addition to the workshop, Ray Archuleta and David Lamm provided two soil health “challenge” days at several farms and ranches in Hawaii County. The trainers, staff, and producers assessed each site and had Q and A with David and Ray. On the Hilo side we looked at a papaya orchard, cow-calf ranch, and a macadamia orchard. In Waimea we visited a cabbage farm, Mealani Experiment Station pastures, and a multiple species operation on Department of Hawaiian Homelands.



Ray discusses the impact of rotational grazing on soil health at Mealani Experiment Station.



Ray and a member of the community demonstrate the aggregate stability test.



Hawai'i Association of Conservation Districts
sustainable quality of life through visionary conservation

We extend our sincerest appreciation to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands for allowing us to hold both the training and public workshop at the Hawaiian Home Lands Hall in Waimea.



HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION · DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

We would like to say mahalo to the Mauna Kea Soil and Water Conservation District for sponsoring the workshop and for working so hard to make it such a success.



Dr. William E. Puckett, Acting 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

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Message from the Acting Director

Aloha and Hafa Adai,

It is hard to believe that my 120-day detail has ended. It seems like yesterday that I arrived in Honolulu and Tony Rolfes was there, at the airport, with my name on a placard. I have enjoyed my stay and the Aloha that everyone has shown. It has been an honor and privilege to serve you as acting Director. I return to Alabama a much better State Conservationist than when I arrived.

Your new Acting Director will be Craig Derickson, State Conservationist from Nebraska. I know Craig and he is a great individual and should do you proud. Craig has served as Deputy Chief for Programs and has a broad range of experiences.

We have achieved much together over the last few months. You should all be proud of your accomplishments in PIA. I am extremely proud of you and PIA, stay positive and push forward.

I hope all of you enjoy working in conservation and ensuring that farming and ranching remain a viable alternative in PIA. I appreciate your dedication to conservation and all the hard work you do.

Mahalo,
Bill

P.S. I have included a few photos of my travels in PIA and have included them in this issue. Maybe you recognize a few of the locations?



Acting Director Dr. William E. Puckett with local rancher Doug Beaton.

Photos from Acting Director, Bill Puckett's Travels



American Samoa



American Samoa



American Samoa



Tinian



Oahu



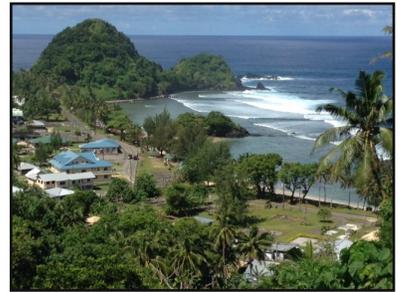
Guam



Maui



Oahu - Birthing Stones



American Samoa



Oahu



Big Island



Saipan—Kagman



Big Island



Big Island



Big Island

Maui County Water Department

By: Ryan Woolbright, Civil Engineer, Kahului Service Center

The Maui County Water Department recently held training for their employees to increase their knowledge of safety and best practices when working in the field. As part of the training, Melanie Stephens from the University of Hawaii-Maui College's Sustainable Living Institute of Maui asked the Kahului field office to provide information on weed control, erosion control, and soil conservation. Two sessions were held in August for the Water Department's operations and maintenance employees. Training sessions included classroom instruction and site visits with questions and answer sessions.

The first training was held at the Piihola water treatment facility above Makawao on August 5. NRCS conservation practices such as Herbaceous Weed Control, Critical Area Planting, Conservation Cover, and various structural practices were presented in the classroom portion. Later, I toured the treatment facility site with about a dozen participants to discuss existing resource concerns (invasive species, erosion, and sediment deposition) and potential solutions.

Two weeks later, the second session was held at the Water Department's base yard in Kahului. After the classroom presentation, approximately 20 participants traveled to water storage tank sites in the Wailuku area. Each site had unique resource concerns. The maintenance crew employees provided insights to their challenges, and potential solutions and alternatives were discussed.

This training series was a fun chance for me to educate people about soil conservation and the work the NRCS does. It was also a good opportunity to expose people to some of the practices the NRCS can assist with and programs that the NRCS provides.

Civil Rights Committee

By: Cheryl Morton, Administrative Assistant, State Office

Aloha and Hafa adai,

First I would like to express my gratitude for being chosen to serve on the Civil Right Advisory Committee (CRAC) for the Pacific Islands Area.

We live and work in a very beautiful and culturally diverse part of the World. It is well known how hard each and every one of you works to maintain not only its unique beauty, but also to build on the personal relationships you have created throughout the various communities.

The Pacific Islands Area CRAC is committed to serving your needs; we encourage your input and participation. So please feel free to call upon us with your ideas.

You can also visit our web-site at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/pia/about/civilrights/>. Updates to the site will be occurring regularly.

Your CRAC members are:

Chair: Cheryl Morton
Vice Chair: Valerie Russell
Advisor: Robin Kelley & Jolene Lau

Special Emphasis Program Managers

GLBT: Valerie Russell
Disability: Alicia Green
Asian American/Pacific Islander: Matthew Wung
American Indian/Alaska Native: Jay Doronila
Black: Mark Defley
Hispanic: Kara Nelson
Women's: Amy Koch

Mahalo,
Cheryl Morton

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Irrigation System

A Special Contribution on a Restoration Project from our Former Lihue DC

By: Lex Riggle, District Conservationist (Fallon, Nevada)

Have you ever experienced the feeling of being in the right place at the right time? I hope everyone will experience the joy and excitement of participating in a real meaningful project. It's not just the physical project but the relationships that develop during the process.

While I have three projects that fall into this category I'll like to share our Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe irrigation system restoration project.

The tribe has a few irrigation systems that divert water from the Truckee River as it travels to its terminus, Pyramid Lake. One of the systems known as the Indian Ditch, consists of a 14 mile network of ditches that conveys water to over 700 acres. The acreage is managed by tribal members with agricultural "assignments". The typical cropping system is a high quality alfalfa hay rotation. Many also have large gardens for home consumption. Over six and a half miles of the 14 mile ditch system is not concrete lined and has excessive ditch seepage as water travels to the farms and ranches. This is unfortunate since the Truckee River provides habitat for the endangered Cui-ui (*Chasmistes cujus*) and the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkia henshawi*), both are



Left to right: NRCS Nevada District Conservationist, Lex Riggle, Gene Paul tribal member and Dept. of Water Resources Technician, NV State Engineer, Vinh Hoang.

fish species. Our collaboration with the tribe will include concrete ditch lining on over 6.5 miles of earthen ditches and replacing all of the water control structures on 14 mile system. A total of 79 structures be installed with all of the field turnouts will include flow meter device that will measure, log and transmit water deliver at each of the field turnouts. This was a request by the Tribe's Department of Water Resources. Assuming the project will be funding we're hoping to have the entire system installed for the next irrigation season.

While the project seems overly simplified there were many steps taken to contracting and many more to be taken during implementation. My Hawaii experience of working with historically underserved clients prepared me continues in Nevada. Recognizing and respecting cultures and values are important first steps to the development of trusting working relationships. It has been my pleasure to share this project with you. You might also be interested in learning that the design the project was completed by former Guam Engineer and Assistant Nevada Agricultural Engineer, Carmella Irwin. I cannot say enough about how important her role has been in this project.

Tanapag Assistance Forum: Next Steps

By: Kendal Hicks, District Conservationist, Saipan Service Center



*Kendal Hicks,
District Conservationist,
working closely with local
resource partners.*

The NRCS Saipan Field Office (SFO) staff has discovered an additional benefit from working closely with its local natural resource partners. That newly discovered benefit is improved outreach efforts to a historically underserved community. In close cooperation with the Commonwealth of the N. Mariana Island's Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality (BECQ) and other CNMI agencies, a SFO staff member has been traveling to, and meeting with, private land owners in the local villages. District Conservationist, Kendal Hicks, stated, "Sometimes, it makes good sense to go into the villages and meet the landowners, where they are, rather than expecting them to seek-out NRCS. Too often, I think NRCS staffs assume that the folks in the community know about us, when really they don't. So, by going to them, we are able to promote our agency's services better."

Hicks also found that NRCS can overcome negative stereotypes that community members sometimes harbor against government agencies in general. Too often, various other agency staffs visit the villagers with news of violations, notices, warnings and restrictions. By contrast, the multiple agencies were able to deliver positive news of grant-funded assistance that could help improve individuals' health and living conditions. NRCS benefited from the opportunity to meet alongside other CNMI agencies in the villages to provide financial and technical assistance. With the community's improved understanding and acceptance of the agencies' missions, NRCS was able to reach villagers that were previously unaware and disconnected. The presence of multiple agency staff members, working after hours, and meeting with village leaders within the villages, helped to rapidly build trust and overcame villagers' negative impressions of government agencies and their programs.

The meetings began, in August, with a "Coffee Klutch" which was followed by the Tanapag Assistance Forum in September. In all, the outreach effort included five CNMI agency partners in addition to NRCS. During the Tanapag Assistance Forum, CNMI agency information included how to obtain free sewer line connections, energy savings, home improvements, utility fee assistance, etc. NRCS was able to provide preliminary information about dry-litter piggery systems to replace existing pig pens that are causing direct discharges into designated, impaired, water bodies. Over a half dozen attendees also provided contact information and requested follow-up with NRCS related to initiating EQIP FY15 applications. The improved water quality, odor reduction, fly reduction, aesthetics, pig health were very intriguing to the forum participants. Hicks stated, "I have never had this many requests for EQIP applications and assistance within such a brief, 2-hour, outreach event. The extra effort to get into the local community, after normal working hours, had immediate, positive results."

The water quality will experience a dramatic improvement in the Achugao Watershed if the community residents will follow-through with their initial interests in implementing practices and programs from the various partners. Given the number and frequency of CNMI DEQ red-flagged beaches, which includes the reef and beach receiving waters from this watershed, it is imperative that the villagers take the initiative required to improve the natural resources in their community. Hicks further stated, "It is very exhilarating to assist a community effort taking the needed steps to improve the natural resource conditions in their community. They understand this is for them, their children, and their grandchildren. They also understand this is necessary to keep their island attractive, healthy and pleasant for guests."

Grazing Lands Conservative Initiative (GLCI)

By: Preston Irwin, State Range Management Specialist, Resource Technology Staff

The Hawaii Grazing Lands Coalition (formerly known as the Hawaii Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative) is a grassroots organization built on partnerships among Hawaii's beef, dairy, sheep and goat producers, NRCS, and other conservation agencies that provides guidance and leadership in the pursuit of grazing land conservation throughout the Hawaiian Islands. It is part of a national initiative to assure the sustainability of private grazing lands by focusing on the environmental, cultural, and economic services they provide.

According to the NRCS' National Resource Inventory (2010), approximately 30% of the 4,152,400 acres that comprise Hawaii's land area is used for agriculture. Of these agricultural lands, grazing land accounts for practically 91%.

In keeping with their commitment to promoting the sound management and skillful use of grazing land resources in Hawaii, the HI-GLC is proud to have sponsored three workshops in the spring of 2014 that were well-attended by ranchers, grazing land managers, and natural resources management professionals.

The Hawaii GLC welcomed Wyoming rancher and grazing management expert Charley Orchard of Land EKG, Inc. to Maui and the Big Island to present workshops focused on helping ranchers improve their management. Twenty one participants, including five NRCS conservationists, learned how to evaluate and track the health of grazing lands during the "Land EKG" workshop held at the Piiholo Ranch on Maui. The following day, thirteen participants met at the Seabury School's computer lab and learned how to use the free Google Earth web-based computer program to map their ranch and its use as a tool to improve grazing management. Twenty-three participants joined Charlie the following week for a similar workshop on the Big Island, including four NRCS employees.

The HI-GLC has been instrumental in promoting grazing land conservation through workshops and outreach events. This has helped forge a strong partnership with the NRCS, which has resulted in measurable conservation benefits on Hawaiian grazing lands. Since 2012, HI-GLC workshop participants have been awarded 20 EQIP contracts for a total of \$1,553,478.49 and 4 CSP contracts for a total of \$313,020.00 in obligated funds. So far, these contracts have resulted in the application of conservation practices on 22,310 acres of grazing land.

The Hawaii Grazing Land Coalition is currently planning for a suite of landowner workshops in FY-2015 that focus on promoting grazing land stewardship and sustainability through sound management and skillful use. The first event is in conjunction with the Hawaii Cattlemen's Council's "Cattlemen's College" at their annual convention on November 14. The HI-GLC is helping sponsor Dr. Anibal Pordomingo, National Coordinator for Animal Production in Argentina at the National Institute of Agricultural Technologies. Dr. Pordomingo, a world-renown expert on grass-finished beef, will discuss the challenges, opportunities, and implications of grass-finishing programs and their application to Hawaii grazing lands.

Individuals who are interested in attending the HCC's Cattlemen's College and/or annual convention are encouraged to contact Stacie Francis, HCC executive secretary at (808) 887-1607.



Charley Orchard discusses how grass physiology relates to forage quality and how to estimate forage production and carrying capacity based on clipping data during the Land EKG workshop at Piiholo Ranch on Maui.

Soil Health Training Comes to Hawaii

By: Amy Koch, Soil Health Team Lead

In July, Ray Archuleta and David Lamm from the East National Technical Center traveled to Hawaii for two weeks of Soil Health classroom trainings and “challenge” field days across the islands. We had 42 NRCS employees attend some portion of the training, including participants from Guam and American Samoa. A total of 46 partners (including SWCDs) and cooperators attended events on various islands. The evening workshop held in Waimea brought over 70 people from the local community together to witness exciting soil health demonstrations and talks.

The first week kicked off in Aiea with a field challenge day that included stops in Mililani Ag Park to view fallow crop fields with exposed soil and weedy pasture sites. The field day was followed by two days of classroom training (“Soil Health and Sustainability for Field Staff”) that included talks on soil health basics, cover crops, and rotational grazing practices. Participants for Oahu events included NRCS, SWCD, RC&D, HARC, CREP, and UH-Manoa staff.

The Lihue Field Office hosted a field challenge day on-site at Dow Chemical in Waimea. Attendees included NRCS and SWCD staff as well as representatives from various seed corn companies on the west side of the island. Field sites included a combination of conventional tillage and cover crop/reduced tillage operations. Aggregate stability and infiltration tests showed the differences between soils from these fields.

The Kahului Field Office also hosted a field challenge day with visits to a HC&S sugar cane field, cover crop (sunn hemp) field at Hawaii Taro Farm, and a pasture site. Attendees included representatives from HC&S, CTAHR, USFWS, Monsanto, and DLNR.

For the second week, Ray and David traveled to Hawaii Island for two field challenge days in Hilo and Waimea, as well as a second session of the 2-day classroom training. Site visits included a variety of soils and land uses, including papaya fields and pasture growing on young, shallow organic soils in Puna as well as pasture and crop sites on deep, volcanic ash soils in Waimea.

As an added bonus, Bob Stobaugh, national videographer, also joined us for the week on Hawaii Island. He visited various farms and ranches across the island to take photographs and video footage. Many of the farmers and ranchers interviewed are already implementing soil health practices and will be featured in national Soil Health profiles.



Challenge Day participants perform the soil slake test to determine soil aggregate stability. L to R: David Lamm, Bronson Yadao, Matthew Pekelo Chang, Eric Hillis, Ray Archuleta, and Blaise Boyle.

2014 “LEAD” Conference: Emerging Topics in the Federal Workplace

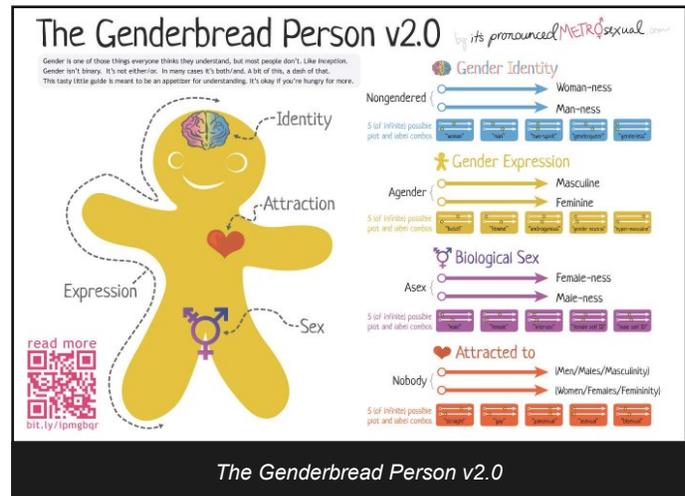
By: Valerie Russell, Cultural Resources Specialist, State Office and CRAC Vice-Chairperson

Organized annually by the Diversity Council of the Honolulu-Pacific Federal Executive Board (FEB), the annual “LEAD” Conference (promoting Learning with Excellence, Alignment, and Diversity) is a free educational opportunity with attendance open to all Federal employees. This year’s conference on Sept. 3 brought two speakers to talk about emerging topics in the Federal Workplace.

Susan Bass, Clinical Nurse Specialist and Former Program Coordinator for the Veterans Suicide Prevention Program, presented on the topic of Suicide Prevention Programs for Veterans. Ms. Bass reported that suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the US; annually 36,035 people die by suicide – of that total, 20% are Veterans. Ms. Bass presented resources available via the Veterans Crisis Line to help you act with compassion and care towards Veterans who are in suicidal crisis. For instance, Operation SAVE will help you to remember important steps involved in suicide prevention – 1) learn to recognize **S**igns of suicidal thinking, 2) know how to **A**sk the question “are you thinking about killing yourself?”, 3) **V**alidate the Veteran’s experience by talking openly without passing judgment, and 4) **E**ncourage treatment and **E**xpedite getting help via the Veterans Crisis Line.



Dr. Rebecca Stotzer, Associate Professor of Social Work at UH Manoa, facilitated a lively and spirited discussion on LGBT Issues and Diversity Management. Dr. Stotzer began with an introduction to LGBT and Diversity by posing the question – what is Gender? Gender is not a binary concept – that is, it is not an “either/or” concept – but should be conceptualized in terms of a spectrum of Identity, Expression, Biological Sex, and Sexual Attraction. Intrigued? see the Genderbread Person v2.0 at <http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2012/03/the-genderbread-person-v2-0/>. While we may not think about how gender dynamics come to play during our daily lives as NRCS employees, how we think about gender has a profound effect on our interpersonal interactions.



Dr. Stotzer then proceeded into discussion of LGBT Issues in the Workplace, talking about how the language that we use to talk about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and LGBT issues can have a powerful impact on our conversations. The right words can help open people’s hearts and minds, while others can create distance or confusion. Language choice can therefore have a powerful effect on the workplace environment and in our daily work with NRCS clients and partners. Designed for new LGBT allies who want to support the LGBT community, but often face an array of confusing terminology and language, the **Talking About LGBT Issues** series, available online at www.lgbtmap.org/talking-about-lgbt-issues-series and www.gladd.org/talkingabout, provides valuable recommendations and resources.

If you and your coworkers are interested in learning more about these topics, please contact me and/or your GLBT SEPM or Veterans SEPM on the Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC). We can act as facilitators for future presentations on these important topics to NRCS employees and partners.

Finally, the FEB is actively seeking suggestions for next year’s LEAD Conference – please send me your topics of interest and I will convey them to the FEB!

2014 Emerging Leaders Program

By: Kara Nelson, Resource Conservationist / Economic, State Office

The Honolulu Federal Executive Board held the fiscal year 2014 Pacific Leadership Academy (PLA) – Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) that was conducted over a nine-month period. The course was divided into two one-week classroom sessions, a book report, two individual action plans, and a research paper. The interactive classroom sessions focused on different aspects of leadership. The first week focused more on the individual: self-awareness, interacting with others, influencing others, strategic thinking, and resilience. The second week focused more on interpersonal relations: leadership and team building principles, managing and understanding conflict and dispute resolution skills, influence/ persuasion/ negotiation, ethics and character, and personal transformation. The out-of-classroom assignments helped to solidify the concepts presented during the classroom sessions by providing an opportunity for practicing leadership skills and applying new ideas. This course provided the framework for understanding oneself and realizing that leadership is a continuous learning and adapting process throughout a career.

Ultimately, the Emerging Leaders Program has been a valuable experience for me to grow personally and professionally. I have been able to gain an enormous amount of insight about myself as well as use the tools I have learned to gain insight into my other coworkers as well.

The structure of the classroom learning environment and exercises allowed me to network as well as strengthen my skills with a diverse audience. I really enjoyed listening to a panel of PLA alumni speakers about their leadership journey and their inspirational words. Leadership is really an ever-evolving process that involves lifetime learning and adapting oneself – it is definitely not one size fits all. I will continue to assess myself, set goals, listen to my inner self and core values, develop new ways of thinking, and think about my aspirations. This has been a truly rewarding experience and I am grateful for being able to meet the people along this journey as well as discover new ideas and tools that I may use for development in the present and future. I highly recommend that people apply to become a fellow in this program the next time it is offered.



FY14 Pacific Leadership Academy Emerging Leaders: PIA NRCS graduates from the 2014 ELP are Tracy Sakato and Kara Nelson.

World Teach Volunteers

By: Arlene Rosenkrans, Resource Conservationist, Pohnpei SC

World Teach Volunteers arriving recently to Pohnpei for the school year visited USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service offices during their orientation this week. Resource Conservationist Arlene Rosenkrans and staff briefed the teachers on NRCS mission and projects in FSM, showing pictures of environmental issues on the island such as water quality, deforestation and invasive species.

They were given an introduction to conservation planning, school gardening programs and soil health outreach that the agency provides. A tour was completed with a visit to the training center behind the office with trees and garden vegetables for demonstrations and school projects. Volunteers received some resources for teaching environmental topics, such as the US Forest Service “Natural Inquirer” website and local resources for seeds and technical assistance.



Resource Conservationist, Arlene Rosenkrans providing tour to the volunteers.

Employee Spotlight

PIA Has Two New Professional Engineers

By: Drew Stout, Area Engineer, East Area Office



is Disability
Awareness
Month



is American
Indian
Heritage
Month



Alicia Greene, PE Civil Engineer in the Hilo Field Office and Ryan Woolbright, PE Civil Engineer in the Kahului Field Office.

Alicia Greene and Ryan Woolbright both passed the Professional Engineering Exam in April 2014. This is a huge accomplishment. The Professional Engineering Exam is an 8 hour exam and passing it is the last step in becoming a licensed Professional Engineer or PE. Before you can take the Professional Engineering Exam you must typically graduate with a degree in engineering, pass an 8 hour Fundamentals of Engineering Exam and work under a licensed Professional Engineer for at least 3 years. Please congratulate Ryan and Alicia, our newest Professional Engineers. Great job!

Feds Feed Families

By: Mary Pigao, Farm Service Agency, Lihue, HI

The pumpkin was grown by our NRCS employee, Morri-Ann Nagata, Soil Conservationist, Lihue SC (photo on right).

- 51 lbs of Raw Pumpkin
- 20 lbs rice

Awesome job farmer Morri-Ann! We are joining forces with NRCS, RD, FSA, and SSA government agencies within our building!



Incoming Acting Director

Craig Derickson became the NRCS State Conservationist for Nebraska in November of 2010 after having served as the Deputy Chief for Programs in Washington, DC. Prior to that, Craig served as State Conservationist in Pennsylvania from 2006-2009 where he coordinated NRCS multi-state assistance to the Chesapeake Bay Water Quality Project. Craig also served in Washington, DC from 2003 to 2006 as Branch Chief of the Stewardship Programs and provided leadership in rule making and implementation of the 2002 Farm Bill conservation programs. He began his natural resource career in 1982 working as field Soil Scientist in Northwest Nebraska and served in numerous field positions, including District Conservationist, State Resource Conservationist, and Regional Technology Specialist for the Northern Plains.



*Craig Derickson
STC in Nebraska*

Personnel Update

Incoming:

- ◆ Bernadette Luncsford, District Conservationist, Aiea (11/02/2014)

Outgoing:

- ◆ Jessica McArthur, resigned (9/30/2014)
- ◆ Ted McArthur, Transfer to USFS, California (8/24/2014)
- ◆ Fisseha Mengistu, resigned (07/11/2014)
- ◆ Daniel Cahill, resigned (09/02/2014)
- ◆ James Sutter, Transfer to Labelle, FL (11/16/2014)
- ◆ Gregory Koob, Transfer to Fish and Wildlife Service with a promotion, Hawaii (09/19/2014)
- ◆ Cheryl Lambert, Transfer to Arizona (07/27/2014)

Career Ladder Promotions:

- ◆ Spencer Nagata
- ◆ Jan Michael Reyes—Pathways Student
- ◆ Kori Hisashima

Update from our Former Agronomist

Formerly in Guam, we are pleased to catch up with Craig Smith, now in Alaska. Pictured to the right, Craig Smith is conducting resources inventory for a CNMP (590) near Talkeetna. This is the town featured in many reality TV and nature shows where pilots fly to Mount Denali, the highest elevation in North America. Keep up the great work Craig!

