

Resource Kona

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Fall 2011

KONA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

It Is Time To Sign-up for EQIP

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is offered through the United State Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). EQIP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through a contract in which the producer agrees to install conservation practices, according to NRCS specs and standards, in an agreed to time frame. The conservation practices chosen to be installed must address an existing resource concern related to soil, water, plant, animals or the air on agricultural land or non-industrial private forestland.

Below: Establishing conservation cover, a permanent vegetative cover is a great way to prevent soil erosion.



Generally the practices farmers in West Hawaii contract to install are mulching, conservation cover, cover crop, nutrient management, tree/shrub establishment, tree/shrub pruning (tree/shrub pruning can help battle the coffee berry borer), micro-irrigation (if you have already been irrigating for two of the past five years) and

irrigation water management just to name a few. Ranchers may install cross fencing, prescribed grazing, forage and biomass planting, watering facilities, and windbreaks among other practices.

Each practice has its own reimbursement rate and is determined by the Hawaii NRCS state office. Each year they collect cost data for many of the practices to determine what the reimbursement rate should be. Reimbursement rates are not intended to cover the entire cost of installing a practice. (cont. on pg 2)



Above: Tree and Shrub Establishment is a practice NRCS will cost share on. It can prevent erosion and is a great way to build soil. Leaf litter is how the soils were originally created in Hawaii.

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Special points of interest:

- Do you want to support the team that goes to the National Soil Judging Contest? Contact your local SWCD office.
- If you want to become active in the Kona Soil and Water Conservation District please give us a call at 322-2484 ext 100

It Is Time To Sign-up for EQIP *(cont. from pg. 1)*

There is a bit of paperwork involved when applying for the program and applicants are required to document that they are an agricultural producer and that they have control of the land they want to apply the practices to.

To find out more, or to schedule an appointment to complete the application paperwork contact the USDA Service Center in Kealahou at 322-2484 ext 100. The staff of the Kona Soil and Water Conservation District will assist you with the paperwork requirements.

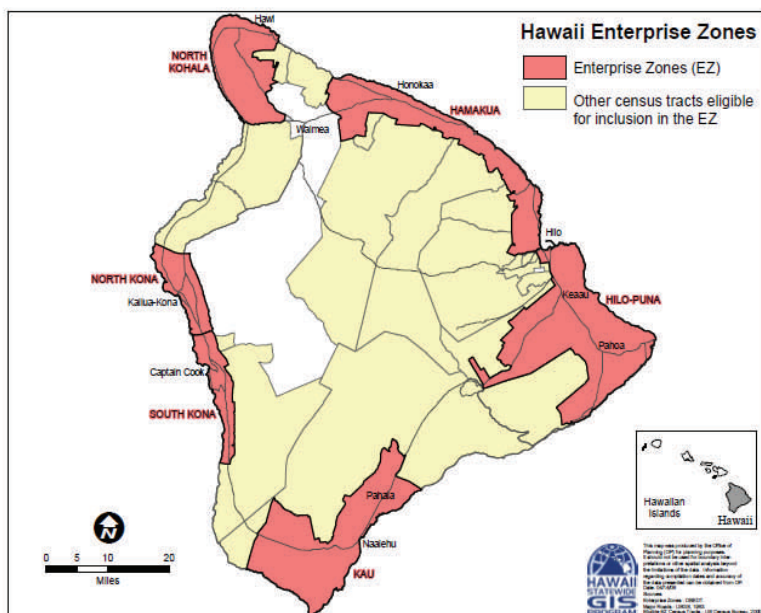
Hawaii's Enterprise Zone Program

Through the use of tax incentives, and other incentives, the Enterprise Zone Program is an effort to stimulate certain types of business activity and job creation in areas where they are most appropriate or most needed.

This is joint state-county program providing a reduction in state taxes and other benefits from Hawaii County for businesses that are eligible and located in a designated Enterprise Zone (EZ). To be eligible at least half (50%) of a firm's annual gross income in an EZ must be from one or a number of activities which include agricultural production or processing as well as manufacturing and wholesaling/distribution among others.

Generally, businesses new to the program are required to increase their average annual number of full time employees by at least one person or 10%, which ever is greater, in the first year. Leased employees or employees hired under a joint employment contract may be counted as full time employees.

For the 2nd through the 7th year in the program the number of employees can fluctuate but cannot be less than the number required in the first year of participation in the program. Also, a requirement for participation in the program is that you currently have at least one full time employee at your EZ establishment before beginning participation.



For agricultural producers a 2% increase in gross sales instead of meeting hiring numbers is acceptable. These sales figures may include the income from value-added products.

Benefits from participating in this program include receiving an 80% non-refundable income tax credit the first year of participation. This credit diminishes by 10% each year for 6 more years will remain at 20% for the 3 year extension. Additionally, a non-refundable income tax credit equal to 80% of annual unemployment insurance premiums the first year. This credit diminishes by 10% each year for 6 more years and will remain at 20% for the 3 year extension. The program also offers a 100% exemption from the GET (cont. on next page)

Hawaii's Enterprise Zone Program *(cont. from previous page)*

every year on gross revenue from EZ-eligible business categories within an EZ though this benefit has been suspended from July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2013.

If you want to learn more about this program contact Jane Horike, Economic Development Specialist with Hawaii County at 961-8496 or via email at jhorike@co.hawaii.hi.us She will be happy to guide you through the application process for this program and answer any questions you have.

Hawaii Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative's Pasture Walk

The Hawaii Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (HI-GLCI) provides guidance and leadership to the landowners, land users, and the grazing industry in general with respect to the sound and wise use and management of all Hawaii's grazing lands. Their goal is to create sustainable grazing land ecosystems throughout Hawaii.

One of their programs "Pasture Walk" got kicked off earlier this month with a visit to the Triple D Ranch in Honokaa. The Deluz family, Antone, Duane, Barbara and Sheila, made their ranch available to folks interested in learning about grass-fed and grass-finished beef. There was a diverse group of people including other ranchers, conservation professionals, representatives from the meat processing facility used by Triple D Ranch and consumers simply interested in learning more about where their food comes from.



One of the herds at the Triple D Ranch located on the Hamakua Coast. Triple D Ranch was host to the first Pasture Walk offered through the Hawaii Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative.

The ranch runs a sustainable operation and the practices they implemented may not work on other ranches but everyone walked away with something to think about. They have done pasture and hay plantings, cross fencing prescribed grazing and water improvements.

We also walked away with full bellies. The Triple D Ranch held a BBQ cooking their hamburgers and their steaks. It is no wonder their meat com-

mands top dollar. It is served at some of the finer restaurants on the Big Island.

If you are interested in learning more about the ranching industry in Hawaii and the activities ranchers participate in to create their sustainable grazing land ecosystems check out the HI-GLCI website at www.grazinglandshawaii.org You can sign up to subscribe to their posts and know when the next Pasture Walk will take place. If you want to learn more about how your local food is processed these pasture walks are something you should consider.



Above: The current and future ranchers of Hawaii Island.

County's SWCDs Now Under Dept. of Research and Development

The state's 16 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) all exist because of Chapter 180 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes. State law also requires the state's counties to use SWCDs to assist in the implementation of the county's Sedimentation and Erosion Control ordinances, the grubbing and grading ordinance.

SWCDs provide this assistance to the county by approving conservation plans prepared for agricultural producers, our Cooperators. Some of these plans call for grubbing and/or grading as well as for the installation of conservation practices like conservation cover, cover crop, multi-story cropping, tree/shrub establishment, tree/shrub site prep, tree/shrub pruning, irrigation and nutrient management just to name a few. Some plans call for the conservation practices to be installed but do not require grubbing or grading.

Historically the six SWCDs in Hawaii County have fallen under the Engineering Division of the County's Department of Public Works. This was due to the grubbing and grading aspect of conservation planning. Beginning this year we fall under the Department of Research and Development and Dayday Hopkins the county's Agricultural Specialist. This change will not impact our ability to provide conservation plans or our ability to approve plans for grubbing and grading exemptions and we will continue to work with the Engineering Division of the Department of Public Works when appropriate or requested to.

As a reminder, for an ag producer to obtain an exemption to the grading ordinance the Kona SWCD requires a grading be provided. Because the Kona SWCD does not have an engineer on staff to produce the grading plan the producer will have to have one created by a licensed engineer to be submitted as part of the conservation plan. Another issue to be discussed with conservation plans created by an SWCD is cultural resources. The SWCD will work with the State Historic Preservation Division if the practices to be installed are considered intrusive. Generally a practice that will cause a disturbance to the soil of more than just a few inches. This means practices like mulching and nutrient management are not thought to bring any harm to cultural resources and may be applied any time.

The Kona SWCD is excited about this change in its organizational structure. The Kona SWCD provides a great deal of conservation technical assistance to our local farmers and those interested in farming. We answer questions from "What will grow on my land?" to "Can I ship my produce to China?". If we do not know the answer directly we work at finding someone who does. It is in this area that being partnered with the county's Agricultural Program will provide the greatest benefit to our ag producers.



The Kona SWCD staff visited the Dept. of R & D recently to meet with members of the R & D team and to learn how we can work together to help producers. That is where the Kona SWCD learned about the Enterprise Zone program.

If you have any questions about the Kona SWCD call Mary at 322-2484 ext. 100. If you have any questions about the Dept of Research and Development and how they can help feel free to contact Dayday Hopkins, the Agricultural Specialist at 961-8369

Photo to the left: Members of the Department of Research and Development. On the left is Jane Horike, Economic Development Specialist and on the right, Dayday Hopkins the county's Agricultural Specialist.

How the SWCDs Can Assist in Land Clearing for Ag Producers

The county's six Soil and Water Conservation Districts can assist agricultural land users who want to open up land for agricultural development. It is one of the primary missions of the SWCDs along with providing conservation technical assistance.

If an agricultural producer submits a conservation plan to an SWCD Board of Directors they may obtain an exemption for requiring a permit for grubbing or grading. SWCD cannot provide an exemption for grading or grubbing when it is related to building development.

If you have land that you want to put into agricultural production contact your local SWCD office. A conservation planner will work with you to develop a conservation plan that will meet your needs while protecting your, and your neighbor's, natural resources.

Here in West Hawaii invasive species infestations can require grubbing for removal. A parcel full of Christmasberry, Rose Apple, Silver Oak, African Tulip, Mesquite, Lantana, and Gorse to name a few, is a parcel that to be productive would be a prime candidate for Brush Management.

Brush Management is a conservation practice that allows for the grubbing of land for the removal of woody species in range or pasture land. To implement this practice the planner would need to collect data on precisely what species the ag producer wants to remove, their location within the parcel, their density and the method the producer would prefer to use for removal, chemical, mechanical biological or even a combination of them.

For the purposes of grading, the Kona SWCD does require a licensed engineer's grading plan and whether grubbing or grading is planned, a letter from the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) detailing what they require to move the plan forward is required. If you have agricultural land with natural resources that could be improved upon, contact your local SWCD office for information on conservation practices that will work towards making that improvement.

County Conservation Awareness Contest

Every fall one of the county's six soil and water conservation districts hosts the County Conservation Awareness Contest and all the other districts help out, this year the Ka'u SWCD hosted the contest at the Ka'u Coffee Mill in Pahala. The USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff is also instrumental in the success of this event.

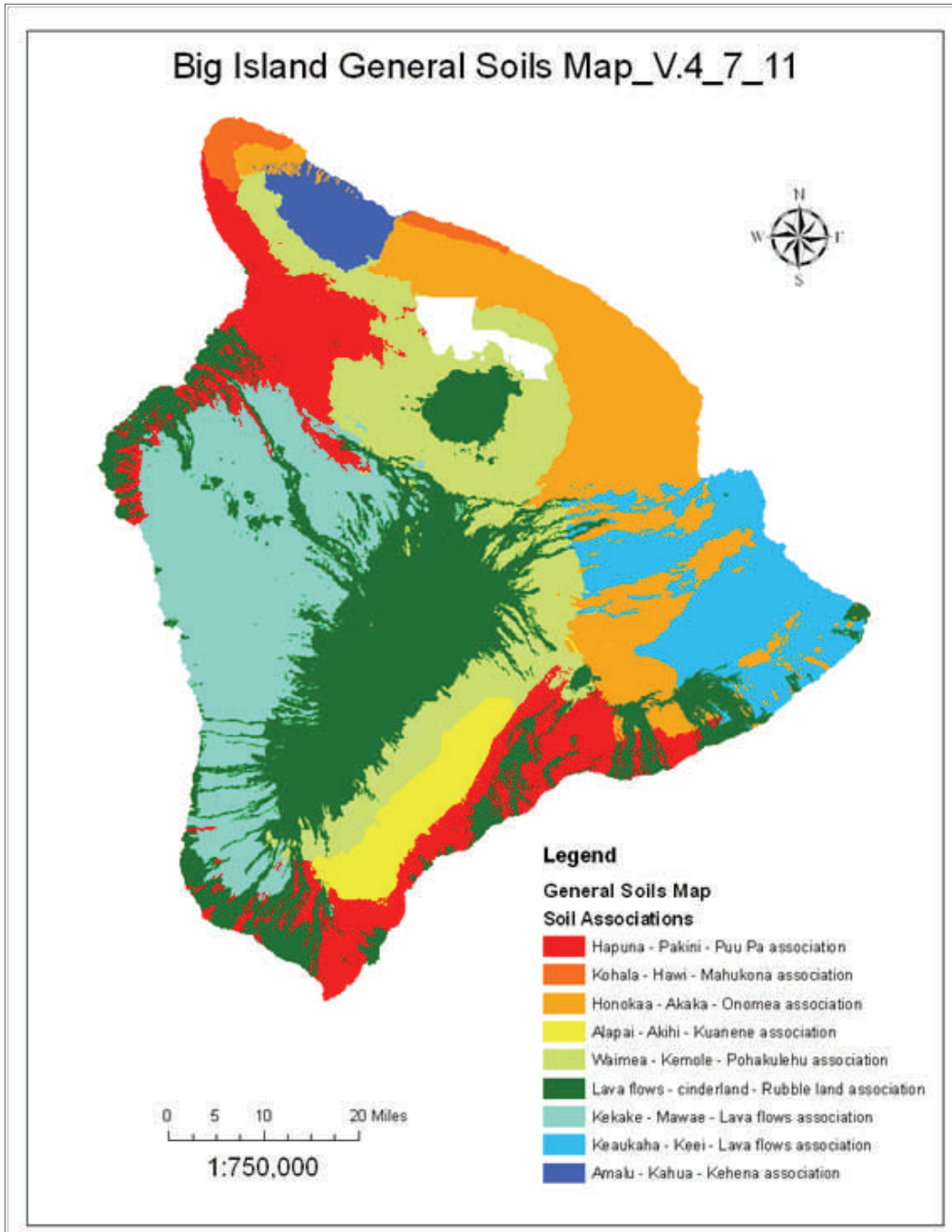
This is a land judging contest for 7th through 12th graders and tests their knowledge of soil and what could be an appropriate land use for that area based on soil characteristics. Land that is good for pasture and rangeland may not be suitable for orchards or other crops. One of the purposes of this contest is to (continued on page 8)

The photos to the right show students at two of the three soil pits they were to make determinations on. Students from Pahoa High School, Konaweana High School and Kamehameha Schools participated in the contest.



Soil Survey Update *By Mike Kolman, Soil Scientist, Soil Survey Office Leader, USDA-NRCS*

Editor's Note: "The Soils of the Kona District", is a reoccurring column in this newsletter. This edition will be highlighting the accomplishments of the Soil Survey Staff and important changes underway for them.



The soil survey staff in Hawaii would like to announce the completion of soil mapping for the Island of Hawaii. The extensive revision of soil mapping for the Big Island began as a project in 1992. The area was mapped as two survey areas that include Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and the remainder of the Island of Hawaii. The total area mapped is over 2.5 million acres. The Soil Survey of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park was published in 2008 (see Web Soil Survey for new soil maps and information <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm>). Publication date for Soil Survey of Island of Hawaii is tentatively scheduled for the end of 2012 after review and certification of the data.

We would also like to announce the opening of the NRCS Hawaii Soil Survey Of-

fice here in Kealahou. The NRCS soils staff from Hilo and Kona has consolidated offices into the old USDA Rural Development space in the Kealahou Service Center. Our mission is to complete the review and certification of the Soil Survey of Island of Hawaii; update all soils data in the Pacific Islands area; and continue providing accurate soils information to all our customers. We will still be across the hall if you ever need soils related assistance or want to stop by and talk story.



For more information, or to apply for any USDA Farm Service Agency program, please call your local USDA Service Center. NOTE: Fees, eligibility requirements, income and payment limitations may apply with any of the programs listed below. Please check with the nearest FSA office for specific rules. The FSA office in Hilo can be reached at 933-8381 ext 1.

Hispanic and Women Farmers

A process to resolve the claims of Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who believe they were discriminated against when seeking USDA farm loans has been established. If you believe that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) improperly denied farm loan benefits to you between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic, or because you are female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation. For additional information contact:

Hispanic and Women Farmer Claims Process:

www.farmerclaims.gov or call 1-888-508-4429

Pigford – The Black Farmers Discrimination Litigation:

www.blackfarmercase.com

Keepseagle – the Native American Farmers Class Action Settlement:

www.IndianFarmClass.com or call 1-888-233-5506

Kona Office

The FSA Office located at the Kona Service Center is closed until further notice. Please call 933-8381 x 1 for service or information.

Dates to Remember:

- October 31 – Last day to file Notice of Loss for LIP and ELAP sign-ups
- November 4 – RTCP supporting documentation due in County Office
- November 4 – COC Ballots mailed to producers
- December 1 – Application closing date for fruits, vegetables, grass, honey under NAP 2012
- December 5 – Last Day to Return COC Election Ballots to the Hawaii County Office
- December 8 – Emergency Loan Application Deadline for production and physical losses caused by tsunami waves

SURE - Qualifying Crop Loss

To receive SURE payments, an eligible producer must have a qualifying loss. A qualifying loss means at least a 10 percent production loss affecting one crop of economic significance due to a disaster on a farm in a disaster county.

SURE – Risk Management Purchase Requirement (RMPR)

A producer must have obtained a policy or plan of insurance for all crops through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation and obtained Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance program (NAP) coverage, if available, from the Farm Service Agency. Forage crops intended for grazing are not eligible for SURE benefits.

81-948 Waena'Oihana Loop
 Kealahou, HI 96750
 322-2484 ext. 100
 Fax: 322-3735

Board of Directors:
 Chairman: Rick Robinson
 Vice Chairman: Greg Hendrickson
 Treasurer: David "Kawika" Marquez
 Secretary: Denise Light
 Director: Ron Baird

Staff: Mary Robblee, Conservation Assistant
 Monthly meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month from 8am-10am at the USDA Kealahou Service Center below the post office. All are welcome and the facility is ADA accessible.

Organization: The Kona Soil and Water Conservation District (KSWCD) is a government subdivision of the State of Hawaii organized under Hawaii State Law, HRS Chapter 180

Function: To utilize available technical, financial and educational resources to focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land users with regards to conservation of soil, water, and natural resources.

Service: The District serves the communities and land users within North and South Kona

Why: The District is committed to the promotion of wise land use and resource stewardship.

**Were on the web at
www.kswcd.org**

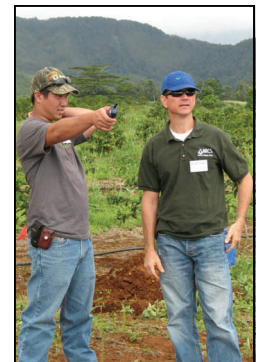
County Conservation Awareness Contest *(cont. from pg 5)*

demonstrate to students that what they learn in school really is relevant to live outside of school. Who knows, one of these young people may become a civil engineer based on what was learned in preparation for and during participation in a soil judging contest.

Pahoa High School, under the coaching of Mr. Inouye, once again was the winning team and will be heading to the state contest later this month. They have had great success over the years and a lot of that is attributed to Mr. Inouye's dedication to this program



The Conservation Awareness Contest is an annual event for 7th-12th graders. This year the event was held at the Kau Coffee Mill. Above: The students relax after the contest. Right: The judges are waiting for score sheets to be delivered so they can begin the task of determining the winning school and individual high score.



Above left: A student determines the slop of the land.
 Above Right: Proctors ensuring students follow the rules.
 Below: Students working out the answers at the third soil pit..

