

## Celebrating our Anniversary

This year we celebrate a very special occasion. President Abraham Lincoln signed into law an act of Congress establishing the United States Department of Agriculture in 1862.

President Lincoln established USDA because he recognized the potential of America's farmers to find new ways to cultivate the land and that with advances in research and technology, America's farmers and ranchers could provide a safe, ample food supply for our nation and the world.

Today, America's farmers and ranchers are responsible in no small way for the health and strength of this nation. Throughout 2012, USDA will recognize important events, such as President Lincoln's signing of an Act to establish the Department of Agriculture on May, 15, 1862, and the July signing of the Morrill Act to establish public land grant universities.

USDA will use a 150th anniversary graphic to mark the occasion and created a web page, [www.usda.gov/usda150](http://www.usda.gov/usda150). The site will give people a sense of where USDA has been – and where USDA is headed in the 21st century. This web page will provide information about events, facts and goings-on related to the anniversary.



*Left to right: Mike Bajinting, Cheryl Lambert, Kathleen Dobler, Ben Schmidt, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Jeff Harlow, Ben Vinhateiro, Jolene Lau, and Ted McArthur.*

## Secretary Tom Vilsack Visits

Attending the American Farm Bureau Federation's annual conference, Secretary Tom Vilsack was in Honolulu January 8-10 for a variety of meetings, press conferences, and a Town Hall gathering.

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*Kathleen Dobler, PIA Acting Director*

## Message from the PIA Director

The PIA has undergone an enormous amount of change in the past few months, and I am certain that it will continue. I understand change can be difficult, but I hope all of you will do your best to embrace the opportunities and support the entire team.

At this time we're not sure when Angel will be able to return to the office. Please keep him and his family in your thoughts.

A major accomplishment for PIA is the success in the delivery of Farm Bill Programs this year. We have had record sign-ups and contract obligations. This is solely due to the dedication of all of our staff working effectively together to make this happen. In addition to helping our customers get more conservation on the ground, we are earning the Technical Assistance funds to ensure financial well being. I am extremely proud of each and every one of our staff for all of the dedication and extra effort that has gone into these accomplishments.

We have just received approval for a number of personnel changes:

- Shirley Nakamura – Assistance Director for Programs
- Ben Schmidt – Assistant Director for Operations
- Ted McArthur – Acting Assistant for Field Operations – East
- Two Term Part-time Administrative clerks for the front office

In addition the following positions will soon be advertised:

- District Conservationist – American Samoa
- Assistant for Field Operations – East
- County Resource Conservationist – Maui County
- Range Specialist - RTT Staff

Our new PIA State Engineer, Sherman White, will report on Monday May 7th. We look forward to his creative leadership for our recently restructured PIA engineering staff. The Area Engineer –East position has been advertised, and as soon as it is filled, we will have our engineering leadership (SCE & both Area Engineers) come together to develop an improved delivery system for PIA engineering. I personally want to thank all of the engineers who have been in acting positions for such a long period of time.

Please keep in mind, my door is always open and I am always available to all the staff at anytime. As long as I am acting I am here to support you.

*Kathleen Dobler, Acting Director*

*Current Developments* is a newsletter for employees and partners. You may submit articles and photos to:

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Natural Resources  
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## Civil Rights Advisory Committee

by Jolene Lau, CRAC Chairperson

I would like to thank Leo Smock-Randall, for an outstanding job as Special Emphasis Program Manager for the American Indian/Alaska Natives. Leo also served as CRAC Vice Chair and really kept things in order! NRCS PIA will miss having Leo as a soil conservationist but we wish him all the best on his new adventure.

With that, the CRAC has a vacancy for American Indian/Alaska Native SEPM. This is a collateral duty position that requires supervisor approval. If you are interested in applying, please see the bulletin with instructions. Deadline for applications is May 31, 2012 and a selection will be made and announced on June 1, 2012.

Please consider applying for this SEPM position. It is a great way to raise awareness of our American Indian/Alaska Native issues, needs, and successes. 20% of your time is dedicated to this worthy civil rights endeavor!

## In Celebration of Black History Month, NRCS welcomed honored speaker!



*Pictured (L-R): Wally Amos and Alberto Moravia enjoying the Soul Food Cook Off sponsored by the State Office Employee Club.*

## Ag Awareness Day



*(L-R): Jolene Lau and Greg Koob, photo by Miles Hakoda.*

Every year, the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (University of Hawaii) coordinates the Agriculture and Environmental Awareness Day on Oahu. The major objectives are to create a greater awareness and understanding of agriculture and the environment among students and teachers, and introduce students to career opportunities in agricultural and environmental studies.

Other exhibitors that participate include UH Urban Garden Center, Master Gardeners, CTAHR, Family Community Education Program, Hawaii Agriculture Research Center, Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Hawaii Department of Transportation Highways Division, Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, Hawaii FFA, Honolulu Board of Water Supply, Leeward Community College, Malama Maunaloa, Monsanto Hawaii, Naked Cow Dairy, Oahu Army Natural Resource Program, Oahu Invasive Species Committee, Pioneer Hi-Bred International, and US Customs & Border Patrol.

# Earth Team Volunteers

*By Jay Doronila, Saipan Soil Conservationist*



*Starting from the left front, kneeling is Julius P. Reyes (ETV), Jay Doronila (NRCS Planner in Saipan), Diane Gabaldon (Saipan and Northern Islands SWCD Coordinator), Marlyn C. Naputi (ETV), Shirley L. Taitano (ETV) and Jan Reyes (ETV).*

April marks CNMI's Environmental Month, The Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) hosted their Annual Environmental Expo at the American Memorial Park in Saipan. This event mainly targets elementary school students who get to see presentations from various agencies. NRCS and its Earth Team Volunteers were able to set up a booth and give presentations to the students for the three days. The ETV's helped with setting up of the booths and presenting to the numerous schools as well as the public who were able to attend the expo. The booth displayed common conservation practices that our agency has implemented such as access road, mulching, animal waste management systems (piggery), vegetative barriers, rotational grazing system, and many more.

The attendance of NRCS at the expo would provide outreach, education, awareness, as well as the importance of conserving our precious natural resources. The three days of outreach went better than expected most especially with the help of the ETV's. The ETV's are college students who are currently majoring in Natural Resources Management. They all got first hand experience in what our practices look like on the ground and are now able to explain their purposes in a planning unit. Not only were they able to learn more about the earth and proper ways of conserving, they were also able to extend their knowledge to the younger generation.

# Making a Difference in Hilo

*By Jessica Newpher, Hilo District Conservationist*



*Starting from the left photo is Amy Koch; middle photo is Kori Hisashima, Buddy Perry, Grant Kow, and Katherine Green; right photo is Lester Suehiro. Missing from photo is Lehua Angay.*

To show support and brush up on some invasive species and engineering techniques, the Hilo Field Office Team including members of the Soils staff and the Ka'u, Puna and Waiakea Soil and Water Conservation District recently volunteered a day to help our community. After surveying for a new youth soccer and baseball field; we cleaned up the walkways along the paths of our local zoo. A hard days worth of work resulted in big smiles from those we serve every day.



**G**regory Koob, PhD in Horticulture/Botany from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, started with NRCS in 2006 as the State Biologist in the PIA State Office.

□ **Technical Assistance:** Provides biology technical assistance to staff and clients throughout the Pacific Islands Area. He helps to determine the need for and develops technical notes to provide biological assistance. In addition, Greg participates in producing ecological sites descriptions for PIA and assists program staff with ranking processes for various Farm Bill programs and evaluating applicants for participation in programs. He conducts wetland delineations for Food Security Act Wetland Compliance and Clean Water Act Compliance and provides training in biology-related techniques and concepts to NRCS staff.

□ **Environmental Compliance:** As State Biologist, Greg is responsible to ensure that all NRCS staff and programs are in compliance with local, state and federal laws and regulations including but not limited to the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Food Security Act and others. He develops and maintains environmental evaluation forms to allow staff to complete environmental compliance requirements. In addition, he processes all ESA section 7 compliance documents and manages endangered Species Act Coordinator contracts. Greg also provides training to NRCS staff to assure environmental laws and regulations are complied with.

□ **Misc.:** In addition to his roles and responsibilities, Greg assists other resource technology staff in providing quality assurance reviews of applied biology practices and conservation plans. He provides training and guidance on conservation planning in the PIA, represents NRCS at meetings and organizations related to biology, and serves as Acting Assistant Director for Technology as assigned.

Before joining NRCS, Greg worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, was a lecturer at Windward Community College, was the publishing editor of *Hawai'i Horticulture* magazine, and a research assistant at Harold Lyon Arboretum at UH Manoa.

## Employee Spotlight



*Gregory Koob, PhD  
State Biologist, State Office*



*Achatinella mustelina* by Greg.



*Ohia lehua* by Greg Koob.

The Hawaii Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (HI-GLCI) is completing a grazing stewardship manual for Hawaii landowners later this year. They partnered with USDA-NRCS, Hawaii Sheep and Goat Association, Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc., Texas A&M University, Kamehameha Schools, and several local ranchers to develop this comprehensive manual for managers of grazing lands throughout Hawaii. Lori Metz, NRCS-PIA State Rangeland Management Specialist, served as primary author and project coordinator. Dan Caudle, retired NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist logged over 360 hours of time as an Earth Team Volunteer assembling the manual and helping Lori with research needs. And Lori Colvin, Graphics Designer with Texas A&M LifeSciences is pulling everything together into a print-ready format that's over 200 pages and easy to take to the field.

The Hawaii-GLCI put this manual together to help graziers interpret their land, and give them tools to meet their objectives. In many respects, it's a "how to" manual. The resources and tools you'll find within the manual come from trained professionals and actual grazing managers that have applied tried and true practices in the field throughout Hawaii.

The manual has 16 chapters, and covers the following:

- Basics of grazing land health
- Forage quality and livestock nutrition
- Understanding livestock forage intake
- How livestock select what to eat
- How grazing and browsing affect plants
- Fence and water location considerations to improve grazing opportunities
- Interpreting animal grazing behavior
- Major forages of Hawaii
- Setting ranch goals, planning strategically, and implementing grazing plans
- Reading the land and doing inventories
- Determining stocking rate and stock density
- Grazing strategies
- Checklist of grazing management decisions
- Keeping grazing records
- Evaluating/using animal body condition scoring

The manual wraps up with a Reference/Resources section, and it's full of helpful photographs, charts, tables, and other graphics. Look for the manual at the Hawaii Cattlemen's Council Annual Convention in November this year, or check out the Hawaii GLCI website to order yours later this year, at [www.grazinglandshawaii.org](http://www.grazinglandshawaii.org).

Ambassador and Mrs. Prahar spoke to about 100 elementary and high school students on the importance of healthy, locally raised foods. As part of the embassy's ongoing effort to promote "Go Local" eating, the Ambassador asked the students to keep eight questions in mind before they bite into something:

1. What kind of food do I eat?
2. Where does my food come from?
3. How did my food get to me?
4. How does my food affect the people who grow, distribute, and sell it?
5. What is the effect of growing and producing my food on the natural environment?
6. What are health consequences of the food I eat?
7. What can I do to eat healthier foods?
8. What can I do to eat foods that are healthier for the environment?

The remarks were followed by the harvest of an extraordinarily tasty looking crop of cabbage the students had raised with the guidance of our invaluable team from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.



*Cabbage planted at the school for the Youth-to-Youth program on Pohnpei.*

# Senior Leader Program

*by Cheryl Lambert, Aiea District Conservationist*

As I reflect on the journey that I have been on with my new NRCS family in the PIA over the past year, a bright spot appears on the horizon that I am proud of; it is the Senior Leader Program experience. In the beginning, I had to justify being accepted to the program, and I am certainly glad and thankful for the opportunity to fine tune my leadership and management skills for my career with the NRCS. This Program offers such a diverse array of subjects touching on Leading People, Organizations and Leading for Results. I am happy to say that I am on target for graduation on July 13, 2012. A lot of work remains to be done until that day.

It takes great dedication, perseverance and discipline by the student to make it through the course, as well as, the support and commitment of coworkers, supervisors, mentors and course counselors to guide one through the assignments (homework) and class requirements. I am a perennial student and life-long learner, and that is an easy fit for me. I thrive on challenge and change. I keep a copy of "Who Moved My Cheese" on my desk. The course really dove-tails nicely with the NRCS mission of Helping People Help the Land. My wish is to reach my full leadership potential in my career.

The Individual Action Plans which I am involved in so far relate to developing a Workload Register for the Aiea Field Office. The Register is used to track conservation plans and contract items for every planner, and also partner organization planners, who are helping the field office with our workload. I have consulted with other DCs in the Area and the Area Office to adopt this tool for the field office, and I thank you all for your input. I can return the favor in the future.

I have written a research paper for a book to be published for the 2012 SLP class. My chapter is called "The Leader and the Organizational Culture." I was honored to be able to ask Secretary Tom Vilsack about the status of the USDA Cultural Transformation when he visited the Aiea FO in January 2012. In my paper, I have included a case study of the Cultural Transformation of the USDA-please stay tuned. USDA employees can access the Cultural Transformation website at <http://www.dm.usda.gov/ct.htm>. Please provide your feedback of CT on the employee survey.

The PLA-Senior Leader Program has reinforced what I have learned in my college studies for my Global MBA in Management and for Agricultural Leadership. It is a good review and reminder for me to use this knowledge and skill in my job on a daily basis. The instructors and staff are world class, and the course work is rigorous so it leads to credible and practical application on the job. The students are mostly from military backgrounds around the Pacific Rim Region (mostly in Hawaii). I need to work with the military on a number of natural resource management issues for Oahu so there is opportunity for networking with the Brass here. I like to network with people who are motivated to be leaders in their organization. A graduate of the SLP course earns 6 units of graduate level credit from the University of Hawaii. I would highly recommend the course to anyone who is serious about leadership in any organization. I would highly recommend the course to anyone who is serious about leadership in any organization. Next year, I will be "paying it forward" as a new course Counselor. So, get ready Emerging Leaders for your next adventure.

# Personnel Update

## **Incoming:**

Brenda Crabtree, Administrative Assistant, East Area  
Mark Defley, Resource Conservationist, Palau  
Cameron Delligatti, Resource Specialist, State Office  
Jorge Guevara, Soil Conservationist, American Samoa  
Kendal Hicks, District Conservationist, Saipan  
Michael Ingenluyff, Accounting Officer, State Office  
Pele Iuta, Soil Conservation Technician, Am Samoa  
Amy Koch, Soil Scientist, MLRA Hilo  
Valerie Russell, Cultural Resource Specialist, State Office  
Joe Takai, Soil Conservationist, Kahului

## **Outgoing:**

Mila Apisa, resignation  
William Fitzgerald, reassignment to Minnesota  
Jeff Harlow, transfer to Washington  
Lori Metz, transfer to USFWS California  
Carol Sampaia, retirement  
Leo Smock Randall, resignation  
Cheri Won, resignation

## **Five Year Length of Service:**

Lehuanani Angay  
Jessica Ludgate  
Morri-Ann Nagata  
Justin "Buddy" Perry  
Rodasio Samuel  
Sharon Sawdey

## **Ten Year Length of Service:**

David "Kawika" Duvauchelle  
Kori Hisashima  
Reese Libby  
Ted McArthur  
Cheryl Morton  
Jessica Newpher

## **25 Year Length of Service:**

Morgan Puaa

## **30 Year Length of Service:**

Gary Shimizu  
Jeffrey Wheaton

*The happiness of your life  
depends on the quality of your thoughts.  
~~Marcus A. Antoninus*

## EWP Ribbon Cutting

*Excerpts from Arvin Temkar, Guam's Newspaper, 'Pacific Daily News'*

When Tropical Storm Tingting struck eight years ago, the hill beside the Barcinas residence in Merizo collapsed, sending rocks and mud tumbling toward the house.

The mud built up against the wall and was almost up to the windows, Dolores Barcinas remembers. Even after the wind and rain had passed, things didn't get better.

Governor Eddie Calvo and some legislators gathered at the house, which is on the main road that weaves through Merizo, for a ribbon-cutting ceremony of a federally funded retaining wall. The wall protects the Barcinas house and the heavily trafficked road from future soil erosion.

The project, which took a month to complete, was the last of seven Tingting projects funded through the Emergency Watershed Program, said Jeff Wheaton, an engineer at the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The projects -- totaling \$2 million -- started soon after the storm, but took time to complete because each site had specific engineering requirements, he said.

The Merizo wall resembles a giant staircase, and is constructed out of wire baskets filled with heavy stones. The project cost about \$200,000.



*From left: Bill McDonald, Southern Soil & Water Conservation District chairman; Gov. Eddie Calvo; Merizo Mayor Ernest Chargualaf; and Jeff Wheaton, an engineer with USDA National Resources Conservation Service office, talk about the construction of a retaining wall at the residence of Fred and Dolores Barcinas in Merizo, yesterday. The wall was built to prevent future landslides following heavy erosion during Tropical Storm Tingting in 2004. / Jesse Castro/ For Pacific Daily News*



*Photo by Jesse Castro, Pacific Daily News. (Left) Bart Lawrence; Governor Eddie Calvo (second from left); and Dolores Barcinas prepare to cut a woven strand of ti leaves to celebrate the completion of a retaining wall project behind the Barcinas' home in Merizo on March 30. The wall was built to prevent future landslides following heavy erosion during Tropical Storm Tingting in 2004.*