

## Chief Lancaster's Visit

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force's annual meeting was held in August on the Big Island of Hawaii. Chief Arlen Lancaster was a speaker at the conference and also participated in field tours during his visit.

The meeting highlighted conservation strategies, successes, and challenges in Hawaii. It also provided a forum for the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force to hear about and discuss the priority threats facing reefs and innovative solutions and partnerships that can be explored to more effectively address these threats. Workshops included recreational stewardship, land-based sources of pollution, bridging communities and government, and climate change responses.

The NRCS staff from Waimea coordinated a visit to Chris Robb's organic vegetable farm followed by a stop at Kahua Ranch to see the grazing management and water storage for livestock.

The NRCS staff from Hilo coordinated a visit to Island Dairy, one of two remaining dairy operations in Hawaii. The tour concluded at Richard Ha's fruit and vegetable farm to see the air, energy, nutrient, water, and pest management practices.

Thank you to everyone who helped!

### Inside This Issue:

Earth Team	3
Employee Spotlight	4
Hawaiian Hale	5
Personnel Update	6
RC&D Corner	7



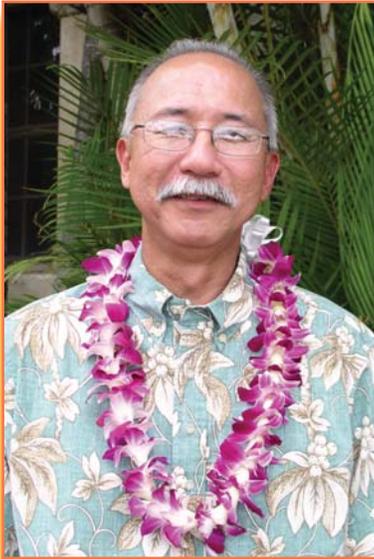
*Traditional Opening at Keauhou before the Meeting*



*Field Tour in Waimea*



*Field Tour in Hilo*



# Message from the PIA Director

Well here we are with another new year already upon us. This last year, FY 2008, was a very difficult year. With all the problems Congress had passing the new Farm Bill and the unusual financial gymnastics that we had to go through, I think we faced challenges that few ever had to face before.

But we came through it with flying colors. This year the Pacific Islands Area met 100% of our performance goals. We also made tremendous progress increasing the rate that our Farm Bill contract conservation practices were applied and payments were made. Your efforts were incredible. But our work is not done.

We now have the new Farm Bill that was passed by Congress. This major legislative action will mean changes to the programs we were working with. So we need to get ready for the changes that the new Farm Bill will bring.

For FY 2009 our Field Office priorities are:

### Priority #1 – Delivery of Farm Bill Programs

- Outreach to New and Previously Underserved Clients
- Conservation Planning to Enhance Farm Bill Program Delivery
- Developing Quality Contracts
- Contract Implementation and Completion

### Priority #2 – Performance Goals

- Timely Progress Reporting
- Accurate Data

Let's always remember that the Farm Bill contracts we develop are promises we make to both our clients and the U.S. Congress. Our job is to follow up to help our clients implement these conservation practices. Doing this will also help us meet the implementation goals of our programs. Let us all work to insure that we meet those commitments. Let us all focus on our task of "Helping People Help the Land."

  
Lawrence T. Yamamoto, Director

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

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## Beef Me Up, Scotty!

By Joe Tuquero, Soil Conservationist, Guam FO

Guam cattle rancher, Oscar Flores (also known as Scotty), in cooperation with the NRCS, has recently ‘Beefed Up’ the pasture environment of his cattle. As a cooperator participating in EQIP, Scott has several environmental-friendly practices lined up for his pasture, including Brush Management, Pasture & Hay Planting, Prescribed Grazing, and Fencing to name a few. With technical assistance from the Guam Field Office (GFO), Scott has recently completed implementing the Fence practice, installing over 4000 feet of fence line.

Scott’s ranch and pasture is located along the Ugum River, probably the largest river on Guam. The pasture is situated within a high priority, or Category 1 watershed known as the Ugum Watershed. A Category 1 watershed is defined as a watershed in need of restoration. The Ugum Watershed is a major contributor to the drinking water system in southern Guam, and is also a major natural drainage into the ocean. In the area, persistent wild land fires, vehicle off-roading, common farming practices followed by heavy rains, along with heavy ungulate browsing, routinely lead to heavy erosion and run-off, resulting in degraded soils and tons of sedimentation in surface drinking water sources and into nearby coral reefs. The land where the pasture lies is owned by the Kloppenburg family, who run eco-tourism operations. A long-time family friend of the Kloppenburgs, Scott is currently the care-taker of approximately 12 acres, which includes the pasture land.

With his current pasturing practices, Scott’s cattle roam freely with occasional tethering. Because of lack of shade trees within the pasture, cattle tend to congregate in 1 or 2 areas, resulting in concentrated grazing, high manure concentration in localized areas, and pasture trampling leaving the soil uncovered with excess nutrients in these areas. The pasture forage primarily consists of signal grass (*Urochloa brizantha*), a high quality forage grass, and the highly invasive wedelia (*Sphagneticola trilobata*). The current cattle management practices add to the existing erosion problem, and hinder forage and cattle productivity. Planned practices for the pasture such as Brush Management, Tree-Shrub Establishment, and Pasture and Hay Planting will address these existing problems.

Scott had been farming with his father, the late Francisco S.N. Flores. As farmers, they have previously worked with NRCS through EQIP. Currently Scott is a full time rancher, and with NRCS assistance, is achieving his goal of improving his cattle operation, and reducing existing and potential negative impacts to the environment. “The technical assistance from the field office staff has been very helpful and understanding,” Scott said of NRCS.

The GFO staff provided guidance to Scott and four other ranchers (Allan Figir, Ignacio Camacho, Matthew Camacho, and Bernard Burech), during the installation of the fence system. The fence system was successfully installed in August of 2008. The fence system includes a perimeter fence consisting of 4-strand barbed wire and 2-strand electrified smooth wire enclosing five grazing paddocks and 1 corral. The grazing paddocks and corral are separated by five interior 2-strand electric smooth wire fences. In upcoming months, upgrading the pasture will continue as EQIP practices are implemented, including Pipeline and Water Facility (for water troughs), Pasture and Hay Planting, and Prescribed Grazing.

## PIA’s Earth Team Volunteer of the Year



*Kaipo Dudoit* was born and raised on Molokai. He enjoys hunting, fishing, diving, and surfing. He graduated from Molokai High School and is currently attending Maui Community College. Kaipo contributed 1155 hours as an Earth Team Volunteer at the PMC. Thanks Kaipo!

OFFICE	VOLUNTEERS	HOURS
American Samoa	8	774
Hoolehua	1	33.5
Mariana RC&D	35	5362
Palau	1	10
PMC	11	1794
Pohnpei	1	56
Saipan	1	3
State Office	12	184.5
Tri-Isle RC&D	52	498
Waimea	2	56
West Area Office	2	6.25



*Kawika Duvauchelle explains the watershed concept.*

## Employee Spotlight



*Joe Takai, Guam Soil Conservationist*

Joe Takai was born and raised on the island of Sa'ipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. He worked with NRCS for the past 17 years and started as a Student Trainee in 1991 on Saipan. From there, he was transferred to the Guam Field Office while pursuing a higher education. He received a B.S. in Agriculture in 2001 from the University of Guam, and his career conditioned appointment led him to Contra Costa County, California. He worked out of the Concord Field Office for five amazing and wonderful years. He says, "It was the best move I made outside my comfort zone as I gained valuable training and experience, and also made lots of friends."

Joe left California five years later to be with his fiancé Arlene and then got married in March 2007. Since then, they've added a newborn. Meet Joe's son Matua, which means "noble" in his native Chamoru language, and was the Chief's social class in ancient times. Joe says, "Special thanks, Saina Ma'âsi, and Mahalo to Larry Yamamoto and Ed Burton (CA State Conservationist) for approving my transfer."

## Annual Inter-Tribal Pow Wow in Hilo



*(Left) Kawika Marquez and Stephen Skipper of the Big Island RC&D. Matt Wung and Sherman White also assisted with outreach.*

# Piligrass for Traditional Hawaiian Hale

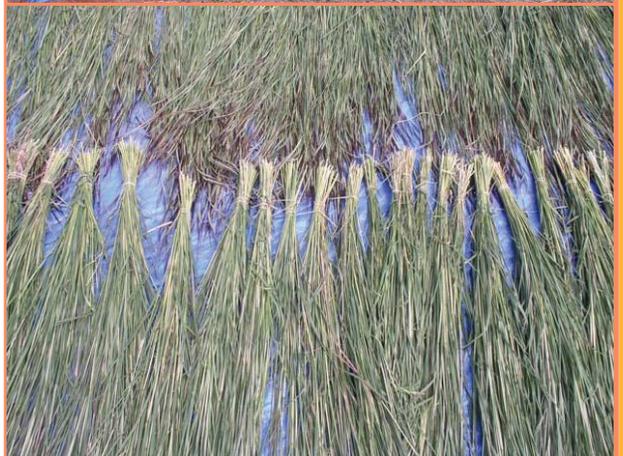
By Glenn Sakamoto, Plant Materials Center Manager

In August of 2008 two native Hawaiian groups volunteered at the Hoolehua Plant Materials Center to take part in a momentous opportunity to harvest piligrass for the completion of a traditional Hawaiian hale (house) on the island of Kaho`olawe. This project was a culmination of a two year cooperative effort by the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission, (KIRC); NRCS Plant Materials Center; Protect Kaho`olawe Ohana, (PKO); Hawaiian Immersion students; and interested community individuals.

Piligrass is a native dryland bunch grass with a somewhat stiff upright growth habit. It is found on all major islands though not in great numbers. Early Polynesians favored piligrass and used it as one of its main thatching material in the construction of homes.

Of particular importance and significance of this grass is that it was originally collected on the island of Kaho`olawe, cultivated at the Plant Materials Center and is now being returned to Kaho`olawe. The "hale" or "house" being constructed is situated at Hakioawa Bay on the north eastern coast of Kaho`olawe. The Hakioawa site is of importance due to its past history when a Hawaiian activists group (PKO), who in the early 70's took a stand at Hakioawa against the military occupation and bombing of the island and wanted the island returned to its native people. The hale being built is in its final phase and should be completed by the end of 2008.

Volunteers under the leadership of Craig Neff, KIRC Commissioner and Daviana McGreggar, PKO; organized volunteers to help in the harvest and to learn about the grass being harvested. Volunteers toiled under the hot Molokai sun to hand pick, cut, bundle and dry hundreds of piligrass bundles. Though tired and dirty, everyone enjoyed each others company and appreciated the effort of this very worthwhile cultural experience.



## Recognition Awards

Spot Awards: Pam Aguon, Lehuanani Angay, Kori Hisashima, Wally Jennings, Jolene Lau, Bart Lawrence, Cheryl Morton, Martin Naputi, Justin Perry, Sarah Tanuvasa, Anton Tornito, and Carolyn Wong.

Extra Effort: Jolene Lau and Michael Whitt.

Time Off: Diane Funke

Five Years Service: David Clausnitzer, Amy Saunders, and Cherry Sriben.

10 Years Service: Diane Funke and Andrew Stout.

15 Years Service: Jolene Lau, Bart Lawrence, Brian Peck, Brent Schumacher, and Sam Taylor.

20 Years Service: Jocelyn Bamba and Loretta Metz.

25 Years of Service: Denise Wiedenheft

30 Years Service: Keith Harada, James Ino, Stephen Skipper, and Larry Yamamoto.

40 Years Service: Robert Joy

## Excellence in Government



*(L-R) Director Lawrence Yamamoto, Sharon Sawdey, Gregory Koob, and Shirley Yamaguchi were recognized by the Honolulu Federal Executive Board in June. Missing from the photo is Cynthia Ansotigue, Sherry Takai, and Eileen Winkle who were also awarded.*

## Personnel Update

### Incoming:

Richard Berscheid, Soil Conservationist, Lihue  
Phillip Cherry, Conservation Agronomist, SO  
Shannon Esterman, Soil Conservationist, Hilo  
Tony Ingersoll, Assistant Director for Technology, SO  
Wally Jennings II, District Conservationist, Hoolehua  
Jessica Ludgate, Soil Conservationist, Hoolehua  
Tracy Nagato, Human Resources Assistant, SO  
Brian Peck, RC&D Coordinator, American Samoa  
Keni Reyes, Biological Science Technician, PMC  
Ben Schmidt, Assistant Director for Field Operations, SO  
Tony Sunseri, Soil Conservationist, Waimea  
Cheri Won, Budget Analyst, SO

### Outgoing:

Cynthia Ansotigue, resigned from the State Office  
Patrick Conner, retired from Lihue  
Michelle Clark, resigned from Lihue  
Scott Crockette, transferred to Alaska  
Noel Ide, resigned from Kealakekua  
Wally Jennings III, STEP in A. Samoa returned to UNM  
Melissa Skillings, resigned from the State Office  
Sherry Takai, promotion, Army

## Outstanding Service



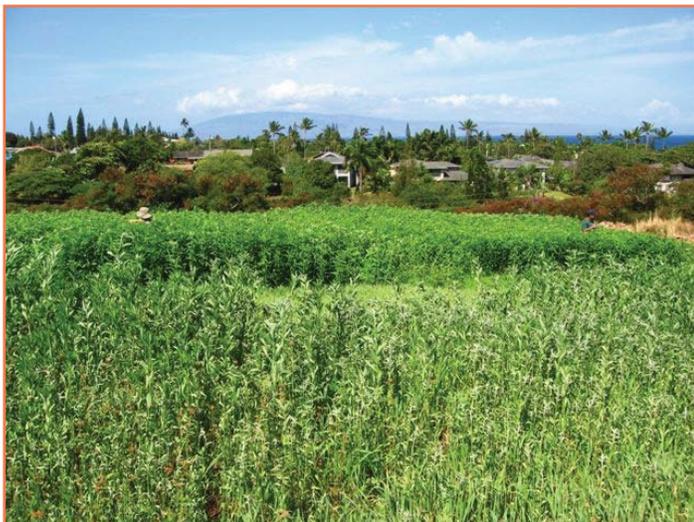
*Michael Whitt, Resource Conservationist, received an award from Director Lawrence Yamamoto for his Outstanding Service.*

# Cover Crop Demonstration

By Jon Astilla, Conservation Specialist, Kahului FO

Cover crops help to improve soil and reduce erosion. Despite these benefits, very few farms in Hawaii were implementing this cultural practice before 2000. Currently, a project is being conducted to promote and advance the use of cover crop technology. The NRCS sponsored project involves researchers from Oahu Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), Crop Care Hawaii, HARC, USDA, and the University of Hawaii. Both Hawaiian agriculture companies and individual farmers on all islands are collaborating by having demonstration projects implemented on their land. The project sites are approximately one half acre in size and include replicated plots of Sunn hemp, buckwheat, oats, combinations of these, and bare ground.

The project site on Maui was planted on April 18, 2008, and will be grown for approximately 60 days. At the end of the cover crop cycle, the participating farm will be planting sweet potatoes and evaluating their growth. A conservation plan is being developed for the Maui site to address resource concerns. The results the study will be made available to the farm community through field days and educational materials. It is intended that these innovative ideas will find favor with small and large growers alike, and that the adoption of cover crops will not only improve their economic bottom line, but also conserve soil and reduce pollution of streams and the ocean.



## RC&D Corner: Oahu



The Oahu RC&D held an Ag Technology Field Day in June to help farmers learn how to reduce fertilizer costs, improve soil fertility, reduce pests, reduce pest control costs, and to increase the likelihood of attracting beneficial insects.

Demonstrations covered the Adoption of Cover Crop Technology, Bamboo as an Alternative Wind-break Species, and Lettuce Resistant to Tomato-Spotted Wilt Virus.

The event was held in partnership with NRCS; Crop Care Hawaii, LLC; Hawaii Agriculture Research Center; UH College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources; Waialua Intermediate and High School; Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation; and Hawaiian Earth Products.

## Plant Materials and Hawaii Vegetative Guide Training for Big Island Planners

By Matthew Wung, District Conservationist, Waimea FO

The Big Island Planners, Technicians, and Conservation Specialists held a plant materials and Hawaii Vegetative Guide training on May 28-29. The first day was a field trip to Kukaiau Ranch in which Bob Sporleder was interested in improving his forage through grazing management. Discussions were made concerning timing of grazing, forage suitability, recommending various forage legumes, and adaptability of forage species; cool season grasses versus warm season grasses. Lori Metz our State Range Management Specialist raised concerns over adequate plant rest and percent utilization of forage species. David Clausnitzer our Forest Ecologist covered grass identification and other plant identification. Bob Joy our State Plant Materials Specialist from Molokai gave his views on plant selection and adaptability of grass and legume species. We discussed the adaptability of Guineagrass (*Urochloa maxima*) versus green panic grass (*varietal Urochloa maxima*) in dry to wet climates. Earl Spence, who was raised on Kukaiau Ranch and is a retired Parker Ranch Agronomist, also gave his views on past marketing of grass finished beef in relation to feedlot finished beef influencing how herd composition and grazing management has changed over time.

The second stop for our field trip was to Peter Oliveira's ranch in which he used Baron's grass (*Ischaemum digitatum*), signalgrass (*Urochloa brizantha*), and California grass (*Brachiaria mutica*) to overtake Hilo grass (*Paspalum conjugatum*). Peter had a trail of California grass and signalgrass in one paddock in which the California grass was non-existent due to grazing. The signalgrass did well in competing with Hilo grass; as well as the Baron's grass. The signalgrass proved less invasive than Baron's grass and seems more productive.

The second day was a joint class room and outdoor class session at the Waimea Nature Park. Discussed were the uses of Vetiver grass (*Vetiveria zizanioides*) and its history. Some other things learned on the second day included: collecting native plants and seeds, establishing legumes in arid areas, using the Hawaii Vegetative Guide, and improving forage quality by grazing management.

Overall the training was very informative for the Big Island staff. It was decided that more of this joint field training on other ranches on the island will improve our planning knowledge and be more informative for our external clients. Patra Vidondo, Soil Conservationist at Kealakekua, is working with her clients to host a field day in September. Special Thanks to Bob Joy, Lori Metz, David Clausnitzer, Earl Spence, Bob Sporleder, Peter Oliviera, and to all the participants for their positive attitude and questions.

## Adopting Non-Traditional Farm Practices

By Sam Taylor, Soil Conservation Technician, Guam

After returning home to Guam in the early 90s, Mr. Wusstig faced many challenges in identifying land to reestablish his farm operation. While living in Oregon for several years, Mr. Wusstig worked as a long haul truck driver, while his family maintained their elephant garlic farm operation. Not knowing what to expect after his return, Mr. Wusstig acquired a land lease for a small farm plot to test the profits of the agricultural market on Guam.

A couple of years into the farming business and with diligent efforts, Mr. Wusstig and his two sons were fortunate to be granted a 40 acre agricultural land lease from the government of Guam. Eager to get his operation started at this new site fostered additional challenges. The site consisted of soils typical in northern Guam, Guam Cobbly Clay Loam. This soil type is very shallow with a T factor of one, has high leaching potential and sits over Guam's sole source aquifer. With options limited, Mr. Wusstig had no choice, but to make do with what he had. Knowing that he had the support of his family, Mr. Wusstig knew he had all the strength he needed to revive this once productive agricultural land.

When first breaking ground at this new site, Mr. Wusstig quickly learned the details of the National Food Security Act requirements for maintaining USDA program benefits. Mr. Wusstig's cooperative nature created opportunities that not only to meet program requirements, but also to benefit from programs offered by USDA. EQIP provided Mr. Wusstig the means to make changes to his operation to facilitate implementation of sound, non-traditional conservation practices such as Residue Management No-Till, Conservation Crop Rotation and Cover Crop.

Today, Mr. Wusstig continues to implement these conservation practices as part of his normal farm operation, long after incentive payments have concluded. Mr. Wusstig now realizes the benefits of sound conservation practices and does all he can to help others convert from conventional tillage to no-till. In addition to this, Mr. Wusstig also leads the way in providing a source for cover crop seeds to help his fellow farmers adopt conservation on their farms.



# Student Stories

My 2008 summer internship in Aiea was short, yet informative and fun. The people who I worked with were easy to get along with and were very patient when I needed to ask questions. I also believe that this might be the last summer that I would get to work with Mike Bajinting since he's planning on retiring soon, so it was nice to work with the man who is full of knowledge and experience about the agency. While the summer internship in Aiea was short, I was able to learn various things that is incorporated with NRCS. While out in the field with Chad Kacir, I learned good communication and people skills that is mandatory in this line of work. Susan Kubo and Mike Bajinting ran me through engineering design, construction, and surveying methods. The District planners, Lisa and Megan were fun going and a joy to work with, whether it was showing me the ins and outs of Toolkit or walking me through irrigation planning and design. Overall, this summer was too short yet a memorable experience that I will use in my upcoming career with NRCS.

--Whitney Haraguchi



*Jessie Dyer in Lihue*

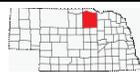
It was probably only my third or fourth trip out in the field when Leo Smock-Randall, soil conservationist in Kahului, took me up to a property to get the slope of a new contour orchard planting. We were there with the GPS to take measurements and document elevations to make sure the slope was appropriate for minimal soil erosion and water loss.

Using the GPS and slope finder, we took the slope readings from each fruit tree to determine the slope from left to right in the rows. After completing one row, we would go on to the next row, then to the next, and so on. The row to row distance is used to determine the actual slope or gradient of the orchard.

This was one of my most educational experiences in the field, although most trips are a new learning experience for me, this had to be one of the most hands-on and beneficial of any.

--Andrea Thompson, STEP

## Nebraska Experience



*Student intern (Morri-Ann Nagata) looking at a no-till soybean plot in Holt County, Nebraska.*

No-till implementation has been set forth on the grounds of Nebraska to increase soil quality and water conservation. The residue from former crops helps to:

- Retain soil moisture
- Increase organic matter
- Reduce soil erosion
- Reduce fertilizer run off
- Reduce irrigation needs

This is just one of the many conservation implementations that I have had the fortune to look at during my internship. Other common area practices include pivot nozzle conversions, shelterbelt plantings flow meter, well, livestock tank, and fence installations. I was even given the chance to learn about the wetland evaluation process. In all, this summer has been a great opportunity for me to expand my knowledge of agriculture throughout the United States.

# Conservation Boot Camp 2008

By Leo Smock-Randall, Soil Conservationist, Kahului Field Office

This past May I had the pleasure of attending the NRCS Conservation Boot Camp training located in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. I was grouped with fellow employees from around the nation, all whom work in varying positions within the agency. The training focused on the steps conservationists should follow to guide decision makers through a comprehensive conservation planning process that complies with national policy. The training provided even more than basic field skills; it also gave perspective on the NRCS, our mission and common vision.



*Rangeland Management Specialist, Santiago Misquez (pictured left), discusses rangeland inventory methods with Boot Camp participants Leo Smock-Randall (HI), Bianca Soto (ME), and Tobiah Salvail (AZ).*

The training first focused on the SWAPA resources that should be considered in the planning process. We reviewed soil analysis techniques and the many ways to access soil survey data. We further delved into the information provided by the soil survey and discussed the appropriate use of the available info. Multiple use water resources were key components of the plans we developed for a delegate farm in OKC. Stepping back from the current use, we looked for secondary and potential future uses for the available water. Wind was as much of a problem in Oklahoma City as it is here on the islands. Learning about wind erosion protection in a place where the Dust Bowl had such impacts was fascinating. It's interesting to think I received conservation training in an area that created an initial need for the Soil Conservation Service.

A large portion of the training pertained to Rangeland management and the many related practices. Initial site analysis included Ecological Site Descriptions (ESD), an inventory tool that I hear from Lori Metz, our state range specialist, will be ready to use on Big Island very soon and may be coming to other islands in the future. The descriptions help to identify the current state of a vegetative community as it phases through ecological succession. They also identify management tools that can be used to force a phase or vegetation change. In addition to the ESDs, several forage inventory methods proved useful while planning for the management of our delegate farm. The fields were also assessed for multiple uses, incorporating wildlife components along with the potential for agroforestry.

Going beyond SWAPA, the training further brought in the human element. Through a variety of exercises, mock interviews and presentations the planning teams honed our communication skills. I took away that having professional and mutually respectful client-agent relationships is key to our agency's continued success and support within the community.

Overall the training grazed over the many key elements of the conservation planning process. It also covered the many tools in the NRCS collective toolbox along with the massive research and science that went into developing them. Bootcamp offered even more than just training, it also gave me perspective on what our agency is trying to do on a national scale. It was inspiring to see so many other NRCS employees in similar places in their careers, all with a common focus. One thing we all agreed on, Conservation is our Purpose and our Passion.

# Carrying on a Father's Legacy

*By Joe Takai, Soil Conservationist, Guam Field Office*

One of Guam's most respected agricultural producers was the late Ramon San Agustin. Tun Ramon, as he was reverently referred to, was in the agriculture community for as long as anyone can remember. He was a charter member to the Northern Guam Soil & Water Conservation District in the 1980's.

Tun Ramon has long supported the agriculture community and NRCS mission on Guam. He believed in and has advocated the need for NRCS' technical assistance since our beginnings in the Pacific Islands Area.

Tun Ramon opened his door to assist NRCS' community outreach efforts. He hosted many functions and gatherings from visiting NRCSers. On numerous occasions, he volunteered his pasture to conduct pasture grass trials & demonstrations, and animal density studies for NRCS and the University of Guam's College of Natural & Applied Sciences. He even partnered with Pale' Antonelli, of Luta, to bring stargrass, to Guam. Stargrass is a highly desirable forage grass to have in pastures and Tun Ramon was the supply source for Guam.

Carrying on that legacy is Joe San Agustin, one of Tun Ramon's eleven children. Joe grew up on the farm and ranch until leaving for the military in 1979. He is married to Jeanette Quidachay and they have four children. Joe recently retired from the U.S. Marine Corps as a Sergeant Major and moved back to Guam in 2007. Both Joe and Jeanette have long missed the ranch & farm life and wanted to get back into it. So Joe secured the lease that had belonged to his late father.

Joe and his youngest brother, Tony, came to our office back in spring 2007. Tony suggested that Joe team with us for assistance as we have worked in the past with Tun Ramon. Joe admitted off the bat that he has no knowledge with livestock production, but he wanted to care for the cattle they have on the 50 acre pasture. I sat down with both Joe and Tony and gave them the details to EQIP. I pointed out the main criteria to be able to participate with EQIP so they could obtain the required documents.

Our first site visit to the ranch, after a long absence, was in December 2007. Jocelyn Bamba, District Conservationist, Jackie Flores, Resource Conservationist, and Sam Taylor, Soil Con Tech accompanied me on this visit. After introductions and a trip down memory lane, we headed out to see the pasture and cattle. Joe explained his main objectives: to provide quality feed and improve the cattle's health. Joe didn't wait for financial assistance through NRCS. He took the initiative to repair and replace the dilapidated perimeter fence using seven strands of half inch steel cables and quarter inch thick "I" beams as end posts. We were all impressed as we've never seen a perimeter fence of this type and degree of construction.

It was evident with the pasture and livestock's condition that Joe needs assistance. Joe was enthusiastic that NRCS was there to assist him and was all ears. I explained our conservation planning

process and its three phase-nine step method. I recommended his first step would be to install several supporting practices. Since the perimeter fence was up, I pointed out that without a cross fences, the cattle would free roam the pasture and likely overgraze it. I explained that having cross fences facilitates rotational grazing that improved forage production, encouraged better forage recovery periods, and improved livestock health.

My second recommendation was to address his weed infestation which some were toxic to cattle. Joe inquired on methods to controlling them, so we presented several alternatives and highly encouraged Joe to explore an integrated method using chemical, biological, and mechanical. We told him that once his weed problem is under control, we could address pasture planting. The best quality feed Joe has is stargrass. Poor maintenance has left remnants of stargrass to compete with weeds. Joe supplement feeds his cattle through a cut and carry method. This method takes up a lot of his free time to feed his stock. Joe inquired about other pasture grass varieties, so we put our heads together and identified several high value, locally available species which will grow well in his pasture.

Joe began his own plant trials using Napier grass. He wanted to find out which areas provided optimal growth as he has the Guam cobbly clay loam series, a difficult soil to work with. He indicated certain areas he would like to concentrate on for his pasture improvement. They were the low areas that had deeper soils. He chose another site with more rocks than soil just to experiment with how Napier would do.

During a separate visit, the Napier grass did well in the deeper soils over the rocky site. This showed Joe where to concentrate his efforts on. Unfortunately, a make shift exclusion fence didn't keep the calves out of the trial paddock and grazed the Napier down to the stubble. Hearing about electric fences, Joe installed a temporary electric fence with guidance from Sam Taylor and Joe Tuquero from the Guam Field Office. Once the electric fence was up and running, Joe immediately saw its effectiveness. It has convinced Joe to include it in his conservation plan that we are currently working on. His experimental plot has recovered from the ordeal and is looking great.

Our third recommendation is to develop the watering facility. Joe uses plastic and metal drums as make shift troughs. He has stretched some pipe to the halfway point in the pasture and is the only watering station in the pasture. We told him that if the fences are up, he will need a watering facility in every paddock. We noted to Joe that strategically placing the watering facility can affect and encourage livestock distribution. That way, he can avoid congregation in particular areas. Joe has signed up to participate in the 2009 EQIP. Joe has expressed his gratitude to NRCS and is excited to work with us.



## Photo Contest Winners

Congratulations to Gregory Koob, Mike Whitt, and Kori Hisashima for being this round of photo contest winners! The Leadership Team judged the photos on Appropriateness to Category, Composition, Creativity, and Aesthetics.

The winner for the Cultural category is *Gregory Koob*, State Biologist in the Honolulu State Office. His picture is of hula dancers.

The winner for the Conservation category is *Mike Whitt*, Resource Conservationist in the Honolulu State Office. His picture is of no-till in a sweet corn field.

The winner for the Scenic category is *Kori Hisashima*, Soil Conservationist in the Hilo Field Office. Her picture is of a kaunakakai sunset.

To view all the photos that were submitted for the contest, see [www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov/features/photo\\_contest\\_photogallery.asp](http://www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov/features/photo_contest_photogallery.asp). Thank you to everyone who contributed photos, to the judges, and to *Karl Mikasa* for creating the searchable database of images.

If you are interested in participating in the next contest, please email one JPEG or TIFF per category to [jolene.lau@hi.usda.gov](mailto:jolene.lau@hi.usda.gov). The deadline to submit photos for the next issue of *Current Developments* is due on December 1, 2008.



November is  
American Indian  
Heritage Month



*Photo Contest Winners: Gregory Koob (top), Mike Whitt (middle), and Kori Hisashima (bottom).*