

Resource Kona

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Fall 2015

KONA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Pahoa High School Students Heading To Nationals

Every fall the counties throughout Hawaii have a soil/land judging contest for high school students called the Conservation Awareness Contest. The students are required to analyze information related to soil and make some determinations regarding it. The contest is held on a different farm each year and all the soil and water conservation districts in the county, along with all the NRCS offices within the county, volunteer to help out.

This year, the Hawaii County contest was hosted by the Mauna Kea SWCD at the Kohala Mountain Education Farm, sometimes better known as the Pumpkin Patch Farm, which is part of Kahua Ranch, Ltd. The winners of that contest, Pahoa High School, moved on the state contest. This year, the state contest was sponsored by the Hamakua SWCD and held at the Wailea Agricultural Group in Hakalau, and they won that contest too, led by Gernel Javier who recorded the highest individual score in the state contest. Second place in the state contest was taken by Kamehameha Maui and Honolulu County's team from Leilehua High finished third. Kauai did not send a team to the state competition.

Now the students from Pahoa are eligible for the national contest held in Oklahoma in early May. They are working diligently to raise travel funds and have lots of fundraising plans in the works. If you want to help

out this very deserving team of young people you can. Submit your donation to the Puna Soil and Water Conservation District, make your check payable to Puna SWCD and mail it to the Puna SWCD, 154 Waiuanue Ave., Hilo, HI 96720. The kids will appreciate any help offered.



To the left is a photo of the winning team. They are from left to right: Mary Noble, Gernel Javier, Mailei Bumanglag(advisor), Jeryll Bernardo, Alana Kizanis

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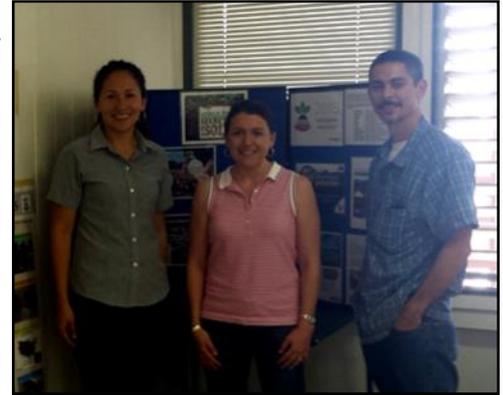
Special points of interest:

- Kona SWCD meetings take place the second Tuesday of the month from 8am-10am and you are invited.
- Would you like a site visit to your farm for GPS and photo documentation purposes? Call 322 -2484 x100 to set up an appointment.

Soil Health Workshop

In November the Kona Soil and Water Conservation District, along with their NRCS partners, hosted a soil health workshop. By all reports it was highly successful with one attendee saying she looks at her soil in a whole new light.

Guest speakers included NRCS Soil Scientists Amy Koch, and Mike Kolman. NRCS Soil Scientist Jacky Vega produced a display highlighting that 2015 was the International Year of Soil and all the benefits healthy soil provide. Also speaking was Robert Barnes of Kona Rainforest Coffee. He discussed the benefits he saw on his farm after incorporating bio-char. Josiah Hunt, the lead author of a CTAHR publication titled "*The Basics of Bio-Char: A Natural Soil Amendment*", explained one of the reasons bio-char is so effective is the surface of a char material. Arturo Ballar, the Staff Biologist for Greenwell Coffee Farm spoke to the importance of healthy microbial activity and numbers. A healthy microbial population in the soil is critical for soil health. Even the magazine *The Atlantic Monthly* had an article on the importance of microbes in the soil. It can be found here: <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/06/healthy-soil-microbes-healthy-people/276710/>



NRCS Soil Scientists, from left to right: Jacky Vega, Amy Koch and Mike Kolman



NRCS Soil Scientist Amy Koch discussed soil basics.

Arguably, the most important thing the workshop attendees learned was that soil, in and of itself, is an ecosystem and that soil ecosystems are impacted in many ways by tilling or not tilling, the vegetation on it, the air temperature around it and the moisture availability in it. Even herbicides and pesticides have an impact on soil health which, because they are poisons, are generally negative impacts.

Another critical aspect of soil health is to keep it covered with vegetation. Soil microbes benefit from having roots in it and they are not as particular as we are about the species of plants providing the roots. So for the sake of your soil, embrace the weed! Weeds provide organic matter on top of and below the soil, both critically important for good soil health. Root systems are not only good at providing organic matter but they hold soil in place during rain events, and again, the soil is not picky about what the roots belong to.



NRCS Soil Scientist Mike Kolman discussed Kona Soils particularly, how they were formed, and their special characteristic's, generally young, rocky and thin.



Robert Barnes of Kona Rainforest Coffee discusses his use of bio-char.

Our workshop had vendors who develop and sell microbial amendments for soil. The vendors included EM Hawaii, and Inovigreen. Both are local Hawaii companies and understand our soils and our soils' needs. (Continued on next page.)

Soil Health Workshop (continued from page 2)



Josiah Hunt discussing the benefits of bio-char.

The Kona SWCD also provided lunch for the participants so that everyone could stay around, mingle, and talk story about their farms and their soil. The farmer to farmer dialogue is a great benefit to everyone.

Our farmers work very hard at providing us food and coffee, often with little fan fare.

This workshop will hopefully allow them to work a little less and their soil to work a little more.



Arturo Ballar discussing the importance of a healthy microbial population in soil.



Vincent Kimura, CEO of Inovigreen, discusses the products his company produces and how they help soil, by assisting the microbial population.



Hiromichi Nago, CEO of EM Hawaii, speaks to the importance of soil microbes



Producers Melvin Kunitake (left) and Norman Sakata (right) both long time farmers who also learned something at the workshop.

There were over 50 local farmers, ranchers and forest land owners who attended the workshop. We all owe local farmer Henry Shimukura a big thank you because he was actually the driving force behind this workshop. He had the idea for the workshop and came into the office to discuss it. His assistance in obtaining the speakers was critical. He was also the driving force behind the lunch that was served. So, for all the accolades the Kona SWCD received for this workshop we share them with Henry. The workshop was his vision and we simply helped him see it through.



To the left, local producers discuss bio-char and microbial products with Josiah Hunt.

To the right, producers discuss the benefits of using products that help improve the microbial populations in the soil such as Inovigreen products.



Farm Service Agency Helps Repair Flash Flood Damage

Earlier this year, during August and September, North and South Kona experienced frequent and damaging flash flood events. The USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has received funding from Congress for its Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). The goal of ECP is to bring land and conservation structures (fences, water tanks, irrigation systems, etc) back to prestorm condition. ECP will not help install new, never been part of the farm, conservation practices like conservation cover where there never was any. For the most part producers are using the program to offset the cost of debris removal and some farms are littered with it, generally rocks of a variety of sizes. The program helps cover the cost of reshaping the land to what it was prior to all the rain. Generally this will pertain to filling in cuts throughout out a farm that the flow of water created. The deadline for ECP was December 15th. If you are not a cooperator, but you are a farmer, you may not have known about this ECP program. If you want to be notified of future assistance possibilities sign up to become a cooperator with the Kona SWCD. You will be added to our email distribution list.



The upper left photo is an example of where reshaping the land would be required. The water crossing over this farm made a number of cuts like those shown here.

The upper right and lower left photos both are examples of the need for debris removal.

This particular farm was heavily damaged by the flash floods with one cut through the land virtually cutting the farm in half. This has caused many production related challenges including fertilizing, spraying for the berry borer even collecting the harvest. They are no longer able to access the northern half of the farm with any type of vehicle.

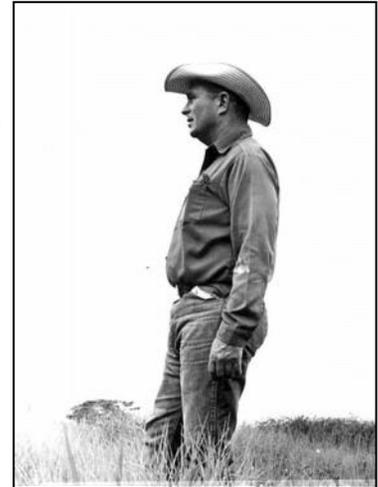


To the right is NRCS Staffer Carl Rossetti standing in a newly formed trench going through a coffee orchard. The depth of the trench, created by flash floods, is approximately two feet deep.

***History's Corner
Uncle Billy Paris
In Memoriam
1922-2015***

“Uncle” Billy Paris was a leader in conservation in West Hawaii. He understood the land and how best to manage it. He felt strongly that farmers had “to provide for the care of excess water in their farm plans as no farmer or rancher can afford to lose topsoil in Kona.” Uncle Billy knew the land and what best to do with it so that it flourished and maintained us.

On a site visit one day with Uncle Billy he stated, newcomers don’t know how to build roads here. It is not like on the mainland. A good road up to the mauka lands has swales and water bars built into them so water can slowdown, collect at a low spot then drain onto either side to be absorbed by the surrounding land. What we saw that day, and what had Uncle Billy so frustrated, is that newer roads simply went straight up the hill. He knew during our heavy intense rains they would simply become raging rivers.



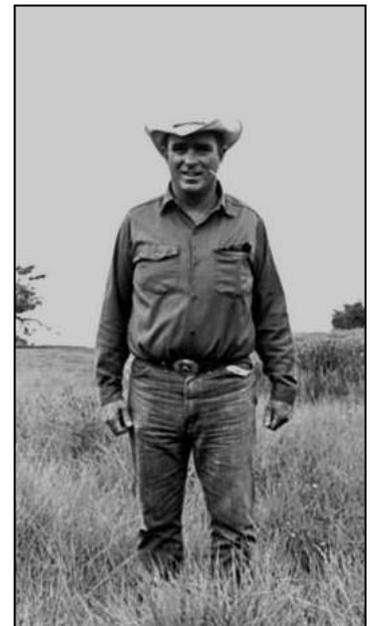
1972, Billy Paris is named the Outstanding Rancher of the Year by the Kona SWCD.



Sherwood Greenwell, left and Billy Paris, right in this undated photo.

Uncle Billy was an active cooperator and director of the Kona Soil and Water Conservation District dating back to the late 50s and through the 1960s. He was the Chairperson for many of those years and was instrumental in working through the flood control structure projects above Kainaliu Town, the one on Napoopoo Rd. at the Sunset Coffee Mill, and the ones that protect Kailua Town. There is a sediment basin behind the Hualalai Regency and another one at the end of Hiona St. that work together to protect Ali'i Drive. All of the projects required a great deal of coordination and effort, along with the Kona SWCD, Hawaii County and the USDA all had a roll to play, and Uncle Billy saw them all through to completion.

In 1962, under Uncle Billy's chairmanship, the district won the **Good Year Award** from the Good Year Rubber Company. The achievements the community had during his time as an active member of the Kona SWCD continue to provide us protection and guidance today and will continue on as long as we are willing to protect his achievements and learn from them so that we may have our own.



1972, Billy Paris on his ranch.

Billy Paris, In Memoriam continues



The **1961 Outstanding Rancher of the Year** Clarence Nakahara (left) being presented a trophy for his achievement by Billy Paris.. Date of photo, 9/30/1962



Billy Paris, right, gives Tatsumi Oue (left) and his brother Francis Oue (on the tractor) their certificate for the **1960 Outstanding Farmer of the Year** Date of photo, 1/19/1961.



1966 Kona SWCD board meeting. Attending from left to right: Jerry Cushingam, Frances Que, George Shimizu, William Paris, Jr., Sam Kamakau, Sherwood Greenwell, Masa Kawasaki and John Iwane.



February 2, 1965 from left to right, Guy Gadbois, George Schattauer, James Stewart and William Paris, Jr. Mr. Stewart was being given an award for his conservation efforts on Hoomau Ranch.



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.

The Farm Service Agency History

The Farm Service Agency, like many USDA agencies, was created as a result of the Great Depression. Franklin Roosevelt had just been elected into office by a wave of discontent caused by mounting unemployment and farm failures.

To help provide solutions the Resettlement Administration was formed in 1935 and renamed in 1937 to the Farm Security Administration, the original FSA. There were many programs designed to assist rural communities including the Standard Rural Rehabilitation Loan Program and the Debt Adjustment and Tenure Improvement Program. Additional changes in 1946 established lending programs for rural housing, rural business enterprises and rural water and waste disposal agencies.

Meanwhile, in 1933 the Agricultural Adjustment Administration was created with the purpose to stabilize farm prices at a level at which farmers could survive. This was the first federal farm program offering price supports and in 1938 there was a general reorganization of the USDA that brought changes in conservation, crop support and marketing legislation.

The War Food Administration was created after the attack on Pearl Harbor to coordinate the flow of basic commodities and was terminated at the end of the war.

A reorganization of the USDA in 1953 created the Commodity Stabilization Service which was now responsible for price support and supply management programs and funds. The land in production at this time far exceeded the needs of the country and to solve that problem the Soil Bank was created to take land out of production. The Commodity Stabilization Service became the Agricultural Stabilization And Conservation Service in 1961. This name better reflected the agency's stabilization and resource conservation missions.

In 1994 the USDA was reorganized again and the Consolidated Farm Service Agency was renamed the Farm Service Agency (FSA) as a result. The Farm Service Agency encompassed the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) and farm credit portion of the Farmers Home Administration. In 1996 FCIC became the Risk Management Agency.

Today's FSA has responsibilities in five areas, Farm Programs, Farm Loans, Commodity Operations, Management and State Operations and also implements ad hoc disaster programs such as the Emergency Conservation Program.

If you are wondering if they can help you, call them at the number above. They will be happy to help to explain their programs and answer any questions.

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Fax: 322-3735

Board of Directors:
Chairman: Greg Hendrickson
Vice Chairman: Jeff Knowles
Treasurer: Not Assigned
Secretary: Keith Unger
Director: Rick Robinson, Pepe Miranda

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.

We are on the web at
www.kswcd.org

Wishing You a Safe and Happy Holiday Season



The Kona SWCD Staff and NRCS staff here at the USDA Kealahou Field Office wish all of our farmers, ranchers, forest land owners, farm managers, and farm workers a very happy and safe holiday season.

From left to right, Bernard Vermeulen, Carl Rossetti, Laura Nelson, Jessica Schmelz, Mary Robblee and Jacky Vega. Unavailable for the photo, Mike Kolman and he hopes you have a safe & happy holiday too!

Funding for this newsletter is provided by Hawaii County Department of Research and Development and they wish for you a safe and happy holiday season too!