

# Resource Kona

RESOURCE KONA

August 2008

KONA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Our New Newsletter

Starting this quarter the Kona Soil and Water Conservation District will be publishing a district newsletter to be published quarterly. If there is enough interest and authors to provide relevant articles a more frequent distribution will be considered.

We are looking for articles that are relevant to farming, green living, and small agricultural businesses. We are a small community and we need to help each other when ever and where ever we can. We can have a local swap page, a help page, a good idea page. It is all up to you and what you want in your newsletter.

So, if you have an idea for an article let us know. We will let

you know if someone has already submitted something on the topic. If you are a local farmer or business targeting farmers and want to advertise in this publication call and let us know. The Kona SWCD Board of Directors wants this newsletter to belong to our agricultural community. We want you to dictate the direction the publication heads in. We feel that this newsletter is one instance where too many cooks will not spoil the broth. Please help us out. Let us know what you want to see for articles and even write one or two yourself. The Kona Soil and Water Conservation District's Board of Directors wants to say Mahalo for all the



The logo above is for the National Association of Conservation Districts. It is an information resource we can all use.

help and information you will provide to make this publication the success we know it can be.

## Kona's Resource Concerns cont. on page 2

In June the Natural Resources Conservation Service sponsored a local work group to discuss what Kona's natural resource concerns are and to prioritize them. Participating in the discussion group were representatives

from the farming community; the Kona Soil and Water Conservation District (KSWCD), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the University of Hawaii Extension Services. A

local work group had the same discussion in 2003 and in 2005.

In 2003 the resource concerns, in their order of priority were, insufficient water supply for irrigation or livestock, noxious weeds, flooding (in 2004 NRCS

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Do you have an idea for an article? Contact us.

### Special points of interest:

- Conservation Cover & Mulching two conservation practices that you can use at home to improve water quality, improve soil quality and reduce soil erosion.
- Soil testing, the first step in a Nutrient Management Plan.
- Want to know your soil type? Call 322-2484 and find out.

## Kona's Resource Concerns (cont. from page 1)



Conservation Cover can reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat.

**To know how much fertilizer you need do some testing. Get a soil test done, test plant tissue. Don't spend money on fertilizer you don't need.**



Mulch can improve soil condition, increase soil fertility, conserve soil moisture, provide erosion control, moderate soil temperature, and suppress weed growth.

State Office made a general policy decision that EQIP funds would not be used to address the flooding concern) and animal waste.

In 2005 the concerns were: insufficient water supply for irrigation or livestock, sedimentation in surface waters, noxious weeds/deforestation, at risk species habitat and animal waste.

This year's group concluded the following are the greatest natural resource concerns for Kona: water quality, soil quality, inadequate water supply, sedimentation from erosion, deforestation/invasive species. Groundwater and our near shore ocean waters have been found to have elevated levels of nutrients, nitrogen and phosphorous particularly. Though many people automatically blame golf courses and farming for nutrient pollution, nitrogen, specifically, also comes from cess pools and septic systems. Since we do not have a well developed municipal sewer treatment system this source can not go unrecognized as part of the problem.

For farmers to help resolve this problem NRCS and the KSWCD recommend soil testing and plant tissue analysis be done before applying fertilizer. This provides the information to develop a nutrient management plan. Besides being good

for the environment, it can save farmers a lot of money. By following a nutrient management plan a farmer will have some controls over their fertilizer costs.

Soil quality is a problem in Kona because of how young the land is in geological terms. It simply takes a long time for natural processes to make soil. By using mulch material on a farm soil quality can be improved dramatically. Mulch can also minimize soil moisture loss so a farmer can also save on their water bill while they are building up their soil.

Inadequate water supply is a problem for farmers due to low water pressure or by not having county water. Improvements to an irrigation system or increased catchment holding capacity can help resolve this problem. Sedimentation from erosion can be minimized by using some type of conservation cover. For orchard farmers, coffee and mac nut for instance, this means planting cover between their rows of trees. Conservation cover is some type of grass or grass/legume mix. The grass species most often recommended are Carpet Grass, Tropic Lalo (*Paspalum*) or St. Augustine. The legume generally recommended is perennial peanut. The root systems of conservation cover helps to hold soil in place during most rain events.

Many times deforestation and invasive species work hand in hand. If the native species are removed invasive species have an opportunity to move in. Since the Big Island has nearly every climate found in the world virtually every plant species has a niche here.

There are other invasive species besides botanical ones. We are facing problems with coqui frogs and there is great concern around the little red fire ant and the impact that species would have on agriculture here.

There are no easy solutions to our resource concerns but by everyone trying various conservation measures we can have a positive impact on our environment and for farmers, it is generally less expensive to work with nature than to fight it.

If you would like additional information on obtaining a conservation plan for your farm or if you have questions on how you can install conservation practices on your land contact the Kona Soil and Water Conservation District or the Natural Resources Conservation Service at 322-2484.

## Cooperator of the Year Picnic

On Saturday, April 2, the Kona SWCD honored its Cooperators of the Year. This year there were three, two farmers and a rancher. The farmers are Robert and Ulu Albert who have a five acre parcel in the state Ag Park in Keahole and the owners of Kokoleka Lani Farm Greg Colden and Marty Corrigan

The Alberts grow noni and plumeria. Their parcel is surrounded on three sides by fountain grass and keeping it of their farm is a never ending task.

Kokoleka Lani Farm grows a myriad of items but specializes in coffee and cacao. Their parcel of land is the old Tanaka Quarry. To look at it now you would never know it was a rock pit in the past. As a by-product of Kokoleka Lani's farming they have created the Kona Natural Soap Company.

Our Rancher of the Year, McCandless Ranch, was

not able to attend our event but regardless they inspire us with their diligent efforts to remove noxious weeds. McCandless Land and Cattle Co., LLC and manager, Keith Unger felt honored to be included in this group

Other attendees included representatives from the Mauna Kea SWCD as well as the staff member from the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Kealahou field office.

We thank Mike Donoho of the Dept of Forest and Wildlife for letting the Kona SWCD use a facility at Puuwaawaa Ranch for the ceremony.



Kona Soil and Water Conservation District's Cooperators of the Year. From left to right—Robert & Ulu Albert, Virginia Isbell (KSWCD Director), Skip Cowell (KSWCD Director), Greg Colden Cooperator of the Year, Rick Robinson (KSWCD Director), Bob Nelson (KSWCD Associate Director) & Marty Corrigan. Not available for the photograph, Cynthia Sally and Keith Unger of McCandless Ranch

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## Farmer's Markets

Who does not like fresh fruits and vegetables? Who does like to know where their fruits and vegetables come from?

Here in West Hawaii we have at least three farmer's markets so there is likely to be one near you.

On Saturday mornings from 8-noon you can pick up a wide assortment of

fruits and vegetables at the Keauhou Farmer's Market. This market is located at the northern end of the Keauhou Shopping Plaza parking lot.

Also on Saturday mornings from 9-noon there is a farmer's market in Holualoa at the Holualoa Koa Gardens, a local restaurant. The restau-

rant is also a vendor selling baked goods. This one is right across from the pink hotel.

There is also a farmers market held on the grounds of the Amy Greenwell Botanical Garden. It is called the South Kona Green Market and the hours are from 9am-1pm on Sunday.

If you are fond of our

unique fruits such as lychee or jackfruit a farmer's market may be the place to shop for your produce.

There may be other farmer's markets that we are not aware of. If you want your farmer's market mentioned be sure to contact us at the Kona SWCD and we will include them in the future.

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**Board of Directors:**  
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**Organization:** The Kona Soil and Water Conservation District (KSWCD) is a government subdivision of the State of Hawaii organized under Hawaii State Law, Chapter HRS 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 land users within, and the communities of 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](http://www.kswcd.org)

## Kona Hosts HACD Annual Conference

The Kona Soil and Water Conservation District was the host district for this year's Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts (HACD) Annual Conference.

The conference took place from June 18-20 at the Outrigger Keauhou Beach Resort. There were representatives from all 16 of the state's Soil and Water Conservation Districts as well as from the Department of Health, Coastal Zone Management and University of Hilo Extension Services.

Presentations were provided by each of the four HACD Conservation Specialists. They provided information on projects they have worked on throughout the year.

We had Attorney Jennifer Brooks from the Office of Information Practices provide a presentation

on the state's Sunshine Law, or Public Notice Law. Her presentation included what constitutes a good meeting agenda and what doesn't.

We also had an agricultural tour of the Kona Districts. We started with a visit to the Kona Historical Society's coffee farm, Uchida Farm. We then went to Lehuula Farms, a modern day coffee farm that not only grows coffee but also roasts, packages and ships it too. You can find them on the web at [lehuulafarms.com](http://lehuulafarms.com)

Lunch was at Teshima's and we enjoyed the upstairs function room with its cool breezes and views of all that is below. People from around the state loved their food, especially the shrimp tempura. Some said they wanted to come back for a weekend just to eat at Teshima's.

The tour was finished off with a

visit to the Natural Energy Lab. Our conference participants learned about the variety of products being produced there.

Overall the tour was a great success at highlighting Kona's agriculture. People learned how far the coffee industry has come over the past 100 years and they learned of the unique agricultural opportunities available at the energy lab.



HACD Annual Conference 6/19/08  
at the Keauhou Outrigger

## The NRCS Staff is here to help

The NRCS staff is a group of dedicated professionals who are here to help farmers apply for Farm Bill Programs and help them with conservation plans for their farms. They also can answer general questions and can steer you in the right direction if you have questions about conservation methods. The people working in the Kealahou Office are:

District Conservationist: Jeff Knowles x 109

Soil Conservationist: Denise Light x 101

Soil Scientist: Chris Jasper x 106

Soil Conservationist Patra Vindondo x 113

Soil Scientist: Mike Koleman x 107

Cultural Resource Specialist Carol Kawachi x 105

The main number to the office 322-2484.

## Big Island Home Improvement

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## Native trees to support healthy watersheds.

By Jill Wagner, Future Forests

One of the positive actions being taken by landowners recently is a new way of growing coffee that marries economic crops with an environmental ethic. "Shade coffee" is a wonderful way to grow native plants and still have a thriving coffee farm. The idea is to plant native species that are appropriate for the elevation and native habitat type among coffee or on the edges of farms. Sometimes people plant right among their coffee trees, filling in gaps and empty holes.

Or if they have areas that are uneven or sloping native plants can be planted in those areas to help with filtering light, controlling erosion, and retaining moisture. Native corridors provide food plants for the native birds. If landowners planted native species as well as coffee it would soften the effect of land use changes and give the birds the opportunity to be there and not be pushed higher up the mountain. In addition, native plantings reduce weeds and support healthy soils. Rainfall drops through their leaves, percolating into the soil, thus greatly

reducing run off.

And of course native species are easy to grow because Hawaii is their home.

They are beautiful and help us to deepen our own sense of place.

