

# Resource Kona

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September 2009

KONA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Perennial Peanut For Use as Conservation Cover

Dr. Radovich, an Extension Specialist in Sustainable and Organic Farming Systems at University of Hawaii at Manoa, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) led a discussion on the use of perennial peanut for conservation cover.

The talk was well attended by approximately 20 individuals from local farms. They learned that perennial peanut has its challenges in getting established, but once it is, it's good at weed suppression and fixing nitrogen from the air so that it is available to plants.



Above: A local farm that has had success in establishing perennial peanut as a ground cover.

There are two methods available for establishing perennial peanut, seeds and sprigging. Testing has been done on Oahu with both methods showing fairly good results. One of the criticism of the testing is the lack of information on establishing the species in very rocky soils like those found in North and South Kona. CTAHR is open to the possibility of doing test plots at the Kainaliu Extension Services office to better reflect the local growing conditions.

Aside from the slow establishment rate of perennial peanut, another challenge is that until it is fixing nitrogen it will compete with your crop for nitrogen in the soil. Once it is established and mature it will be feeding your crop nitrogen.

A local coffee grower is using perennial peanut for ground cover and has had tissue sampling done on their coffee trees. They showed satisfactory levels of nutrients, particularly nitrogen though they also discovered some draw backs. Once established it can be aggressive and has to be kept from becoming too close to coffee trees. Another drawback the producer learned of, perennial peanut seems to invite slugs which may need to be controlled if they get out of hand., though overall the producers felt the benefits still outweigh the challenges.

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### **Special points of interest:**

- Do you want to learn more about conservation on your land? Give us a call.
- If you want to become active in the Kona Soil and Water Conservation District please give us a call at 322-2484 ext 100

## ***KSWCD Pilot Program for Soil Testing and Conservation Cover***

The Kona SWCD has initiated a pilot program to help get conservation on the ground. At our August board meeting the Directors approved a program where cooperators can be provided one hour of time with Gene Nolin, a soil and crop consultant from "Soils Alive". Gene will meet with each cooperator on their farm and talk to them about the challenges the cooperator faces. He will help the cooperator obtain a soil sample for testing and send it to a lab on the mainland that he was worked with for many years. When the results come back he will discuss them and the recommendations for amendments with each individual. The value of the one hour of consultation and soil test is \$100. With the aim of improving your soil the District wants to help you keep it so we will reimburse participants for up to \$100 of grass seed. We realize that \$100 of grass seed is not likely to provide much cover for many of our local farmers. It is our hope that it can get you started

This program is aimed at cooperators who have not received financial assistance from the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program for the conservation practices of conservation cover or nutrient management. If you have received NRCS cost share payments for only one of those practices we will work with you on the other one. If you are a cooperator and want to participate, want to become a cooperator so that you can participate, or have any other questions please call our Conservation Assistant Mary Robblee for additional information at 322-2484 ext 100.

## ***Cooperator of the Year Picnic***

Each year the Kona Soil and Water Conservation District and the Mauna Kea Soil and Water Conservation District take turns hosting a picnic to honor their Cooperator of the Year winners. This year's Cooperator of the Year Picnic was hosted by the Mauna Kea SWCD and was held at the Moku Mai Piko taro farm, operated by Jayson and Alberta Mock Chew, in Waipio Valley (see photo to the right). Moku Wai Piko Poi is one of two Mauna Kea Cooperator of the Year award recipients. Not only have these wet taro farmers put in an enormous amount of work to maintain a beautiful taro farm but they have installed practices that invite wildlife onto their property. The owners and operator of Lau Ranch, Pat Lau and Pat Lau Jr., were also honored as a 2008 Cooperator of the Year by the Mauna Kea SWCD which also honored its 2007 Cooperators of the Year, Monty and Tim Richards, owners of Kahua Ranch, who were not able to attend last year's picnic. The Kona SWCD 2008 Cooperator of the Year is Lyman Kona Coffee Farms operated by Hans Eckert and his wife Marsha.



The site for the picnic was more beautiful than many of us had imagined. (continued on page 6)

### ***A Hui Hou Jeff and Patra***

The Kealahou Field Office has said a hui hou to two of its employees this September. Soil Conservationist Patra Ghergich has moved back to her home state of Louisiana to be the District Conservationist in the Franklin Field Office located in St. Mary's Parrish. She came to our office upon graduating from college in 2007. Patra is very excited about working closer to her family and being closer to New Orleans, she has told us Mardi Gras is a lot of fun.

Jeff Knowles, who started in this office in December of 2002, is heading back to Afghanistan. As some of you know, he worked in Afghanistan a few years ago for six months. He really enjoyed the work and people of the country that he helped. This current venture is for a full year. He's not really sure which area of the country he will be in but does think he will be working at about the 10,000 ft elevation. He hopes to assist the local population with some larger agricultural projects so that they can realize greater self sufficiency.

Both Jeff and Patra have been great assets for our community. They both helped grow the programs available to our producers and shared their knowledge of protecting our natural resources plus they were willing to learn from those who have been here for many years. The people who will soon be working with them will learn of their enthusiasm, team attitude and desire to be part of the solution to any problems their communities encounter. The Kona SWCD wishes them both the very best and says "mahalo nui loa for your efforts on behalf of our agricultural community."

To the right, Jeff is pointing to where a pig has damaged a perimeter fence. Below, he is inspecting a watercourse after the Nov. 2007 floods..



Above, Patra is telling young people about the uses of GIS in her daily work life. And below, Patra is working out in the field at Puuwaawaa assisting in the implementation of a Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program contract with the goal of protecting native nene geese



## **Got Ants?**

While cleaning out some old files this recipe to deal with ants was discovered and it may help you with some ant problems you may have.

### Boric Sugar Acid Bait

This recipe is for white footed ants and other sugar feeding ant species. It may not be completely effective for some ants (pharaoh ants, carpenter ants, big headed ants, Mexican ants) as their food preference may change throughout the year. Proper identification is vital for proper bait selection. Be advised, the white footed ant does not regurgitate its food to feed its young so the bait will only control the white footed ants that come out of the nest and feed on it.

### Recipe:

1. Place in a two cup liquid measure:
  - 1 teaspoon of boric acid powder
  - 3 tablespoons of white table sugar
2. Fill to 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup line with warm distilled or bottled water, do not use tap water.
3. Stir to dissolve completely.

### Directions for use:

Pour mixture into small (condiment type) containers along with an absorbent material (cotton, etc.). Place filled containers in areas of current ant activity. Check on a weekly basis and replace or refresh as necessary. Moldy or fouled baits should be replaced with fresh ones. Allow the ants to feed in the stations for up to one or even two months.

### Important Notes:

1. Bait acceptance is better if you do not immediately disturb the ants during the initial phase of baiting, i.e. don't remove their primary food source (possibly your food) until they have started feeding on the bait material.
2. Do not, under any circumstances, use any household insecticides on any ants around the areas you are baiting. This will disturb the ants and they may discontinue feeding on the bait and you have missed your chance.

In our next edition, another recipe discovered during the clean out, a recipe to deal with soft-bodied pest such as aphids, mealy bugs, white flies, scale, citrus and black flies.

## **Little Fire Ant Reminder**

Remember, whenever you bring planting material onto your property, soil, mulch, or potted plants, quarantine and test for the little fire ant. Diligence is how infestations are prevented. If you have any questions give the District office a call at 322-2484 ext 100.

### ***Kona Farm Bureau Annual Meeting***

The Kona Farm Bureau had their annual meeting and dinner in September. The guest speaker for the event was the State Department of Agriculture's Chairperson Sandra Lee Kunimoto. The major issue addressed in her speech had to do with the budget cuts the Department of Agriculture (DOA) has had to endure. She explained that budget cuts directed by the Governor are aimed at the general funds each department receives, not funds categorized in any other way such as special funds or federal funds. The DOA's budget is heavily financed through General Funds (more than 50%) yet every month, it seems, the revenue, for the state are lower than the projections were. All of this is why it appears the DOA's cuts are more severe than other departments.

There was some good news: Through working with other agencies and councils, i.e. The Invasive Species Council, it appears the anticipated layoff of 14 Agricultural Inspectors will not occur. It is unclear how many will remain but through better partnering with other agencies and through better efficiencies, progress is being made. One of the efficiencies Kunimoto mentioned requires industry participation. She mentioned that if shipping manifests could be supplied to the inspectors prior to arrival or shipping a ranking system could be developed to determine criteria for high priority inspections versus a low priority.

Kunimoto's speech held a central theme, by working together and improving efficiencies in the current systems we can work our way through these current economic lean times. It will require new ideas and the cooperation of all stakeholders including consumers, farmers, business people, educators, government employees and government policies makers. It will be by working together as a team that we will succeed.

Also at the meeting the Kona Farm Bureau presented their First Annual Heritage Award. This is an award given to a local family farm that has been in operation for over 100 years. The Yamagata Farm, started in 1898 and in continuous operation since, was given the honor. The farm was started by the Great Great Grandfather of the family when he came from Japan to be a blacksmith for a sugar plantation. The family continues to have a love for farming for their land and, hopefully, Kona will have this family farm around for another 100 years.

The members of the Kona Farm Bureau seemed pleased with the leadership its directors have provided. Eight of the nine current directors were seeking reelection and all were approved by the members. The ninth seat is vacant and if you are a member and are interested in becoming more active in the organization contact the Chairperson, Nancy Pisicchio.

The Kona Farm Bureau holds monthly meetings on the third Thursday of the month at the Kona Marshalling Yard (upstairs from the Hawaii Food Basket) located on Kuakini Highway. Meetings start at 6:30 pm.

### Cooperator of the Year Picnic (continued from page 2)

We drove down into the back of the valley and had to cross two streams to get to our final destination within the valley but it was more than worth it. The picnic, attended by approximately 30 people, was a pot luck barbeque. Everyone brought something delicious to eat. We sat around and talked story about farming and conserving the island’s natural resources or we walked around the farm to witness the incredible natural beauty.



To the left are Jayson and Alberta Mock Chew, operators of the taro farm that allowed us to have our picnic there. For that we are all very grateful. Below the operators of Lau Ranch with Jim Thain, Chairperson of the Mauna Kea SWCD.



Above left are the operators of Kahua Ranch, Mauna Kea’s 2007 Cooperator of the year. Above is the Kona SWCD’s Cooperator of the year, Lyman Kona Coffee Farm and Chairperson Rick Robinson and to the left, native wildlife, a Hawaiian Stilt and fun on a tire swing. Below a panoramic view of the property



**FSA News****FARM SERVICE AGENCY**

This is an exciting time for the Farm Service Agency! We currently have several programs available that focus on helping our local farmers and ranchers. For more information, or to apply for any USDA Farm Service Agency disaster assistance program, please call your local USDA Service Center. The FSA office in Kealahou can be reached at 322-2484 ext 111.

On September 18<sup>th</sup>, the USDA announced the implementation of livestock disaster assistance programs. Producers may now begin applying for benefits under the provisions of the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish program (ELAP). These permanent disaster programs, authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, replace previous ad-hoc disaster assistance programs and are funded through the Agricultural Disaster Relief Trust Fund.

LFP provides payments to eligible livestock producers that have suffered livestock grazing losses due to qualifying drought or fire. For drought, the losses must have occurred on land that is native or improved pastureland with permanent vegetative cover or a crop planted specifically for grazing. The drought losses must also have occurred during the normal grazing period for the specific type of grazing land in the county. Eligible livestock under LFP include beef cattle, alpacas, buffalo, beefalo, dairy cattle, deer, elk, emus, equine, goats, llamas, poultry, reindeer, sheep and swine. For losses due to drought, qualifying drought ratings are determined using the U.S. Drought Monitor located at <http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>.

ELAP provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish that have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions. Further detail on eligibility criteria is available at your local FSA office.

For both LFP and ELAP, livestock or forage losses must have occurred on or after January 1, 2008, and before October 1, 2011. Note that there are assistance application deadlines for each crop year during that multi-year period; call your local FSA office to determine which specific deadlines will be applicable.

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides financial assistance to producers for livestock deaths that result from natural disaster. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, certain diseases, wildfires, extreme heat and cold. Eligible losses must have occurred on or after Jan. 1, 2008, and before Oct. 1, 2011.

The Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) is a federally funded program that provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occurs as the result of natural disasters. NAP provides coverage for crops for which the catastrophic level of insurance is not available and payments of indemnities are based on individual producer crop losses. The deadline to sign up for NAP coverage in 2010 is December 1, 2009.

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Board of Directors:  
Chairman: Rick Robinson  
Vice Chairman: Greg Hendrickson  
Secretary: Virginia Isbell  
Director: William "Skip" Cowell  
Director: David "Kawika" Marquez

Staff: Mary Robblee, Conservation Assistant  
Monthly meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month from 7am-9am 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](http://www.kswcd.org)

### ***"DIG IT! The Secrets of Soil" Poster Contest***

This fall the Kona SWCD is sponsoring the National Association of Conservation Districts's poster contest for 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. The theme of the contest is **"DIG IT! The Secrets of Soil"** in partnership with the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and the Soil Science Society of America. Letters were recently sent to the principals of the public elementary and middle schools advising them of this opportunity for their students. The contest is open to all 4th, 5th and 6th graders in North and South Kona.

If you want to learn more about participating in the contest please contact us at 322-2484 ext. 100. The winner of the local contest will become a contestant in the state contest and maybe even the national contest. Below are previous national poster contest winners ([www.nacdnet.org/education/contests/poster/](http://www.nacdnet.org/education/contests/poster/))

