

Resource Kona

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Winter/Spring 2012

KONA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Captain's Ohana Farm, 2011 Cooperator of the Year

Each year the island's six soil and water conservation districts (SWCD) choose a Cooperator of the Year. The USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), or the SWCD's staff nominate producers who have demonstrated a dedication to improving and protecting the natural resources on their land. This year's four nominees were an exceptional group of individuals for their dedication to natural resource protection and improvement; they were also exceptional for the diversification between them.

Jack Turner and his wife Tina, Kamehameha Schools leaseholders of the land they named Captain's Ohana Farm, have had to overcome many obstacles that are quite familiar to Kona's farmers, a lack of soil was one of the biggest challenges, so they thought. In November of 2007 South Kona had what was believed to be a 100 year storm. Jack's land has a natural water course, the Ki'ilae Stream, running right through the middle of it, the result was nearly total devastation. Not just because of the water that ran down the stream, but because the volume of water could not be contained by the stream and impacted virtually the entire parcel.



This photo gives an idea of the challenges Jack Turner and his wife Tina faced as a result of the November 2007 storm event. The car is still in use today!



And this photo shows what was left of their papaya field and includes parts of their irrigation system.

The above photos show what their farm looked like at after that devastating storm. (cont. on page 2)

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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.
- If you want to learn more about how to protect your natural resources, give us a call, 322-2484 x 100.

Captain's Ohana Farm, 2011 Cooperator of the Year *(cont. from pg. 1)*

Over the years, the conservation practices they put in place include mulching, and conservation cover to overcome very rocky soil and to help prevent erosion during future rainfall events. They also installed critical area planting within their watercourse to help prevent erosion there when it rains. The result is a farm that has a permanent vegetative cover virtually throughout. This protects not only their livelihood but also their downstream neighbors and the community in general.

The Captain's Ohana Farm now boasts 63 different varieties of orchard trees. Their diversity is their strength, there is always something ready to harvest and they even grow some herbs and vegetables

Jack and his wife will be the first to tell you they were not alone in suffering hardship from that storm, all their neighbors were affected, particularly the South Kona Fruit Stand. The help they received from friends, neighbors and the community in digging out from under feet of lava rock still brings tears to their eyes when they talk about it. In their own words they are forever grateful.

Please join us in congratulating Jack and Tina on the hard work they have done on Captain's Ohana Farm.



The farm after years of mulching and seeding for conservation cover. The leaf litter from the trees and the clippings from the mowing continue to feed organic matter to the soil.



The Ki'ilae Stream that cuts through the Captain's Ohana Farm. It may not run very often but has proven to be very destructive.

2011 Cooperator of the Year Nominees

Captain's Ohana Farm may have been selected the 2011 Cooperator of the Year, but that does not mean the competition was easy, not by any means. There were four nominees for the 2011 award and each was deserving of the honor.

The Daily Fix coffee grower, Sandra Scarr has taken an approximately 9 acre parcel that had 3-4 acres of rose apple on it and converted it to a coffee farm with a native forest. Sandra saw the rose apple not just as an invasive pest species but also as a great resource. She converted it into mulch while opening up large areas of her land for production. Sandra increased the acreage devoted to coffee but also dedicated much of the now available land to recreating a native forest, no easy task.

Another nominee was Naked Bean Coffee, of Arianna Farms. Kraig Lee, the farm *(cont. on next page)*

2011 Cooperator of the Year Nominees (cont. from previous page)



Part of the forest being reestablished in mauka area of the Daily Fix coffee farm.



Another picture of the Daily Fix's young forest, note the leaf litter. This is how West Hawaii's organic soils were first created.

manager oversaw the removal of 9 acres of macadamia nut trees with no conservation cover to prevent erosion to a coffee farm covered with grass, two sediment basins, irrigation and a fence to protect the coffee and land from feral ungulates, pigs particularly. In December of 2010 there were



The lower portion of Naked Bean Coffee.



Looking mauka across the coffee orchard at Naked Bean Coffee

some heavy rains in the Keauhou area and the Kona SWCD staff went to check on how this farm was handling the rainfall. There had been some channelization of water flow in a previous rain that rightfully concerned the makai neighbors greatly. It was reported that the rain was absorbed by the land like a sponge. The area had received enough rain in the few months previous to this heavy December rainfall that allowed conservation cover to be established. Conservation cover is a great way to keep soil in its place. Turn to page 8 to read about the fourth nominee, a land owner with a wonderful forest tale.

Kona SWCD at the Earth and Ocean Fair

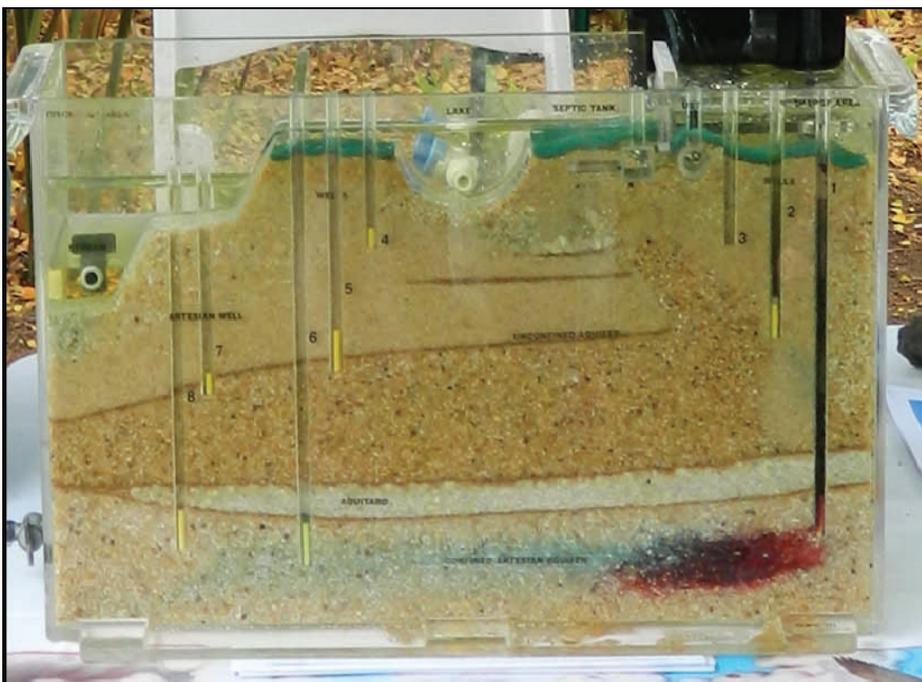
This year, as in previous years, the Kona Soil and Water Conservation District participated in the Earth and Ocean Fair sponsored by the Kona Kohala Chamber of Commerce and held at the Keauhou Outrigger. All the vendors had a similar goal, to educate the public of the value taking care of the earth and ocean has. By protecting both, we will have a source of food and recreation forever.

At our booth, we used our water model and food coloring to demonstrate the water cycle and the relationships between groundwater, surface water and ocean water. We are able to clearly illustrate that what you put down an old lava tube or what enters a storm drain, even it does not feed directly to the ocean, can eventually end up there.

Dry wells allow storm water and all other liquids, like non-water soluble motor oil, to merge with groundwater. We have some storm drains that are clearly labeled as feeding directly into the ocean. Other storm drains use drywells to collect storm water runoff and allow it to dissipate into the ground slowly. Our water model shows that anything introduced into our groundwater has the potential to end up in the ocean, or possibly even worse, in our drinking water.

Please protect your community and its future, do not put anything down any storm drain. Let drywells do what they are designed to, help prevent flash floods by being able to collect large amount of storm water runoff and allowing it to be merged with our ground water as it would have if the there wasn't so much hardscaped surface.

The Kona SWCD staff will be happy to present its water model to your class or organization so that you can better understand how this cycle of water operates. One really cool water fact, the water we drink today is the same water dinosaurs drank millions of years ago and that is because the water we have is all the water we ever had and all the water we ever will have, it simply changes form from liquid to vapor to solid and back again but it is all still H₂O.



To the left, our water model clearly shows there can be a flow to groundwater. Here in Hawaii it is crucial to protect the integrity of our ground water. Not only does it impact the ocean but it is where most of us get our drinking water and most of our aquifers, where ground water resides, are considered irreplaceable. The good news is our ground water is currently in very good shape, but only we can keep it that way by not over-using fertilizer and disposing of oils and chemicals in a responsible manner.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program for 2012

At the April 10th Kona SWCD Board of Directors' meeting, the Natural Resource Conservation Service's (NRCS) District Conservationist (DC) for the Kealahou Field Office, Jessica Sternfels, reported that the Kealahou office had an unprecedented number of applicants for conservation planning cost share programs with, to date, 69 individual farmers looking for conservation planning services.

One reason we were able to take so many applications was because the Kona SWCD district staff met with each applicant and assisted them with the paperwork, which can be daunting and does take approximately 2 hours. This allowed the Soil Conservationists more time to work on a greater number of conservation plans. The district wanted to do this so that we could get as much conservation on the ground and as many producers benefiting from the financial cost share assistance as possible.

The two most popular conservation programs offered through NRCS is the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat incentives program (WHIP). EQIP can help improve farm land and WHIP can help improve forest land. Both provide a tremendous benefit to the community, not just to the people enrolled in the program. There have been thousands of acres of land protected from erosion through these programs.

On May 6, 2011 there were heavy rains in Kainaliu. A coffee producer came in to sign up for EQIP during the fall because with that storm they experienced first hand that "the grass held the soil in place!" The producer explained that water was running across her coffee lands and when it subsided her soil and grass were still there and this is how the community benefits. Take care of the land you are fortunate to have and the land will take care of you. As a community, if we support programs like EQIP and WHIP being applied to the land then the community will be better for it.

Ms. Sternfels also reported that for the first time in the Pacific Island Area (PIA) NRCS has run out of program money. NRCS has applied for additional funding from Washington and we are hopeful it will be forthcoming.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection, Kona June 9th 7:30—2:30

Bring your automotive fluids, chemicals and poisons and other hazardous household wastes to the Kealahou Recycling & Transfer Station collection area on June 9th. Business, farm, non-profit or government agency waste are **NOT** allowed. Electronic waste (e-waste) is also **NOT** allowed. For full details on what materials are and are not accepted, please visit <http://hawaii Zerowaste.org/recycle/householdhazardous>

There will be a concurrent collection event for reusable latex paints held nearby and operated by Recycle Hawaii. Bring your reusable latex paints or come and see what is available for pick-up by the public.

Customers should pack their items in spill-proof containers and be careful when transporting them to the event. When at the event, please remain in your vehicle in line until authorized personnel come to unload your vehicle. For your safety and the safety of those around you please do not walk your hazardous materials over to the authorized personnel in the restricted area, this precaution is to prevent spillage and ensure fairness to those already waiting in line. Mahalo for your kōkua.

Anyone who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication (including language interpreting) or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in this event should contact Chris at 961-8554 by June 1st.

Soil Climate Analysis Network

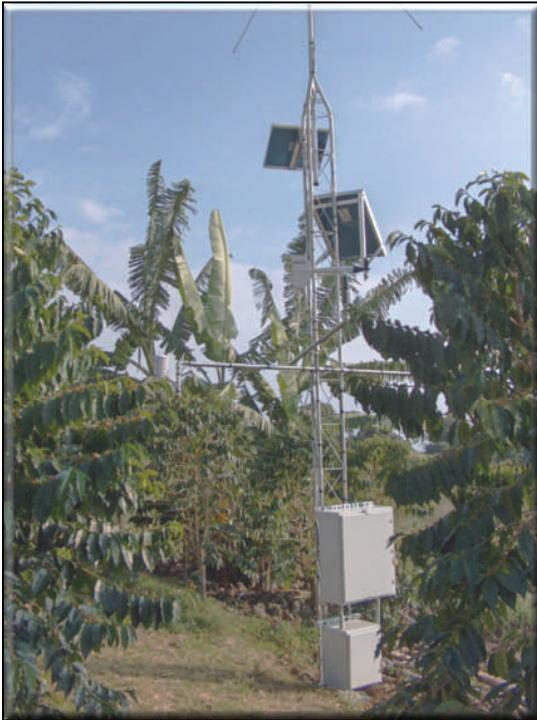
Reviewed by Mike Kolman, Soil Scientist, Soil Survey Office Leader, USDA-NRCS

Editor's Note: This edition's Soils Page is dedicated to the SCAN Network. You can obtain excellent and vital soil and climate information both current and historical for a variety of locations across the country

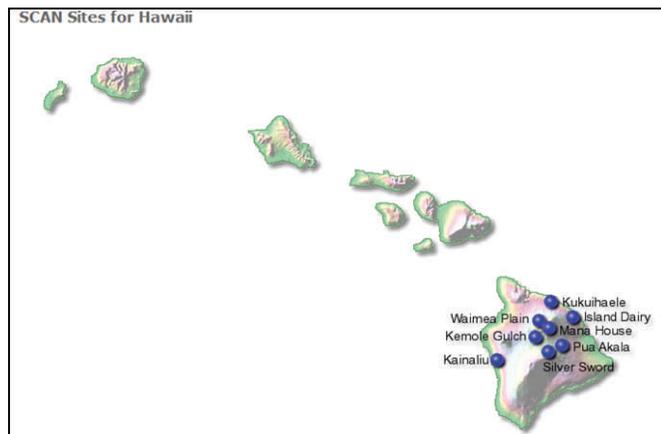
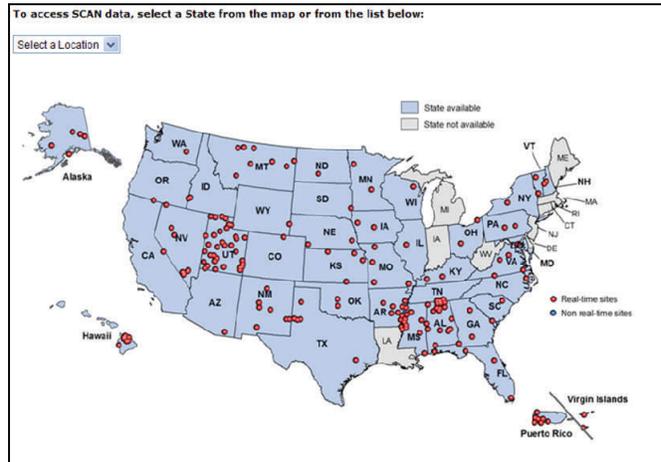
Have you ever wondered if there is an official rainfall gauge located somewhere locally? The answer is yes, and it is available online! The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has the Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN), a nationwide soil moisture and climate information system designed to provide data to support natural resource assessments and conservation activities.

SCAN sites collect data on precipitation, air temperature, as well as soil moisture and soil temperature. The soil data is collected a variety of depths. The data collected at SCAN sites is used by global climate modelers, soil scientists, ecologists, droughts managers, and farmers to support various activities including soil surveys, water management and irrigation schedules, crop production models, planting schedules and other natural resource management issues.

The web site is www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov. Once there, on the left side of the page click on SCAN Data.



To the left is a photo of the SCAN site in Kainaliu. Below is a map showing where all the SCAN sites across the country and in the Caribbean are located and a map showing where SCAN sites are located in Hawaii.



Something to keep in mind if you access the SCAN site and use its data, the default display for temperature data is Celsius. There is a box you can check to convert it to Fahrenheit. Also, you can choose to look at current data or historical data. For instance, the storm that Captain's Ohana Farm and the South Kona Fruit Stand had to contend with in late November 2007, the historic data on the SCAN site shows 5.3 inches of rain fell in Kainaliu on 11/29/2007.



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.

Rural Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to rural youths to establish and operate income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, Future Farmers of America, and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization's advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5,000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

US citizenship (which includes Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands,) or a legal resident alien status; Between 10 years to 20 years of age; Reside in a rural area, city or town with a population of 50,000 or fewer people; Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above; Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the project and the loan, along with providing adequate supervision. Stop by your county office for help in preparing the application forms.

Minority Farm Register Now Open

Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages minority farmers and ranchers to voluntarily join the USDA Minority Farm Register to receive information and opportunities from USDA agencies. The new Register is an outreach tool designed to reach underserved farmers and ranchers who are not currently enrolled in USDA loan, farm or conservation programs.

By joining the Register, minority producers may receive outreach materials, newsletters, and program announcements from USDA agencies. They may also receive information and assistance from other USDA-approved outreach partners, such as community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and minority-serving educational institutions. USDA will carefully control access to and use of the Register.

Registration forms are available in Spanish (AD-2035SP) and English (AD-2035) on the FSA web site www.fsa.usda.gov under "Forms".

USDA Factoid: Did you know?

One of the most significant changes in the 2007 Census of Agriculture is the increase in female farm operators, both in terms of the absolute number and the percentage of all principle operators. There were 306,209 female principle operators counted in 2007, up from 237,819 in 2002 an increase of almost 30 percent.

81-948 Waena'Oihana Loop
 Kealahou, HI 96750
 322-2484 ext. 100
 Fax: 322-3735

Board of Directors:
 Chairman: Rick Robinson
 Vice Chairman: Greg Hendrickson
 Treasurer: David "Kawika" Marquez
 Secretary: Denise Light
 Director: Ron Baird

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.



Cooperator of the Year Nominees (cont. from pg 3)

The last, and certainly not least, nominee for the 2011 award was the Ohia Forest Farm a beautifully restored native forest by Tricia Bobnar and her family. Their land, located in South Kona, is a 6 acre parcel which is predominately a native ohia forest. The problem, like so much of our native forests, there was a heavy infestation of christmas berry and strawberry guava. They removed all of the christmas berry, by hand. The work they did is difficult enough when done with heavy equipment but to do it by hand shows the love and respect they have for their land. They have planted scores of native species to improve the diversity, particularly of the understory. They also planted coffee, since it is a shade tree, along one edge of their forest. The day of the tour the coffee was covered in Kona snow and looked beautiful.

The Kona Soil and Water Conservation District, on behalf of the community want to thank all of our nominees for all their hard work in protecting their land which in turn protects our community.

The photos below and to the right show how dedication to the forest can create one of the most beautiful places in the world. The Ohia Forest Farm, 6 acre parcel where a native forest is being restored. Some of the native plants they have added to their forest are A'ali'i, Kawau, Mamane, Olopuia, Alahe'e and Ilima, just to name a few.

