



NRCS



Hawaii

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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*Our People...
Our Islands...
In Harmony*

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Conservation Update

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture charged with carrying out the Department's conservation mission on private lands. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to landusers through the 16 Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Hawaii.

Partnering for Wetlands

Endangered Nene and Koloa have discovered new wetland habitats on private lands on the islands of Hawaii. The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is working. Thanks to partnerships between private landowners, Ducks Unlimited, Inc. and NRCS, restored and created wetland habitats continue to appear throughout the state. WRP is a voluntary program that offers landowners cost-share funds, technical assistance, and the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property.



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A few years ago, Sumner Erdman from the Ulupalakua Ranch on Maui, Ducks Unlimited, Inc. staff, and NRCS began discussing the possibility of utilizing USDA's Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) to construct four ponds on the Ulupalakua Ranch to

enhance habitat for the listed endangered nene goose (the Hawaii state bird). Ducks Unlimited designed the ponds according to NRCS specifications. Construction began on June 18, 2001 and was completed on June 27, 2001. The ponds vary in size with the smallest being 0.09 acres to 0.32 acres. WRP funds were also used to provide habitat protection in the form of fencing and the Ranch has worked with other partners to re-establish native trees and shrubs in the area.



Ulupalakua Ranch

Partnering for Wetlands

On the Big Island, Umikoa Ranch was the first in Hawaii to sign up for the Wetlands Reserve Program with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. They have restored a complex of wetlands where endangered Koloa ducks can thrive. The wetland restoration is a component of natural restoration of the Ranch, which includes scarification and koa reforestation, fencing, and rat and mongoose control. Senator David Matsuura, land manager for the ranch said, "It's critical that we do partnerships. It's really valuable to the landowner as well as the land."



Chalon Ranch on the Big Island has also utilized the WRP to improve wetlands habitat for endangered Koloa and migratory waterfowl. Land manager Michael Gomes says, "Enhancing wetlands is a great way to integrate endangered species management with compatible ranch operations and provide rare opportunities for visitors to view endangered Hawaiian waterfowl."



NRCS and Ducks Unlimited are committed to WRP in Hawaii. From 1998-2001, NRCS has been allocated over \$580,000 for the program, which has led to over \$1 million worth of wetlands projects with partners. These projects prove that with a concerted partnership effort and dedicated, conscientious landowners, Hawaii's critical wetland ecosystem can be restored and preserved.

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