

West Maui Coral Reef Initiative Fact Sheet

The NRCS West Maui Coral Reef Initiative (WMCRI)

Background and Purpose

Coral reefs are among the most productive and diverse ecosystems on earth. Additionally, coral reefs contribute to a healthy economy. They create habitat for many fish and invertebrate species with commercial value, support tourism and recreational industries, and shelter coastlines from storm damage. The near shore reefs of Hawaii's main islands are credited with generating about \$800 million in gross revenues annually — nearly 10% of the total revenues contributed by tourism to the state's economy.

Coral reef habitat is threatened by land-based sources of pollution (LBSP) transported into coastal waters by surface water runoff and groundwater seepage. The West Maui Coral Reef Initiative (WMCRI) is a focused effort of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to address LBSP threats arising from agricultural activities in western Maui watersheds. The initiative is providing assistance to agricultural producers and other non-federal land managers to improve management of agricultural runoff and other natural resource concerns.



Photo: Liz Foote, Coral Reef Alliance

Conservation Plan Assistance

The West Maui Coral Reef Initiative will deliver up to \$1.4 million between 2012 and 2014 for financial assistance to agricultural producers installing conservation practices in the western Maui watersheds. Funds are provided through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and initiative participants must meet eligibility requirements of these programs. NRCS conservation professionals work closely with agricultural producers to discuss production goals and identify conservation practices to address site-specific resource concerns.

Expected Benefits

The initiative is aiming to install best management practices for

2,500 acres of land having high risk for soil erosion concerns, and 260 acres of land with high risk of water quality degradation. The plans will include at least one core conservation practice especially relevant to reducing soil erosion and reversing water quality degradation in the West Maui environment. Core practices include:

- Conservation Cover
- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Cover Crop
- Herbaceous Weed Control
- Mulching
- Herbaceous Wind Barriers
- Grassed Waterway
- Vegetative Barrier
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
- Prescribed Grazing
- Brush Management
- Tree/Shrub Establishment

Supporting practices will be used to ensure proper function of core practices and to address site-specific resource concerns other than soil erosion and water quality degradation. NRCS estimates that practice installation can eliminate 9,400 tons of soil, 59,000 pounds of nitrogen, and 3,700 pounds of phosphorus from the annual pollutant load on western Maui reefs.

West Maui Partnerships

The authority and responsibility to address land-based sources of pollution falls on a multitude of government levels, so the United States Coral Reef Task Force

rolled out a Watershed Partnership Initiative in 2009 to enhance coordination of agency resources to address LBSP. In 2011, the Task Force selected the Ka'anapali-Kahekili area of Maui as the second of three areas in which to implement the Watershed Partnership approach. The figure on this page identifies boundaries for some of the partnership projects currently underway by federal and state agencies, with significant support coming from local organizations. The following website provides links to additional West Maui partnership project information:

www.kaanapaliwmp.com/other-efforts.html

More Information

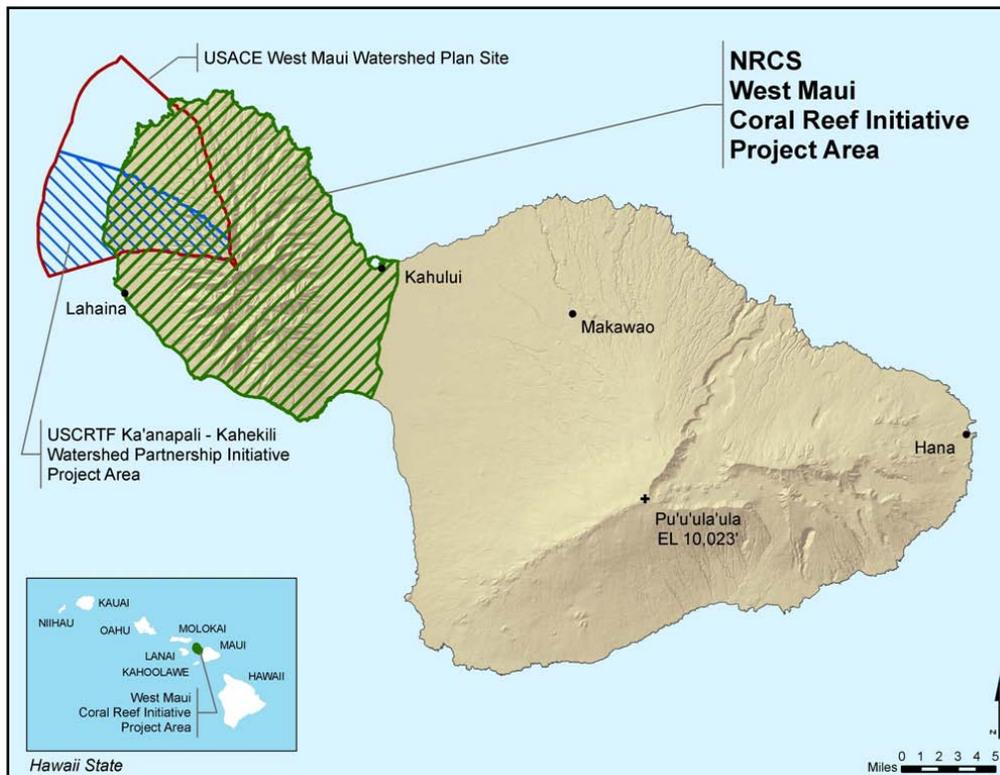
For more Information about the West Maui Coral Reef Initiative or other NRCS conservation efforts, please contact the NRCS Service Center on Maui:

77 Hookele Street, Suite 202
Kahului, Hawaii 96732
(808) 871-5500

Ranae Ganske-Cerizo,
District Conservationist

Additional information can be found on the website for the NRCS Pacific Islands Area:

www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov



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