



# News Release

*Pacific Islands External Affairs Office*

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## Habitat Restoration and Protection Grants Offered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

In an effort to reduce the conflicts between hunting programs and endangered species protection, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces the availability of funds to implement habitat restoration and protection actions across the State of Hawaii. The funding is available through the Hawaii ESA Community Conservation Initiative (HECCI). This unique Service program is designed to engage landowners and community groups in the implementation of conservation actions to benefit endangered and threatened (listed) species. The Service will be looking to fund projects that enhance public hunting opportunities, populations of listed species, or benefit both game and listed species such as wildland fire prevention.

“Thanks to the support offered by Senator Inouye in the appropriations process, this unique program continues to benefit both hunters and conservationists alike,” said Gina Shultz, acting field supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. “2004 marks the third year of funding for this important initiative. Last year, the program focused on the islands of Hawaii, Maui, Molokai, and Lanai resulting in 19 funded projects. This year, the program will expand to include Kauai and Oahu.”

Public informational meetings to describe the program and solicit project ideas are scheduled throughout the six-island region:

<u>Island</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Hawaii			
Hilo	January 27, 2004	7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Hilo State Office Bldg.
Kona	January 28, 2004	7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Yano Hall
Waimea	January 29, 2004	7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Waimea Community Center
Oahu	February 4, 2004	7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Cambell Estate Laulima Room
Kauai	February 6, 2004	7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Kalaheo Neighborhood Center
Maui			
Kula	February 9, 2004	7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Kula Community Center
Molokai	February 11, 2004	7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Mitchell Pauole Center
Lanai	February 12, 2004	7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Lanai Public Library

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“This program affords the Service the opportunity to support hunting locally while maintaining our responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act to protect and conserve listed species,” explained Shultz. “The challenge is great, but with the help of this program we hope to encourage working partnerships between hunters and conservationists that accommodates both interests. The “aina” or land is for the enjoyment of all, and it is the responsibility of all Hawaiians to work together to protect the islands and their wildlife.”

Conflicts between hunters and conservationists often arise when difficult to manage game mammal populations occur on landscapes that harbor vulnerable plant, invertebrate, and bird species. Game mammals reduce populations of endangered species by eating, trampling, and degrading native habitats.

As species continue to decline, State and Federal governments are forced to list more species as endangered (in the case of the Federal government), and designate their critical habitat. Landowners, politicians, and business people are concerned about the increasing social and economic costs of this government regulation.

“Although there are significant disagreements between hunters and conservationists, there are also important common goals for land management. Additionally, both sides realize that endangered species recovery will ultimately mean less regulation and more flexibility,” said Benton Pang, fish and wildlife biologist with the Service’s conservation partnerships program.

Pang cited last year’s projects as examples of the types of activities that can be funded through this grant program. Project activities include Humu ula access trail improvement for hikers and hunters (Hawaii), restore native habitats through fencing and native plant propagation in the Kahikinui Forest Reserve (Maui), and sustainable pig hunting and habitat protection through fencing in the Kahakuloa Game Management Area (Maui). These projects serve only as examples, and each local community should assess their own needs in a creative way.

Project proposals are welcome at the individual public meetings, or can be submitted directly to the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Honolulu office at 300 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 3-122, Box 50088, Honolulu, Hawaii 96850. Deadline for submissions is April 30, 2004. For more information, contact Benton Pang at 808/792-9400 or by electronic mail at [benton\\_pang@fws.gov](mailto:benton_pang@fws.gov).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.