

Conservation Client Gateway came through for local turfgrass operation

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As with anything new, it takes time to get adjusted. Online applications are no different. Sean Fong is one of few users in the islands to venture forth on a new online application now available to farmers and ranchers who want to interact with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and get help with conservation planning and financial assistance for practice implementation, from the comfort of their living room or barn.

Fong began working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop an effective irrigation system and other technical assistance at Hawaiian Turfgrass, a local sod company on Oahu. He was surprised to learn that NRCS was implementing a new online application called Conservation Client Gateway, or CCG, where customers could sign up for Farm Bill Programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This and other financial assistance programs are available to private landowners and operators to implement practices that help conserve and protect natural resources and improve efficiency while enhancing the environment. In addition to EQIP, Fong is also applying for the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program to improve water use.

Conservation Client Gateway is a secure online web application that allows NRCS clients to check the status of their conservation plans, apply for financial assistance, track payments, report completed practices, and electronically sign documents. If you are already familiar with the programs and services of NRCS, this online process is an additional feature to “come into a USDA Service Center” without leaving your home or office. The first step would be to visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway. This site will walk you through the process of getting what is called USDA eAuthentication. This is an account that may require a trip to your local USDA Service Center, but that may be the last trip you’ll need to make into the NRCS office for a long time. Once your email address is confirmed, you can activate your account for what is called “Level 2 eAuthentication.” After your account has been verified and validated, you will then be able to access your client information and interact online with your NRCS planner. There are many online services available on Conservation Client Gateway to assist you.

“It was rough at first but like anything else, once you get the hang of it, it becomes easy to use,” said Sean Fong of Hawaiian Turfgrass. “With his help, we were able to identify glitches and make adjustments to the system that will benefit future CCG users,” said Tony Ingersoll, NRCS Assistant Director for the Ecological Sciences Team.

EQIP and AMA are two programs authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. NRCS provides conservation technical assistance to private landowners in partnership with Soil and Water Conservation Districts. To learn more about the programs administered by NRCS in the Pacific Islands Area, visit www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.