

## West Maui Coral Reef Initiative

*Submitted by Adam Reed and Ranae Ganske-Cerizo*

In 2011, the coral reefs off of the coast of West Maui were identified as a priority site. As a result there are now multiple government agencies working together along with the public to identify strategies for improving the overall health of the West Maui Coral Reef. The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has dedicated funding specifically to West Maui for the implementation of water quality related conservation practices. This strategy is designed to prevent to loss of excessive nutrients, pesticides, and sediment from the land which can have a negative impact on the reef.

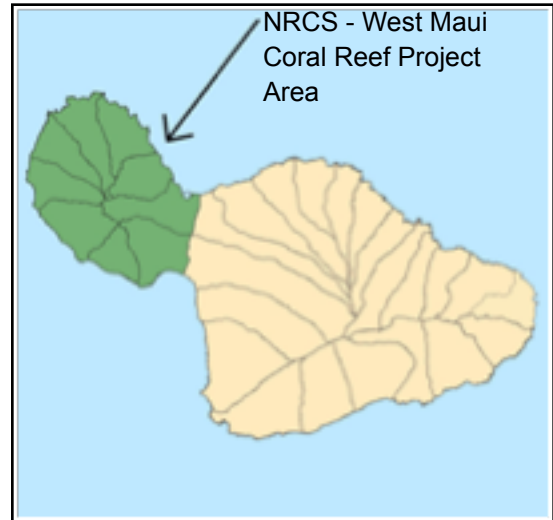
Excessive nutrients in aquatic ecosystems generally result in accelerated plant growth which is not a natural part of the ecosystem. NRCS is actively looking for agricultural producers who would be interested in improving their fertilizer management. A nutrient management plan follows the principles of applying the proper rate, form, timing, and placement of fertilizer. NRCS can also work with confined animal producers to address the collection, storage, and utilization of manure. This can have a mutual benefit to the producers and the environment.

NRCS also has risk assessment tools to work with agricultural producers to evaluate pesticides. These tools can be used to identify whether the pesticides are a risk to surface or ground waters and what mitigating techniques would be effective at reducing their risk. This information can be very helpful to farmers who are trying to make management decisions as to what pesticides would be effective at pest control while not posing excessive risk to the environment.

The control of soil erosion and sediment loss may be the most important water quality practice for the protection of the coral reef. If sediment loss is reduced then the amount of nutrients and pesticides is also generally reduced as they tend to adhere to the soil particles. There are number of conservation practices such as diversions, terraces and grassed waterways which address soil sediment loss.

If you would like to learn more about NRCS opportunities in West Maui please contact Ranae Ganske-Cerizo, District Conservationist, NRCS office in Kahului at 871-5500, ext 107. Other programs are available state wide, and to learn more interested individuals should contact their local NRCS office or visit [www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov).

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