

Harry Kim
Mayor



Alan R. Parker
Executive on Aging

County of Hawaii

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November 11, 2005

Thomas Dorr
Under Secretary, USDA Rural Development
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528
Alexandria, Virginia 22302

Dear Mr. Dorr:

Subject: Proposed Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) Regulations.

The County of Hawaii has successfully participated in the SFMNP since 2003. This past year over 1,800 low income elderly participated in this project. The feedback we have received from the participants of the program has been overwhelmingly positive. Many have voiced their appreciation for this program and hope for its continuation. It has been a win-win situation for both the local farmers and the elderly participants.

We are pleased that this project is being considered to become a permanent program to feed our low-income elderly. However, the proposed rule to limit this benefit to \$50 per person would have a very negative impact on our elderly participants. Should this proposal pass, the elderly would lose over \$106,000 annually. Therefore, we are oppose to the proposed rule change.

Instead, we urge you to drop the proposed \$50 cap or provide a grandfather clause in the final rules to permit Hawaii to use 2004 benefit levels as a monetary cap.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this very popular program for the past three years and for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Farm Bill legislation.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alan R. Parker".

for Alan R. Parker, Executive on Aging

Hawaii County is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.



An Area Agency on Aging

Comments by The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i

**Farm Bill Forum
Sheraton Keauhou Beach Resort
Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i
Saturday November 12, 2005**

Thank you Under Secretary Dorr and Deputy Undersecretary Carlson for this opportunity to provide input into the development of the Administration's 2007 Farm Bill proposal.

I am Rob Shallenberger, Hawai'i Island Program Director with The Nature Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy is an international nonprofit conservation organization with programs in every state and over 1 million members. Our mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on earth by *protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.*

The Conservancy's Hawai'i Chapter has been in operation for 25 years and we manage a network of 12 preserves encompassing about 32,000 acres across the main Hawaiian islands.

In addition, we work with 64 private and public colleagues in nine watershed partnerships throughout the state. These partnerships are working to protect about 1,000,000 acres of Hawaii's forested watersheds for their water resource and ecological values. Thirty-six of these partners are private landowners who recognize the critical importance of protecting their upland forests.

The Nature Conservancy and many of our landowner partners make use of important Farm Bill conservation programs. As you consider the future of conservation in farm policy we recommend the following:

- 1. Please continue and increase funding for USDA conservation programs. For example, The Nature Conservancy has taken advantage of nearly \$500,000 in WHIP cost share grants since 1999 to improve wildlife habitat in Hawai'i through fencing and invasive species control.**
- 2. Please look for ways to streamline the management burden of USDA conservation grants. While greatly appreciated, our staff and our partners report that USDA conservation grants are amongst the most cumbersome and time consuming to manage.**
- 3. Please approve the Hawaii Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Plan to assist landowners in managing lands that have marginal agricultural value but important natural resource value.**

- 4. Develop a forest and watershed program through the Forest Service's State and Private Forestry Program for protection and restoration of private non-industrial forest lands.**
- 5. Invasive species are one of the single greatest threats to our economy, environment, and the health and well-being of our citizens and visitors. Please:**
 - a. Prohibit planting of invasive species and increase incentives for planting native species in USDA conservation programs.**
 - b. Re-emphasize the federal responsibility of APHIS and U.S. Customs & Border Protection to prevent introduction and movement of invasive species.**
 - c. Give pest threats to natural areas equal priority to threats to agricultural production.**
 - d. Increase research funding to combat invasive species.**

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide comments.