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Southern Weekly - Wednesday, September 22, 2004

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Fouha serves as test project

Tree plantings aim to control erosion in the watershed

By Lena R. Quinata
For Southern Weekly

About 100 people took time on Sept. 4 -- primary election day -- to help rejuvenate a portion of the Fouha Watershed in Umatac.

There were more than 65 volunteers from the Guam Territorial Band and 15 from Oceanview Middle School's Harmony Leo Club. Also on hand were Jocelyn Bamba of the Marianas Resources Conservation and Development, a handful of dedicated conservationists from the Department of Agriculture's Forestry Division, Peter Bautista of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Mayor Tony Quinata of Umatac, along with a handful of his staff.

The volunteers worked for hours in the morning sun, putting about 1,000 seedlings into the hillside overlooking the Philippine Sea in an attempt to undo the damage that has been done to the hills of southern Guam and to its



Photos by Lena R. Quinata/For Southern Weekly

The steep hills of the Fouha Watershed in Umatac are being used as a demonstration project for erosion control in steep terrain.





watersheds.

A watershed is an area of land that collects and drains water. In the south of Guam, the Ugum Watershed Treatment Plant is responsible for providing water to villages from Talofoto to Umatac. During times of heavy rainfall, southern residents cringe at knowing that water service will likely be shut off. Too much rain could mean no water. This happens as a result of the clogging of the water filters and waterways of the treatment plant because of increased sedimentation brought down from the hills as a result of the heavy rainfall.

The No. 1 problem contributing to this is a simple one: fire.

Fires are hurting all the people in the south. After a fire, there is no vegetation to bind the soil in the hills. The rains come and bring the loose sediment down the length of the watershed, killing organisms in rivers, destroying reefs and chasing the fish away. Moreover, landslides, mudslides and increased flooding can also happen because of fires -- not to mention the danger to homes and private property, and the loss of aesthetic beauty, something we must preserve to entice more tourism.

Fires are also harming the watersheds in Umatac. Because of its steep hills, Marianas Resources Conservation and Development and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are using the Fouha Watershed in Umatac as a demonstration project for erosion control on steep terrain. If successful, it will serve as a guide for similar erosion control techniques that could be used in the Ugum Watershed.

Fires are hurting the land and its people. The absolute best thing that any southern resident can do to help is not to burn. More importantly, share your knowledge that the effects of fires are so very



Volunteers from the Department of Agriculture's Forestry Division help plant seedlings in the Fouha Watershed Sept. 4, which will hopefully help mitigate erosion and runoff.



Photos by Lena R. Quinata/For Southern Weekly


Hard work: Some of the approximately 100 volunteers who showed up at Fouha Watershed to plant seedlings to mitigate erosion toil under the hot southern sun.



Seedlings of hope: Youth volunteers look over some of the tree seedlings planted in

harmful to the land and to its people.

Fouha Watershed Sept. 4. The watershed is being used as a testing ground for steep terrain soil erosion control.

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