



HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND — NRCS Trains Haitians in the Science & Art of Soil Surveys...page 5



IN THIS ISSUE



President's Message

Dear NOPHNCSE members,

First of all, I want to thank you for putting your confidence in me and for wanting me to serve as your President for another term. Second, I want to welcome our new council members and thank them for taking time from their busy schedules to be part of our National Council. Together, we will continue working toward reaching our goals. Last, but not least, a big THANK YOU to our exiting council members. They

have worked hard for the last two years to make changes and move NOPHNCSE forward. One of our achievements under this council is the new regional proposal for NOPHNCSE members to do outreach. We approved 3 of 3 regional proposals. They all have been a big success. Our newsletter received a facelift, making it more interactive. A big thanks to Kristie Wiley for taking time to put together an awesome newsletter. We created our Facebook page thanks to Lori Valadez's leadership and time. The USDA Connect Community Page was developed to host our most important documents and Power Points from our webinars and meetings.

We hosted a training webinar as part of the East Region's Outreach and Professional Development Workshop. This webinar reached many members and prospective members across the nation. For those interested in watching the recording of this webinar please go to:

<https://connections.usda.gov/communities/service/html/communityview>.

Under the leadership of Luis Hernandez, we will be reinstituting the membership awards and Farmer of the Year award. Stay tuned for more information coming in the next month or so.

I am looking into hosting our annual business meeting in November or December. As part of this business meeting, I would like to host another webinar. If you have a topic that you would like us to discuss or to provide training, please send your request to your regional representative. Stay tuned for time and dates.

Please reach out to your regional representatives or any council member for any needs and ideas.

Happy Fall to all of you...(think "Pumpkin Spice Latte!")

Astrid Martinez
NOPHNCSE President



Secretary Vilsack and NHLA Sign Landmark Agreement...page 2



Jim Wells County Ranch Reaps Benefits of Conservation Efforts...page 8



NOPHNCSE East Region Outreach and Professional Development Workshop...page 9

Also in this issue...

Michael Margo is Elected NOPHNCSE Executive Vice President.....2

Janella Cruz is Elected NOPHNCSE Secretary.....3

Latina Author Searches for the Root of "Hispanic" vs "Latino" Identity.....4

News from Around the Regions.....6

Hispanic Heritage Month.....10

State Hispanic Emphasis Program Managers.....11

More Latinos on Farms Move from Fields to Office.....12

Secretary Vilsack and NHLA Sign Landmark Agreement

by Michael Martinez, Special Assistant, Washington, D.C.

In furtherance of USDA's Cultural Transformation, Secretary Tom Vilsack and Hector Sanchez, Chair of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), signed a Memorandum of Understanding on June 5 that "seeks to promote equality of opportunity in USDA policies and programs, as well as access to employment and career enhancement opportunities." The MOU prioritizes the realization of USDA as an employer of choice for Hispanics, "in order to promote the recruitment, hiring, and retention of a diverse workforce at all levels."



Signing Ceremony—Secretary Vilsack with USDA General Counsel Ramona Romero, NHLA Chair Hector Sanchez, and Roger Rivera of the National Hispanic Environmental Council.

delivery, the MOU embraces the inclusion of Hispanics and removal of barriers to equal employment opportunity and advancement.

The recently signed MOU establishes a formal framework for substantive, results-oriented dialogue and engagement between NHLA and USDA. The agreement seeks to address core issues for Latinos and USDA such as:

- Recruitment, retention, and promotion issues, including Latino representation at all levels of employment;
- Minority business contracting;
- Student/youth programs;
- Latino representation on Boards and Commissions;
- Expansion and support of employee development activities and assignments to aid employee retention and expand promotion opportunities; and
- Overall USDA outreach to Hispanics.

The MOU ([available online here](#)) emphasizes collaboration to achieve real, measurable progress with tangible workplace results for Latinos. In 2012, Hispanics in the federal workforce increased a mere .1 percent—from 8.1 percent to 8.2 percent—of the nearly 2 million federal government employees. Moving well beyond diversity in the workplace and program

...continued on page 3

Michael Margo is Elected Executive VP



Michael is originally from Rio Grande City, Texas, a small border town in southern Texas. He received

his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Rangeland Ecology and Management from Texas A&M University. He was introduced to NOPHNRCSE as a student at the 2000 annual conference in Washington, D.C.

Michael is leading the development and coordination of ecological sites with soil surveys in Marfa, Texas. He has been in Marfa for over eight years. He is also a member of the NRCS foreign advisory team and has presented several presentations on ecological site concepts and development in Guadalajara, Mexico City, and Aguascalientes, Mexico.

Prior to arriving in Marfa, Michael spent two years with the National Park Service as a Supervisory Biological Science Technician at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado and two years as an AmeriCorps volunteer promoting environmental awareness issues in Texas' Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Michael's leadership skills include Planning Committee Co-Chair for the 2014 Texas Section Society for Rangeland Management annual meeting, Alpine/Marfa, Texas; Vice President of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, Texas A&M Chapter, 1999-2000; and Public Relations Chairman for the Rio Grande City Sesquicentennial Commission, 1998. He also served as chairman of the Commercial Livestock Committee, Starr County Youth Fair, 1998.

Landmark Agreement continued...

Michael Martinez, Special Assistant, USDA in Washington, D.C.

Just as important, this new partnership serves as a model that can be replicated with other federal departments. This MOU builds on President Obama's Diversity and Inclusion [Executive Order](#) (18 AUG 2011), which calls on the federal government to "create a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable individuals to participate to their full potential." It also furthers a 16 OCT 2000 [Executive Order](#) on Hispanic employment, which directs departments to, among other things, "promote participation of Hispanic employees in management, leadership, and career development programs."

The goal of Cultural Transformation is to get everyone at USDA— from the Under Secretaries to employees at every grade level, in every location— to work to ensure that USDA is a place where there's equity of opportunity for all employees and everyone who works here is empowered to reach their full potential. Only then can USDA provide its customers with exceptional service in an equitable manner. Successful transformation includes:

- A commitment by USDA employees to improve USDA's past and future record on Civil Rights, including expanded outreach efforts to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers;
- Systems of accountability that encourage all employees to achieve high standards of performance and customer service;
- A renewed commitment to create diversity in the workforce and succession planning;
- Striving to make USDA a premier organization and model employer. We will be open, responsive, collaborative, transparent, and highly-effective in implementing our many missions; and
- Employees being respectful of the diversity of our workforce and constituencies. The workforce will be engaged and motivated, empowered to succeed, and trained to meet future challenges.

Janella Cruz is Elected NOPHNRCS Secretary



Janella was born and raised in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, one of the most populated cities located on the northeast part of the

island. She started college in San Juan, Puerto Rico and received a bachelor's degree in environmental science with a minor in chemistry from Universidad Metropolitana. Afterwards, she started graduate school at New Mexico State University, studied soil science in the plant and environmental sciences program, and graduated with a Master of Science in Agronomy and a minor in environmental management. During graduate school, Janella was active in the Rotaract, a community service charter organization. After one year has a Rotaract member, she was elected to be the International Service Director (2005-2006), focusing on special projects in Centro Santa Catalina, Juarez, Mexico. In 2006, the organization received an award for Outstanding International Community Service Project representing the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean.

In 2009, Janella started her professional career with NRCS as a soil scientist in Rapid City, South Dakota. In 2010, Janella became a member of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees. Janella transferred to Arizona in 2011 and currently works in the Flagstaff soil survey office. She continues to improve her professional skills and enjoys mentoring student interns.

[Read more about Janella on page 4...](#)

Latina Author Searches for the Root of “Hispanic” vs “Latino” Identity

Source: [Latina Lista](#)

Mexican American author and UC Berkeley sociologist G. Cristina Mora never realized the diversity of “Hispanics” until she moved out of her Los Angeles neighborhood, where 100 percent of her neighbors were families who could trace their lineage back to different states of Mexico, to the East Coast where people mistook her for Puerto Rican.

It was during this time that she thought about the evolution of the Hispanic and Latino labels and how they’ve come to represent one group that is far from homogenous. In her book, “Making Hispanics: How Activists, Bureaucrats, and Media Constructed a New America” (University of Chicago Press), Mora explores how the different nationalities that fall under the “Hispanic” label were able to unite into one group and, in turn, increase their political and social clout with the government and corporate America.

In an interview with UC Berkeley’s media department, Mora answers a range of questions that explain her motivation to write her book and how her research lead her to understand the difference between “Latino” and “Hispanic.”

(The following is an excerpt from the UC Berkeley interview)

What’s the gist of your book?

It’s a story about people being disadvantaged, being a statistically reliable group and being consumers. All of these elements came together in an almost perfect storm in the 1970s when activists, the media and government bureaucrats learned how to work together to put out this pan-ethnic message.

How did this movement start?

It was the activists who first went to the Census Bureau and said, ‘You have got to create a category. You have got to distinguish us from whites.’ Up until that time, the Census Bureau mainly grouped Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans in the same category as Irish and Italian, and that became a real problem because it couldn’t show the government the poverty rates between Mexicans and whites. There was pushback on how large and how broad the category could be, but ultimately, a Hispanic category was established.

What do Hispanics have in common other than the Spanish language?

In many cases, they don’t even have that in common. You have the person whose great-grandmother came from Argentina, but has never visited Latin America, and does not speak Spanish, lumped into the exact same category as a Guatemalan who just crossed the U.S. border. One argument the book makes is that in order for all these government, market and political interests to come together, the category had to become broader in order to fit in all these ideas about Hispanics being consumers, or Hispanics being disadvantaged people.

Over time, the Hispanic identity has become based on cultural generalities such as ‘We all love our

Janella Cruz continued...

In the spring of 2013, she was elected to serve as the Area 1 Representative for the Civil Rights Advisory Committee in Arizona. Throughout her educational and professional career, Janella has been active in civil rights and outreach—serving on the civil rights committee, coordinating outreach support for family food shelters in Arizona, mentoring, and managing community-based projects for women and the underprivileged.

NOPHNRCSE Members Elect Three New Regional Representatives

East Region Representative

Gisela Carmenaty, Pennsylvania

Midwest Region Representative

Rocemi Morales, Ohio

Northern Plains Region Representative

Roberto Luciano, North Dakota

Read more about [Gisela](#), [Rocemi](#), and [Roberto](#) in the regional section of *La Voz*, starting on page 6.

families. We are all religious and we all have some connection to the Spanish language however far back that may be.’ That’s a weakness and a strength. It was because of that ambiguity that we have the large numbers who identify as Hispanic and who have made advances. But when you have such a broad and opaque category it’s hard to elicit and sustain passion and commitment.

Helping People Help the Land

Lending Our Neighbors a Helping Hand: NRCS Trains Haitians in the Science and Art of Soil Surveys

by Manuel Matos, Soil Scientist, Caribbean Area



NRCS soil scientists teach Haitian trainees about clod making and bulk density labeling.



NRCS soil scientists and Haitian trainees sampling one of the sites.



Manuel Matos (left) teaches a trainee to describe color and clay films for the pedon descriptions.

Caribbean Area NRCS MLRA Soil Survey Leader, Manuel Matos, had the unique opportunity to work with a group of NRCS soil scientists leading a pilot soil survey project of 3,000 hectares in the Cul-de-Sac Area of Haiti. The project was part of a joint program between the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), NRCS, Direction Rurale Forestière et du Sol (DRFS) of the Ministry of Agriculture (MARNDR), Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine (FAMV), and the USAID-funded WINNER soils laboratory and training facility at Bas Boen.

The goal of the project is to build capacity within MARNDR to enable Haitian soil scientists to conduct a detailed soil survey of the entire country. Other project objectives are to:

- develop skills to plan, conduct, and disseminate soils information;
- demonstrate the usefulness of soil surveys in resource planning and management; and
- publish online soil survey maps and a hard-copy soil survey that will include interpretations for such uses as crops, urban development, erosion, and soil degradation; land use capability and limitations; and recommended management practices.

The participation of NRCS soil scientists was a continuation of training activities that began in the summer of 2013 during the visit of a Haitian delegation to the USDA–NRCS National Soil Survey Center in Lincoln, Nebraska.

From March 23 to April 1, the group of scientists worked with 15 Haitian soil scientist trainees to select, describe, classify, and sample soils. As part of the project, 13 soil characterization samples were collected for detailed analysis. This two-week assignment was the final phase of field work in the pilot soil survey project. The team used the most current soil survey procedures in order to provide Haitian scientists with soil survey information needed for agricultural, conservation, engineering, and land use planning applications. For more information, contact MLRA Soil Survey Leader, Manuel Matos, at 787-831-3416 x. 108.

News from Around the Regions

In each issue of *La Voz* we would like to feature news from each region. Tell us about the exciting things happening in your area. Spotlight a new member. Share your volunteer experience. Tell us what is unique about your state. We want to hear from you! Work with your regional representative to ensure your region is featured in each issue of *La Voz*.

CARIBBEAN AREA

Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands

USDA Releases 2012 Puerto Rico Census of Agriculture



The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released the 2012 Census of Agriculture for Puerto Rico on June 27. This release marks more than a century of agriculture census data collection in Puerto Rico, where the first agriculture census was conducted in 1910.

“The Census is the leading source of statistics about Puerto Rico’s agricultural production and the only source of consistent, comparable data at the municipio level,” said NASS Administrator Joseph T. Reilly. “Conducted in cooperation with the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture and the University of Puerto Rico Extension Service, the 2012 Census of Agriculture provides information on the area’s unique agriculture industry that is gathered at the local level.”

You can download a pdf version of the 2012 Puerto Rico Census of Agriculture from: www.agcensus.usda.gov.

EAST REGION

Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia

Meet East Region Representative Gisela M. Carmenaty Martinez

Gisela M. Carmenaty Martinez has been working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service for over 3 years. Currently, she serves as a soil conservationist for Pennsylvania at the Greensburg Field Office in Westmoreland County. She assumed her duties at this location on July 28, 2014.



Ms. Carmenaty began her career with the USDA NRCS in the summer of 2010 in the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) at Carrington, N.D. After that summer, she went back to Puerto Rico for her last semester of college, and for three months during that time, worked at the Mayaguez Field Office as an Earth Team Volunteer. After graduation, she came back to the agency as a full-time soil conservationist in Langdon, N.D. and was there from February 2011 until May 2012. Ms. Carmenaty then transferred to the Perkasié Field Office as a soil conservationist trainee for a little over two years.

Born and raised in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, Ms. Carmenaty graduated from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez campus, with a degree in livestock industries. In her spare time, she likes to spend time with her husband and two dogs, and enjoys exploring the city of Pittsburgh since they just moved there this summer.

MIDWEST REGION

*Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota,
Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin*

Rocemi Morales is Elected Regional Representative for the Midwest



Rocemi started her NRCS career in 2003 as a soil conservationist summer trainee in Ohio with the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). She worked in Medina and Wayne counties during the summer, and completed a second summer position before accepting a full-time position as a soil conservationist in Ashland, Ohio.

In 2005, Rocemi became the grassland specialist for northwest Ohio, and in 2006 she became the watershed coordinator for Huron-Vermillion CSP watershed, while still working on her grassland specialist duties. Rocemi became a district conservationist for Erie County, Ohio in 2008. In addition, she was selected as HEPM and served in that position until 2012. In 2013, Rocemi became a resource conservationist when NRCS merged Erie and Huron counties. In January 2014, Rocemi took a lateral move to Lorain and Median counties as a resource conservationist.

Rocemi holds a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Puerto Rico, and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Phoenix.

NORTHERN PLAINS REGION

*Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska,
North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming*

Roberto Luciano is Elected Northern Plains Regional Representative



Roberto Luciano is from Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. He was raised on a small fruit farm in the mountains of Mayaguez. Roberto's first leanings toward agriculture systems began after watching and helping his dad work on the farm. By the age of 14, a science fair project with tissue culture banana trees opened his mind to study agriculture. After high school, Roberto was accepted at the University of Puerto Rico under the Crop Protection Department. During college, he had the opportunity to present lectures and make chemical demonstrations in schools for Science on Wheels Educational Center under the Department of Chemistry.

Roberto graduated from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus with a degree in agronomy and entered North Dakota State University in Fargo, N.D. as a plant science graduate student in 2008. During graduate school, he became familiar with the agricultural systems in the Northern Plains and with some farming issues associate with crop yield reduction. He had the opportunity to present part of his research to the scientific community and farmers in professional meetings in North Dakota and Hawaii.

On December 2010, Roberto was hired as a soil conservationist for USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Forman, N.D. On April 2013, he was hired as a district conservationist in Garrison, N.D. Presently, Roberto is putting his knowledge in conservation practices in West McLean County and serving as the Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager for North Dakota USDA-NRCS.

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas

Jim Wells County Ranch Reaps Benefits of Conservation Efforts

by Melissa Blair, Public Affairs Specialist, Texas NRCS

Driving through the Trejo Ranch, patches of green grass almost taller than the pickup puts a big smile on the faces of Jim Wells County ranchers, Arnold and Ida Trejo, who less than a year ago were destocking their cattle due to drought. Today, the grassy fields and the stockpile of hay show the benefits of the Trejo's conservation efforts of resting the land along with keeping forage residue on the ground that helped absorb the timely rains.



Although Trejo had experience with ranching with his uncle and his brother, he knew that there was a lot to learn to be successful on his operation. He was running about 174 head, which was way too many, as evidenced by the lack of grass on the ranch. He and his wife voluntarily sought out the resources and knowledge of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and District Conservationist Bruce Healy to help them improve the condition of their land.

"NRCS is something beautiful that government has done; it's a beautiful feeling knowing that someone has your back and gives a darn about you and your land and not just because it's their job," said Arnold. "Through our district conservationist, Bruce Healy, sharing, guiding, and opening our eyes to what can be done at the ranch, we have developed a respect and a friendship."

Read the full story at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/tx/home>

SOUTHEAST REGION

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia

Hispanic NRCS Employees Participate in Soil Survey Training

by Joxelle Velazquez-Garcia, Soil Scientist, Mississippi



Joxelle Velazquez-Garcia, Soil Scientist with the NRCS in Mississippi, gave a presentation about Digital Soil Survey to a GIS class at Alcorn State University in Lorman, Mississippi.



Four Hispanic employees attend Basic Soil Survey Training held at the National Soil Survey Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. Luis Alvarez, Soil Scientist (WY); Pamela Herrera-Olivas, Wildlife Biologist (NM); Luis Garcia, Ecological Site Specialist (NM); and Joxelle Velazquez-Garcia, Soil Scientist (MS).

WEST REGION

Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho,
New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon,
Utah, and Washington

Quotes to Ponder

Submitted by

Mary Sanchez, West Region
Representative

***Progress begins with the belief that
what is necessary is possible.***

— Norman Cousins

***The perfect journey is circular—the joy
of departure and the joy of return.***

— Dino Basili

***When patterns are broken, new
worlds can emerge.***

— Tuli Kupferberg

***Wisdom is the reward you get for a
lifetime of listening when you'd have
preferred to talk.***

— Doug Larson

***Do it right and do it well, but not
always to perfection.***

—unknown

***The first step in solving a problem is to
tell someone about it.***

— John Peter Flynn

Don't find fault. Find a remedy.

— Henry Ford

***Certainty is inverse proportional to
knowledge.***

— unknown

***Blessed are the flexible, for they will
not be bent out of shape.***

—unknown

***If you can't help someone in life, then
what is life living for.***

— Ed Hooper

NOPHNRCSE Provides Outreach to the NYC Institute and Professional Development Training to NRCS Employees

by Heydsha R. Cordero, Acting National HEPM and
Gisela Carmenty, Soil Conservationist, Pennsylvania



On the afternoon of June 29, eight members of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNRCSE) East Region collaborated with the National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC) and attended the New York City Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute on Staten Island, N.Y. The Institute is designed to help build the

environmental leaders and professionals of tomorrow by educating, engaging, and inspiring youth, especially Latinos/Hispanic and other minorities, on a range of environmental and natural resource issues. During the event, NOPHNRCSE sponsored a field tour and provided hands-on training to 22 inner city students, 17-19 years of age, from Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, California, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Puerto Rico. The field tour was located at Gericke Farm on Staten Island, N.Y.

Gericke Farm was established in the late 1700s and was the last working farm on Staten Island when it was sold to the State of New York in 1979. Today, the farm is used primarily for educational purposes. NOPHNRCSE members established four field stations on the farm to teach the students about the work of NRCS. Field stations included: Soil Health, Irrigation, Conservation Planning, and Careers in Conservation.



Edwin Muñiz, NJ Assistant State Soil Scientist, explains how ground penetrating radar is used in soil survey while students receive hands-on experience.

The "Soil Health" station was led by Edwin Muñiz, Assistant State Soil Scientist in New Jersey, and assisted by Luis Hernandez, Soil Survey Regional Director in Amherst, Massachusetts. The students were enthralled with the high-tech equipment that was demonstrated. One such equipment was the Delta X-Ray Geochemistry Soil Analyzer, which uses x-rays to penetrate the soil and detect pollutants. The principles of soil chemistry, texture, and the different relationships that crops have with the soil were also discussed.

...continued on page 10



Rubén Pérez, Soil Conservationist/Irrigation Specialist, NJ, with students at the Irrigation and Engineering station.



Noel Soto, Soil Conservationist- PA, teaching a student how to use a clinometer.



(L to R) Bianca Diaz Deliz, Soil Conservationist, ME and Gisela Carmenaty, Soil Conservationist, PA, help a student at the Conservation Planning station.



Astrid Martinez, NOPHNRCE President and Wyoming State Conservationist, shares her NRCS experience with the students.

Ruben Perez, Soil Conservationist and Irrigation Specialist in New Jersey, led the “Irrigation and Engineering” station. Ruben showed the students a small scale of an irrigation system and demonstrated how the water table influences the water availability for crops.

The “Conservation Planning” station was led by Noel Soto, Soil Conservationist in Pennsylvania, and assisted by Bianca Diaz and Gisela Carmenaty, Soil Conservationists in Maine and Pennsylvania, respectively. The students learned about water quality and were introduced to the clinometer and a dumpy level that are used in the field.

Last, but not least, was the “Careers in Conservation” station led by Astrid Martinez, NOPHNRCE President and Wyoming State Conservationist. Astrid led a roundtable discussion on the various career opportunities with NRCS. Students were also provided a packet of information about NRCS careers and programs and had an opportunity to ask questions about NRCS.

On Monday June 30, after the conclusion of activities with the Institute, NOPHNRCE sponsored a professional development training session for NRCS employees. This training was hosted by Carrie Mosley, New Jersey State Conservationist, and moderated by Astrid Martinez. The training was offered to NRCS employees across the country via video telephone conference.

The event planning team included: Gisela Carmenaty (PA), Maria Collazo (NJ), Zenik Crespo (NY), Tim Garrahan (DE), Irma Hernandez (NHQ), Edwin Muniz (NJ), Noel Soto (PA), and Kristina Wiley (MA)

photos taken by Kristina Wiley, East Region Outreach and Professional Development Workshop Coordinator

Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15 to October 15



Hispanics have had a profound and positive influence on our country through their strong commitment

to family, faith, hard work, and service. They have enhanced and shaped our national character with centuries-old traditions that reflect the multiethnic and multicultural customs of their community.

During National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15) we recognize the contributions made and the important presence of Hispanic and Latino Americans to the United States and celebrate their heritage and culture.

Hispanic Heritage Month, whose roots go back to 1968, begins each year on September 15, the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Mexico, Chile and Belize also celebrate their independence days during this period and Columbus Day (Día de la Raza) is October 12.

What are you doing to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month? We'd love to hear from you. Share your story on the NOPHNRCE Facebook group or on the USDA Connect NOPHNRCE Community.

State Hispanic Emphasis Program Managers

Alabama

Luis.Cruz-Arroyo@al.usda.gov

Alaska

samia.savell@ak.usda.gov

Arizona

Melissa.Martinez@az.usda.gov

Arkansas

Dawn.Fox@ar.usda.gov

California

Tomas.Aguilar-Campos@ca.usda.gov

Colorado

donald.valdez@co.usda.gov

Connecticut

Fernando.Rincon@ct.usda.gov

Delaware

brooke.brittingham@de.usda.gov

Florida

Karyn.Ruiz-Toro@fl.usda.gov

Georgia

Chris.Groskreutz@ga.usda.gov

Hawaii

kara.nelson@hi.usda.gov

Idaho

denise.adkins@id.usda.gov

Illinois

Kelly.German@il.usda.gov

Indiana

lindsay.martinez@in.usda.gov

Iowa

Renae.Nicholson@ia.usda.gov

Kansas

Dwayne.Rice@ks.usda.gov
Xiomara.Tryban@ks.usda.gov

Kentucky

carlos.roda@ky.usda.gov

Louisiana

Miki.Buller@la.usda.gov

Maine

chris.jones@me.usda.gov

Maryland

Ramon.Ortiz@md.usda.gov

Massachusetts

luis.laracuenta@ma.usda.gov

Michigan

linda.ortiz@mi.usda.gov

Minnesota

Leslie.Diazalvarez@mn.usda.gov

Mississippi

Joxelle.Velazquez@ms.usda.gov

Missouri

Brendaly.RodriguezMunoz@mo.usda.gov

Montana

Matthew.Whithed@mt.usda.gov

Nebraska

anna.ferguson@ne.usda.gov

Nevada

carmella.apodaca@nv.usda.gov

New Hampshire

shari.cohen@nh.usda.gov

New Jersey

Maria.Collazo@nj.usda.gov

New Mexico

daryl.nieto@nm.usda.gov

New York

zenik.crespo@ny.usda.gov

North Carolina

Milton.Cortes@nc.usda.gov

North Dakota

Roberto.Luciano@nd.usda.gov

Ohio

Angel.Arehart@oh.usda.gov

Oklahoma

Lynnette.Dominguez@ok.usda.gov

Oregon

garrett.duyck@or.usda.gov

Pennsylvania

Noel.Soto@pa.usda.gov

Puerto Rico

rafael.sierra-castro@pr.usda.gov

Rhode Island

luis.laracuenta@ma.usda.gov

South Carolina

Carl.Wright@sc.usda.gov

South Dakota

matthew.cavenee@sd.usda.gov

Tennessee

Haydee.Thillet@tn.usda.gov

Texas

Flavio.Garza@tx.usda.gov

Utah

andrew.wallace@ut.usda.gov

Vermont

Bob.Thompson@vt.usda.gov

Virginia

Gayle.Veney@va.usda.gov

Washington

donald.hanson@wa.usda.gov

West Virginia

Adriana.Jimenez.Lopez@wv.usda.gov

Wisconsin

Natalie.Irizarry@wi.usda.gov

Wyoming

Katelyn.schade@wy.usda.gov

More Latinos on Farms Move from Fields to Office

by Tanzina Vega, New York Times
(published online Aug. 16, 2014)

When he was 15, an immigration raid at a Japanese flower nursery turned Arturo Flores's life around.

The owners needed a new group of workers to replace the ones removed by immigration officials, and Mr. Flores landed a job cutting flowers. He slowly worked his way up to packaging and delivering them. In the mid-1980s he got a call from two businessmen looking to start their own cut-flower business. They asked him to manage deliveries and distribution. Today Mr. Flores, 50, is the president of Central California Flower Growers in Watsonville, a distributor in Santa Cruz County that sells more than 100 varieties of flowers and other plants.

Farming businesses in the United States are still dominated by whites, but Mr. Flores (whose last name means "flowers" in English) is one of a growing number of Latinos who own or operate farms in the country. While the overall number of farms in the United States decreased by 4 percent from 2007 to 2012, during the same period the number of farms run by Hispanics increased by 21 percent to 67,000 from 55,570, according to data released in May

from the government's 2012 census of agriculture. The numbers signaled a small but consistent pattern of growth in agribusiness among Latinos, many of whom have gone from working in the fields to sitting in the head offices.

Many, like Mr. Flores, emigrated from Mexico in the 1970s and '80s and worked their way up from picking produce to managing the business. They have classic American bootstrap stories of grit, determination and a little bit of luck. Some own the land they till while others rent. Many employ Mexicans whose language and job duties they understand intimately.

Salvador Vasquez, 56, who owns Vas Vision Berry Farms, a berry grower for Driscoll's in Watsonville, came to the United States from Mexico when he was 11. Mr. Vasquez said it was his ability to communicate in English and Spanish with the workers and the supervisors on the farms in Watsonville that helped him move up from being a fruit picker to becoming a supervisor.

But it was not an easy ascent. In 1989, Mr. Vasquez worked as a supervisor during the day and in the fields at night. "If I slept nine hours in five days it was a lot," he said.

By the 1990s, he supervised more than 2,500 farm employees, and by 2000 he had become part owner of the business. "You have to work hard for the American dream, but it is possible to achieve," he said.

Read the full article online at:
[The New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com)

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Articles may be sent via email as either an MS Word attachment saved as text only, or pasted directly into your email message.

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The deadline for submitting articles for the Winter issue of **La Voz** is December 15, 2014.