



# La Voz

Newsletter

June 2009

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## **President's Message**

*Luis Hernandez, President*



Saludos!

August is just around the corner. Are you ready for the 2009 NOPHNCSE annual training conference? Have you made hotel reservations? Hopefully yes, but if not, July 6 is the early-bird registration deadline.

A few weeks ago I traveled to Washington, D.C., and met with NRCS Upper Management. I articulated NOPHNCSE mission and provided a new vision for collaboration with NRCS. I shared information on Hispanic population demographics, projections, challenges and opportunities for NRCS. I also met with NRCS International Programs Division. I thank Angel Figueroa who facilitated this meeting with

International Programs Division. We discussed potential international work opportunities for NOPHNCSE members.

Let me take a few lines to share what's happening in the NOPHNCSE world:

- Mario Morales, Vice President, resigned to his position with NOPHNCSE. I thank Mario for all the hard work, dedication and contributions to NOPHNCSE mission. Mario will continue helping the organization in a different capacity. Gilbert Guerrero is acting Vice President until membership elects a Vice President through the elections process.
- A new NOPHNCSE Website is in the make and hopefully you will see a demo during business meeting in Philadelphia. Carmen Ortiz, Lori Valadez and other members are leading this effort. The final product will be a modern website with many new tools for the membership.
- The 2010 NOPHNCSE Conference will be held in Kansas City, Kansas. This conference will be a joint effort among NOPHNCSE, NOPBNCSE, APIO and the Civil Rights Division. Please mark you calendar for the week of April 5 – 9, 2010. More information will be presented in Philadelphia.
- The NOPHNCSE History project is undergoing under the leadership of Humberto Hernandez and the Historical Perspectives Committee. This project is the early stages and final product will be a professional document that captures the history of NOPHNCSE. More information will be presented in Philadelphia.
- NEDC is designing a formal course on “Working Effectively with Hispanic Ranchers and Farmers”. The training will be designed to equip NRCS workforce with the information and skills needed to provide the best technical and administrative services to Hispanic farmers and ranchers across the nation. NOPHNCSE supports this NEDC initiative and is fully engaged in the design.

I thank 2009 conference planning committee, standing committees and the National Council for their support, commitment and contributions to NOPHNCSE mission. I wish to see each of you in Philadelphia. That's going to be one of the best conferences in the sixteen years of our existence. I invite you to be part of this historical event.

Nos Vemos en Philadelphia!!

## **NOPHNRCSE Training Conference, Philadelphia, PA**

*Amanda Hasemeier, Conference Planning Committee*

16<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Conference  
Philadelphia,  
August 3 – 6, 2009  
Radisson Plaza-

*Together,  
Help the Land  
Juntos,  
Personas a Cuidar la Tierra*



NOPHNRCSE Training  
Pennsylvania  
Warwick Hotel Philadelphia

*Helping People*

*Ayudando a las*

Time to get registered for the conference and make your hotel reservations at the Radisson Plaza-Warwick Hotel in the great City of Brotherly Love!! Make your plans to attend this year's training conference! Early-bird registration deadline is July 6<sup>th</sup>.

Registration forms and information about the conference and the City of Philadelphia, including a draft program agenda, can be found at the NOPHNRCSE website - <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic>

IMPORTANT NOTE: Use the telephone number for the hotel from the registration form OR go directly to the hotel website (see below) to make your reservations online.

Registration questions can be addressed to Carmen Ortiz - [carmen.ortiz@ca.usda.gov](mailto:carmen.ortiz@ca.usda.gov).

The Radisson Plaza - Warwick Hotel Philadelphia is taking reservations under "NOPHNRCSE USDA". The hotel has agreed to lower the per diem rate to \$135.00 a night for a double or single. Go on-line to check it out or make your reservations --

<http://www.radisson.com/nophnrcse>.

1701 Locust Street, Philadelphia PA 19103

**Reservations:** (888) 201-1718 US

**Telephone:** (215) 735-6000

Ground Transportation information:

Airport arrivals: Lady Liberty Transportation, 1-215-724-8888 offers a \$10.00 ride to center city hotels.

Amtrak: arrives at the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station in Philadelphia. Local train will take you to the Suburban station with no further charge, first stop, but the Radisson is several blocks away. Taking a cab is the most convenient way to get to the hotel from the train station.

Driving: The hotel has a valet parking service for \$30.00 a day or park-your-own for \$28.00. Other privately operated garages within walking distance of hotel.

To view the latest program draft, visit the NOPHNRCSE Web site at [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/2009\\_conf/2009\\_conf\\_info.html#confprog](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/2009_conf/2009_conf_info.html#confprog)

Below you will find a list of the Planning Committee Chairs. Please contact anyone on the list if you have any questions or would like to help out. Now that we are getting close to the conference time and if anyone is looking to volunteer, I encourage you to call one of the names below.

Conference Chair: Amanda Hasemeier – [amanda.hasemeier@pa.usda.gov](mailto:amanda.hasemeier@pa.usda.gov)

Conference Co-Chair: Irma Hernández -- [irma.hernandez@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:irma.hernandez@wdc.usda.gov) Awards

Awards Chair: Arturo Carvajal – [arturo.carvajal@ca.usda.gov](mailto:arturo.carvajal@ca.usda.gov)

Communications Chair: Lori Valadez – [lori.valadez@tx.usda.gov](mailto:lori.valadez@tx.usda.gov)

Equipment and Technology Chair: Luis Gamboa – [luis.gamboa@ftc.usda.gov](mailto:luis.gamboa@ftc.usda.gov)

Exhibits Chair: Ronnie Skala – [ronnie.skala@tx.usda.gov](mailto:ronnie.skala@tx.usda.gov)

Hospitality Chair: Walter Albarrán – [walter.albarran@ma.usda.gov](mailto:walter.albarran@ma.usda.gov)

Local Arrangements: Cristina Clark-Cuadrado – [cristina.clark@pa.usda.gov](mailto:cristina.clark@pa.usda.gov)

And Betsy Clarke – [Elizabeth.clarke@nj.usda.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.clarke@nj.usda.gov)

Moderators Chair: Milton Cortés – [milton.cortez@nc.usda.gov](mailto:milton.cortez@nc.usda.gov)

And Kris Graham-Chavez - [Kristin.Grahamchavez@az.usda.gov](mailto:Kristin.Grahamchavez@az.usda.gov)

Program Chair: Edwin Almodovar -- [edwin.almodovar@ny.usda.gov](mailto:edwin.almodovar@ny.usda.gov)

Registration: Carmen Ortíz – [carmen.ortiz@ca.usda.gov](mailto:carmen.ortiz@ca.usda.gov)

And Rosa Reyes – [rosa.reyes@fl.usda.gov](mailto:rosa.reyes@fl.usda.gov)

Student Participation – Emily Bonilla – [emily.bonilla@nd.usda.gov](mailto:emily.bonilla@nd.usda.gov)

Auction/Scholarship Night – Heather Medina - [heather.medina@mi.usda.gov](mailto:heather.medina@mi.usda.gov)

Technical Papers/Poster Presentations Chair: Tony Resendez -- [tony.resendez@tx.usda.gov](mailto:tony.resendez@tx.usda.gov)

Committees still looking for members to assist with conference activities are the Equipment and Technology and Registration committees.

Also, if you would like to be a moderator during one of the sessions, contact Milton Cortez or Kris Graham-Chavez. It's not too late to volunteer your assistance!

### ***Scholarship Night:***

***Bring an item for Auction night!!***

Every year, the NOPHNRCSE Scholarship and Endowment Fund committee plans an auction to raise funds for the various scholarships given out to students. Applicants submit an essay, letters of recommendation, and grade transcripts to compete for the \$1,000 prize. Through the generosity of NOPHNRCSE members like you, the number of scholarships given out annually is increasing as well as helping the endowment fund to grow.

This year, the auctioneer is going to be one of our own from NRCS headquarters who is willing to share his talent, not only to get participants to bid top dollar, but to have some fun while the bidding wars rage.

Help the students of the future, the endowment fund and auction night be a successful event.

As a donation, consider bringing to the conference for the auction pile, items significant to your state, a personal creation, jewelry, or items of interest to the bidders -- all make very good choices.

If you want to ship items to the hotel, there is a contact and address below for your convenience:

*Attn: Stefy Garber  
Convention Services Manager  
Radisson Plaza-Warwick Hotel  
"NOPHNRCSE USDA"  
1701 Locust Street  
Philadelphia PA 19103*

*Ph:(215) 735-6000*

*Email: [stefy.garber@radisson.com](mailto:stefy.garber@radisson.com)*

Please do not have the items arrive more that about 3 days previous to the conference.

### ***Shipping displays or poster presentation materials:***

Contact information and address is listed below if participants want to ship conference items, displays or poster presentation materials, equipment, auction items, etc

*Attn: Stefy Garber  
Convention Services Manager  
Radisson Plaza-Warwick Hotel  
"NOPHNRCSE USDA"  
1701 Locust Street  
Philadelphia PA 19103  
Ph:(215) 735-6000  
Email: [stefy.garber@radisson.com](mailto:stefy.garber@radisson.com)*

Please do not have the items arrive more that about 3 days prior to the conference.

### **Check out this exciting conference speaker –**

Dr. Steve Running of the University of Montana, Ecology and Forestry professor shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 and has accepted NOPHNRCSE's invitation to speak at the conference.

[http://www.newwest.net/city/article/ums\\_steve\\_running\\_wins\\_share\\_of\\_nobel\\_peace\\_prize/C8/L8/](http://www.newwest.net/city/article/ums_steve_running_wins_share_of_nobel_peace_prize/C8/L8/)

### **Conference Registration Information**

*Carmen Ortiz, Registration Committee*

The conference registration information can be found on the NOPHNRCSE website.

### **TOUR DESCRIPTIONS**

Tour spaces are limited. When registering for a tour, indicate the order of preference in which you would like to be assigned to a tour. Your preference cannot be guaranteed. Assignment will be on a first-come, first-serve basis. All guests registering together will be assigned to the same tour as space allows. Lunch is included for each tour.

1	New Jersey Tour: 4 Stops
<p>Basto Village: Historic Batsto Village, a nationally recognized historic site, is located in Wharton State Forest in Southern New Jersey. The Village has changed and survived during several different periods of American history. Archeological investigations have also discovered evidence of Prehistoric life in the Batsto area. <u>Evidence shows land use dating back several thousand years.</u></p>	
<p>Pine Island Cranberry Co: New Jersey is the third-largest cranberry-producing state in the United States, trailing Wisconsin and Massachusetts, and it has a long growing tradition dating back to the 1700s. The largest cranberry grower in New Jersey is Pine Island Cranberry Co., Inc., a fourth-generation, family-owned business that's been in operation for almost 120 years. The farm includes 1,150 acres of cranberries, as well as 70 acres of blueberries. Each year, it produces 24 million pounds of cranberries, or over 240,000 barrels, supplying Ocean Spray with its entire crop.</p>	
<p>Franklin Parker Preserve: New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) purchased the 9,400-acre Franklin Parker Preserve in 2004 to protect its unusual concentration of resources, which include rare plant and animal species, pristine streams, and wilderness forest. In the midst of five major State land-holdings totaling over 200,000 acres, the Preserve is an important open space connection, providing trail linkages and passive recreation. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has supported the purchase of the Preserve and holds a partial ownership interest.</p> <p>NJCF has partnered with the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to protect and restore 2200 acres of wetland habitat through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Formerly one of New Jersey's largest cranberry farms, the Preserve contains 1100 acres of wetland agricultural fields and miles of canals and dikes. This water control system has transformed natural wetlands into highly modified agricultural environments, which cannot revert to native wetland communities on their own – altered water flow and compacted and leveled soil must first be repaired.</p> <p>Through the Wetlands Reserve Program, NRCS has purchased an easement on the Preserve for \$4.4 million that forever protects the land for conservation purposes. NRCS will also provide financial and technical assistance in the amount of \$1 million to restore the disturbed wetland habitats. Canals will be plugged and dikes will be breached to allow the water table to once again fluctuate on a natural cycle rather than one dictated by agriculture. Native plants will recolonize from nearby habitats and germinate from seeds that have lain dormant for decades.</p> <p>In some cases, NJCF and NRCS may augment natural revegetation. Current plans call for 150 acres of Atlantic White Cedar reforestation. An increasingly rare Pine Barrens community, less than 20% of historic Atlantic White Cedar forests remain. Natural regeneration of cedar trees is unlikely due to poor germination and heavy deer browsing.</p>	
<p>Russo's farm stand: Traveling through the New Jersey country side on a winding, tree-lined road, you will come to Russo's Orchard Lane Farm, which is a family owned and operated 250-acre fruit, vegetable, and greenhouse tomato farm. All farm produce is picked fresh daily and sold in our farm market on the farm or at Trenton Farmers Market located in Trenton. We also sell a fine selection of other fruits, Vegetables, jams, jellies, cider, fall decorations, Christmas trees, and more. We are open daily from May to December. We are proud to still be farming after 85 years and four generations, with hopefully a fifth generation to follow. Come take a relaxing drive in the country, and share a day together as a family</p>	

	<p>to visit our family and meet your future farmers (our fifth generations) who will someday provide you with your farm fresh produce.</p>	
2	<p><b>Delaware Conservation Tour: 4 Stops</b></p> <p>University of Delaware Farm: A manure separation system was installed in 2008 to help the University reduce the number of manure applications on a farm that is completely surrounded by the City of Newark. The separation system allows them to reuse the sand bedding. Presently the manure is stored under roof and used off the farm. This is an additional cost to the University and very inefficient. Plans are to eventually compost the manure. The liquids are stored in a tank and injected in their crop fields at the appropriate time. A NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant and New Castle Conservation District cost-share were used to fund the project. The University is also working to evaluate warm season grass and wildflower plantings with the Delaware Fish and Wildlife Landowner Incentive Program.</p> <p>Eric Hopkins Farm: Eric Hopkins has a 217 acre farm located in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. He produces corn, soybeans, and small grain. He has been active in various conservation programs, including the Conservation Security Program (CSP). Mr. Hopkins has restored wetlands, planted grass and food buffers and improved wildlife habitat. He has implemented irrigation water management, nutrient and pest management, and conservation tillage.</p> <p>Nancy Moore Farm: Nancy Moore is a poultry farmer in Kent County. She has approximately 136,800 broilers and 120 acres of tillable land. She has participated in EQIP, CSP and District cost share programs, and has constructed poultry waste structure, heavy use area protection pads (concrete pads), poultry litter amendment, and a comprehensive roof runoff management system. She practices nutrient and pest management on her cropland.</p> <p>Jim Reynolds Farm: Jim Reynolds is a retired Delaware Fish and Wildlife employee and has implemented a variety of wildlife conservation practices on his farm. Using the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), filter strips, grassed waterways, conservation cover and a shallow pond have been implemented. The marsh is under a Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program contract to control the invasive Phragmites.</p>	
3	<p><b>Pennsylvania Tour: 3 Stops</b></p> <p>Mushrooms – Daniel Beltran: Pennsylvania mushroom growers supply around 60% of the fresh mushrooms market sales and 79% of the mushrooms used in processing in the U.S. Come and see how a Hispanic farmer grows them and how he copes with water and air quality issues.</p> <p>Bog Turtle – Natural Lands Trust: Due to high urban and farming activity in this corner of the country many wildlife species are at risk or are threatened and endangered. This part of the tour will show you how the WHIP program has helped a NGO improve the habitat for a cute T&amp;E little turtle called the Bog Turtle.</p> <p>Stroud Center – The Stroud Water Research Center: Pennsylvania is home of one of the most prestigious international water quality centers, The Stroud Water Research Center. Since 1967, the center has been conducting research on how streams function as a whole and the complex web of life that inhabits them. The scientists here master the relationship between riparian forests and water quality. Come and see how they use a natural stream for research... inside a building. Learn about field research on agricultural land and from other countries around the world.</p>	

## **Energy in Agriculture Workshop**

An energy awareness training session will be offered in conjunction with the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in August 2009. This 2-1/2-day session will cover basic information about energy in agriculture and how energy can fit into the planning process.

Topics will include energy basics, energy audits and energy management activity plans, renewable energy and bioenergy, carbon trading and modeling, energy-related legislation, and energy funding opportunities. Also included will be a case study planning exercise involving use of energy tools as well as a half-day field tour.

## **Additional Events**

Register for **NOPHNRCSE Conference and Energy in Agriculture** workshop on the Conference Registration Form and you will be entitled to participate in the events listed below. Please indicate on your registration form the events you wish to participate. No price adjustments will be made for not participating in some of the events.

Monday night: President's Reception & Business Meeting

Tuesday: Award Luncheon

Tuesday night: Scholarship and Auction Night

Wednesday: Networking Breakfast with State Conservationist and Speed Mentoring

Thursday night: Banquet

## **Financial and Travel Scholarship Committees**

The *Financial and Travel Scholarship Committees* worked together for several months promoting various scholarships available through NOPHNRCSE for the 2009 Conference. The committees reviewed and evaluated 29 qualified candidates that applied for the scholarships available. From 29 candidates, 7 were selected to receive Financial Scholarships and 3 were selected to receive the Travel Scholarships that will give them the opportunity to participate in the 2009 NOPHNRCSE Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Refer to list of selected students below).

Some of other activities the committee is coordinating for the 2009 NOPHNRCSE Conference include the Leadership Breakfast and the Scholarship Night.

Members of the Financial Scholarship Committee

Sharyn Alvarez  
Edwin Martinez

Heather Medina  
Rafael Vega

O go dgtu'qh'vj g"Vtcxgn'Uej qrtuj kr 'Eqo o kvgg

Manuel Matos  
Emily Bonilla -  
Maria Hrebik

Heydsha Cordero  
Diana Irizarry  
Chris Graham-Chaves

The following students were selected from the applicants to receive Scholarships:

**Financial Scholarship (7)**

- Robert Garcia (Martha Guerra-Arteaga Scholarship)
- Elyssa Duran (Coronado-Remides Scholarship)
- Joseph Rodriguez
- Alejandra Martinez
- Kristina Wolf Hernandez
- Terri Lynn Johnston
- Aaron D. Smythe

**Travel Scholarship (3)**

- Raul Ray Hinojosa
- Marvin Lopez
- Keilah McInaney

**Call for Auction Items**

*Heather Medina Saucedo, Scholarship Committee*

The NOPHNRCSE Scholarship Auction will take place Tuesday, August 4th, 2009, at the Radisson Plaza -Warwick Hotel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from 6:00 pm until 9:00 pm. I would like to encourage the membership and guests to start thinking about donating items for the scholarship auction. Please contribute by donating items to be auctioned out during the Scholarship Night. Please consider bringing something unique from your area!

Donations will be collected next to the registration area August 3 through August 4. The proceeds from this event help support our scholarship program and build our scholarship and endowment fund.

No matter how small an item may seem, it will make a huge difference! Your creative contributions help our auction become a great success – and lots of FUN!!!

Can't think of anything? Here are some ideas: Non-perishable food items and drinks\*, local candy, local games, typical clothing items, flags, local arts & crafts, local artist music CD's, music instruments, quilts, books, magazines, maps... Call Heather with questions at 616-846-8770 ext x 3

Auction items can be mailed to the hotel. Stefy Garber is the contact at the hotel. Please ship all packages for the conference to her at the address below. Packages should not arrive at the hotel

more than 2-3 days in advance so they can keep track of them better. If they arrive too early they might get lost. An email letting her know you've shipped a package might be good too.

Attn: Stefy Garber  
Convention Services Manager  
1701 Locust Street  
Philadelphia PA 19103  
Ph:(215) 735-6000  
Email: [stefy.garber@radisson.com](mailto:stefy.garber@radisson.com)

Thank you for your contributions, and see you in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania!!!

\*If you are flying to the conference, please be sure to check airport security measures for a list of restricted items and quantities!

### **2009 Rangeland Conservationist of the Year Award Winner**

*Rocemi Morales, Membership Committee*

### **2009 Rangeland Conservationist of the Year Award Winner**

Congratulations to Kenneth Alcon, Area Rangeland Management Specialist in Eastern New Mexico, for being named the **2009 NRCS RANGELAND CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER**. Kenneth received this very prestigious award during the 2009 National Conference of Society for Range Management, held in Albuquerque, New Mexico this past winter.

Ken is an active participant at all area training sessions that are related to rangeland management, pasture management, forest management, and wildlife biology. Kenneth is reliable to provide well prepared and delivered lectures and field exercises on all phases of inventory, planning techniques, technical details and monitoring and evaluation

Kenneth maintains excellent working relationships with individual farmers and ranchers he works with to develop cooperative conservation plans. Kenneth is generally brought in to assist field office staff with difficult or sensitive conservation planning issues that are beyond the scope of normal field office operations. Kenneth is known and respected across the state for his knowledge and abilities in dealing with difficult communication issues and bringing an acceptable outcome for all participants. Kenneth is often requested by NRCS staff, conservation district partners, and forest service staff to explain difficult points of range science and agency policy.

Kenneth brings an infectious can-do attitude to all his work and his broad knowledge of range practices and principles makes him able to deal with any conservation challenge that arises.

Kenneth has served on the state EEO/Civil Rights Committee for the past 5 years and has volunteered to be his areas representative to the Toolkit and Arc View and GSAT training cadre.

Kenneth enjoyed a notable career with the forest service before joining NRCS. Kenneth brings his knowledge of those organizations unique characteristics to joint trainings with NRCS and FS participants. Let's congratulate Ken for a job well done!

## **Lyford Elementary Celebrates Earth Day**

*Juan Pena, District Conservationist, NRCS*

Lyford, Texas, Elementary School celebrated Earth Day on April 22 by planting three trees to beautify their campus. Juan Pena, District Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service demonstrated how to plant trees and explained the importance of trees in our environment. He also discussed fertilizer grades and what functions nitrogen, phosphorus, and potash have in helping plants grow. Lucas Garcia, Extension Agent with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and Laura T. Gonzalez with the Willacy Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) assisted Pena. Shown back row (Left to right) Robert Garcia, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Science Teacher, Dina Escamilla, Principal, and Juan Pena. Shown on the back row extreme right (Left to right), Lucas Garcia, Alicia Cortez, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Teacher, and Chris Luna, Counselor along with their 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. The trees were donated to Lyford Elementary by the Willacy SWCD as a reward for having the most participants in their annual Conservation Poster Contest.