

National Organization  of Professional Hispanic
Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees



La Voz

Newsletter

December 2010

In this Issue:

- [President's Message](#)
- [Looking to the Past to Further the Future](#)
- [Call for Posters and Papers for 2011 Annual Training Conference](#)
- [Training Conference Tours](#)
- [Student Financial and Travel Scholarship Committee Update](#)
- [Take Advantage of Scholarship Opportunity](#)
- [HEPM Update](#)
- [NOPHNCSE Latina Highlight](#)
- [Sylvia Mendez to be Awarded Medal of Freedom](#)
- [Job Application Support Cadre Framework](#)

President's Message

Angel Figueroa, President



First, I would like to welcome all new NOPHNCSE members that joined in 2010, hoping that your professional needs will be fulfilled by our organization.

This Holiday Season is upon us and right after that we focus our attention to our national conference in San Antonio during the week of June 19, 2011. Bertha Venegas, Salvador Salinas, and our conference planning team are making good progress and contracts are about to be signed. One point I want to stress about participation in our 2011 conference is that NRCS Leadership will scrutinize all requests for attendance and firmly apply the policy that approved employees on federal travel must be there for training or on the program. The Department is challenging all meetings for appropriate attendance so please work with your supervisor early in order to attend,

and if possible, get on the program or have a training need identified. Our Organization's home page has some information about our conference, calls for papers, etc.

I would like to announce that the Recruitment & Career Development Committee led by Cori Calvert from California has developed a program to assist our Hispanic employees with their job application materials. Please see the announcement recruiting Job Application Support Cadre volunteers in this issue of La Voz.

Finally, I want to thank all of our volunteers that work in the national council, committees, and strategic planning and hope to see many of you in San Antonio.



[Back to top](#)



Looking to the Past to Further the Future

Bertha Venegas, Conference Planning Chairperson

The 2011 Training Conference of both the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees and the Hispanic Employees Program Managers (HEPM) is scheduled for June 20-24, 2011, at the Westin Riverwalk, 420 West Market, in San Antonio, Texas.

Texas NRCS employees are excited to be hosting the training conference with the help and support of Salvador Salinas, NRCS acting state conservationist for Texas.

This year will mark the 17th Anniversary of the organization meeting and will take place in San Antonio, where the first conference was held in 1993. In celebration, we will be “Looking to the Past to Further the Future.”

The HEPM training is scheduled for Monday, June 20, followed by the annual business meeting of the organization that afternoon. The NOPHNRCSE 17th Annual Training Conference will kick off on Tuesday, June 21, with the Opening General Session and will end on Thursday, June 23, with the banquet which promises to be an event quite different than in the years’ past.

The team has been working diligently to offer a venue filled with technical and interpersonal skills building sessions that will assist you in advancing the goals of the agency as outlined in our new strategic plan.

The technical tours will include work done in the San Antonio area with the assistance of our local partners and will also include tours rich in culture and diversity.

I encourage everyone to participate in our training and also consider submitting a technical or poster presentation. I am very proud of the hard work and the accomplishments we in NRCS made this year. I encourage you all to share your knowledge and experience so that others can learn from your hard work. Our organization was chartered under the auspices of training and the success and attendance to our conference will be evaluated on this merit.

San Antonio has a lot to offer for the whole family and the Westin will honor the government hotel rates three days before and after the conference, so come early and stay late!

[Back to top](#)

Call for Posters and Papers for the 2011 Training Conference

Tony Resendez, Natural Resources Committee Chairperson

NOPHNRCSE invites the submission of Abstracts for Technical Papers and/or Posters to be presented at the 2011 Annual Training Conference. We encourage all NRCS staff to participate and showcase their conservation activities across the nation. Whether it's an outdoor classroom, a water development project, watershed planning effort, outreach, or information about the area and people you work with, someone can learn something from your efforts and success. Please share your stories!

Topics for Papers and Posters:

1. Experiences in providing effective and equitable service to customers with multilingual and multicultural needs.
2. Communication methods and materials that reach minority, historically underserved, and nontraditional groups.
3. Experiences in cooperative approaches (building partnerships, networking, etc.) for the conservation and protection of natural resources.
4. Experiences in locally led, voluntary watershed-based approaches for attaining effective resource management.
5. Uses of market-based approaches; NRCS activities that support these approaches could be used to leverage non-federal dollars going to conservation efforts. (For example, Conservation of Natural Resources can be achieved by "green labeling". When we buy

- USDA approved organic food, USDA has set a measurable standard. Then, indirectly the public is paying to decrease the use of pesticides and to promote biological pest control.)
6. Development and transfer of current technology and Information Systems.
 - a. Instruments or tools like GIS, remote sensing, satellite imaging for resource assessment, conservation planning and implementation
 7. Emergency assistance associated with a natural disaster, the type of NRCS assistance showing Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) work: debris removal from stream channels, road culverts and bridge abutments; reshaping and protection of eroding banks; repair of levees and structures, and reseeded of damaged areas.
 8. Success stories in any of the following:
 - a. Conservation projects or practices installed or completed, or close to completion, which is making a positive contribution to local air quality, water quantity/quality or another local resource concern.
 - b. Farm experiences in maximizing fuel efficiency (i.e. program to do conservation tillage or no-tillage, which also improves soil quality and air quality).
 - c. NRCS support of projects using solar power in farm operations or other renewable energy sources like wind turbines or methane produced by dairy lagoon digesters, which can produce electrical power.

Abstract Submission Guidelines:

1. Deadline for submitting Abstracts (up to 400 words) for Papers and Posters is January 21, 2011. Abstracts will be accepted by e-mail or FAX by COB on that Friday. *Late submissions will not be considered!*
2. Abstracts for proposed Papers and Posters must be in English.
3. There are a limited number of oral presentation slots available.
4. Oral Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes with 5 minutes of Q&A.
5. Conference registration is required for all NRCS employees.
6. The deadline for submitting final papers and posters is February 18, 2011.
7. Selected submittals for papers and posters will be notified by February 28, 2011.
8. Accepted papers and posters must be submitted in electronic format and may be utilized/referenced in future publications by NRCS and NOPHNRCSE.

Guidelines regarding set-up and presentation of posters

Poster Specifications:

1. Overall poster dimensions should be no greater than 48" in width and 42" in height. If it is necessary to exceed these dimensions, please contact poster chairperson, prior to submittal, to see if your special case may be accommodated. These recommended sizes are due to two factors:
 - a. The display panels are 96" in length by 48" in height.
 - b. The majority of the plotters that can print posters have a height limitation of 42".
2. Poster should be printed, preferably in color, on quality, heavy weight paper.
3. Lamination is not encouraged, nor necessary. If used, lamination should be light weight to allow rolled poster to "relax" in flat hanging position.
4. The poster presenter's name and contact information should be displayed on the poster.

5. USDA employee's poster will have the USDA equal rights statement (USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.) printed on the poster with a font size of 8 or greater.
6. Poster may be rolled and shipped in map tube or hand delivered.

Display:

1. No table top or individual freestanding display of posters will be allowed.
2. Freestanding two sided display boards will be provided.
3. Presenters will hang poster on display boards before the opening session of the conference.
4. Posters will be pinned, or velcroed to display board. Velcro tape and push pins will be supplied.
5. Handouts, brochures, business cards, etc. that contribute to the poster will be allowed if presenter supplies an envelope or pocket that can be pinned or velcroed to display board below poster.
6. There will be an allocated time when all presenters must be with their posters during a break period or poster session to answer questions.
7. Presenters are responsible for the removal of their posters at the designated time near the conference end. Posters left in the area after this time will be disposed.

Recommendations:

1. Contact your state Public Affairs Specialists. They can assist you in a number of ways.
2. Request permission to attend the training session in San Antonio in June 2011 as soon as possible. The display and future use of your poster is a professional presentation to your peers at a professional conference, and an acceptable reason for requesting government time and expense.
3. Make your poster with a wide area of interest where it can be displayed by other NRCS employees at other meetings (i.e., Conservation District annual meetings, State Conservation District Conventions, agency training sessions, heritage month displays, etc.).
4. If you feel that you do not have adequate material to put together a poster, consider collaborating with someone else (your coworkers, the neighboring field offices, tribal staff, partners, etc.).
5. Various computer programs can be used to create posters that look very professional, and can be rolled into a tube container for transport and storage.
6. Prepare an abstract, less than one page, for submittal with your poster registration form.

Contact persons:

Tony Resendez, Natural Resources Committee Chair, 325-597-4666 office, 325-597-2408 fax,
Tony.Resendez@tx.usda.gov

Ronnie Skala, Natural Resources Committee Co-Chair, 254-742-9872 office, 254-742-9889 fax,
Ronnie.Skala@tx.usda.gov

Poster Registration Form

~ Please Print ~

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Telephone Number: (____)_____ FAX Number: (____)_____

Information required:

Poster (complete a separate sheet for each submittal):

Size: _____ height (inches) _____ width (inches) Please read guidelines.

Poster Title: _____

Abstract

Please attach a one (1) page or less abstract for poster (MSWord or text document).

Agreement

I agree to be present during breaks or designated session to answer questions about the poster being presented. I agree to be responsible for timely displaying and removing my poster during the conference. I also acknowledge that the poster guidelines are outlined on the NOPHNRCSE web site. I request my poster presentation be displayed at the 2011 NOPHNRCSE Training Conference.

Name (Signature)

Date

Deadline for submission is January 21, 2011.

Please email to ronnie.skala@tx.usda.gov.

[Back to top](#)

Training Conference Tours

Chase Garcia, Conference Planning Team

Missions and Mexican Market Tour – San Antonio is a wonderful reflection of its Spanish Colonial heritage. The beautiful architecture, elaborate churches and friendly people remain as part of the heart and soul of our beautiful city. Visit our famous missions and then enjoy lunch on your own and shopping at the largest and oldest Mexican Market in the U.S.
(Spouse \$25.00)

Celebrate San Antonio Tour – With just one visit to San Antonio, the city will capture your imagination just as it captures the “Spirit of Texas”. Come and celebrate the great heritage of our past as we visit the “Alamo”, the Shrine of Texas Liberty; San Fernando Cathedral, the oldest cathedral in the U.S. and the famous Buckhorn Hall of Horns Saloon and Texas Ranger’s Museum.
(Spouse \$36.00)

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention – Visit floodwater retarding structures built by the San Antonio River Authority in partnership with the local Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. There are forty-two completed floodwater retarding structures in five watershed protection and flood prevention projects.
(Max 55 persons)

San Antonio River Basin Restoration and Urban Flood Control – Walk the beautiful San Antonio River and see the efforts that are underway to apply more modern, environmentally sensitive and aesthetic construction methodologies to enhance the flood carrying capacity of the River, while bringing recreational amenities and improvements to a 13-mile portion of the River. Visit the Riverwalk lock and dam and flood control tunnel that is approximately 16,200 feet long.
(Max 55 persons)

[Back to top](#)

Student Financial and Travel Scholarship Committee Update

Manuel Matos, Student Financial and Travel Scholarship Committee Chair

The scholarship application has been posted at the NOPHNRCSE website (<http://207.58.155.137/~noph/index.php/scholarships>). Please help distribute the application and if you know of any potential candidates please encourage them to apply. To have more information about scholarship application process you can contact Amanda Hasemeier at amanda.hasemeier@pa.usda.gov.

The State Conservationist Breakfast and Recruitment Fair will be hosted in our San Antonio conference. This activity will be Thursday morning during the week of the conference. To have more information about this activity you can contact Heydsha Cordero at heydsha.cordero@md.usda.gov.

The Conference Planning Committee has approved our Scholarship Night (auction night) to be held in La Villita complex, located on the south bank of the San Antonio River, a block or two from the conference hotel. La Villita was San Antonio’s first neighborhood. It was originally a settlement of primitive huts for the Spanish soldiers stationed at the San Antonio Valero Mission

(the Alamo). After the 1819 flood, brick, stone and adobe houses replaced the earlier structures. In 1836, La Villita was the site of General Santa Ana's cannon line in the Battle of the Alamo and an historical map from earlier that year showed the village to be of a considerable size. To have more information about this activity you can contact Frank Velazquez at frank.velazquez@mi.usda.gov.

[Back to top](#)

Take Advantage of Scholarship Opportunity

Mari Hrebik, Engineer, Texas

Higher education or continuous education and trainings many times go hand-in-hand with career advancement; and this is a very important goal to which most of our members aspire.

Fortunately for us, NOPHNRCSE offers an excellent opportunity to members. The NOPHNRCSE Career Advancement Scholarship is a much under-utilized tool by the membership and it is hard to understand why. Every year NOPHNRCSE offers a scholarship up to \$1,000 to one member in good standing from each of the seven regions. Financial assistance for full-time employees is not very common, especially not in the amounts offered through this scholarship.

As a recipient of this award I cannot emphasize enough how great of an opportunity this is, and I find it hard to believe why more members don't take advantage of this great financial assistance. Applicants for this scholarship are very scarce year by year and it is hard to understand why. I greatly encourage anyone who has a training course, educational class, certification classes, etc. to consider this scholarship as a way to assist with the incurred costs. The deadline for the 2011 application is February 28, 2011.

[Back to top](#)

HEPM Update

Jacqueline Padrón, NRCS National Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager

Mark your calendars... The annual Hispanic Emphasis Program Managers' (HEPM) training will be held in conjunction with the NOPHNRCSE Conference in San Antonio, Texas, Monday, June 20, 2011, 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. HEPMs' travel day will be on Sunday, June 19, 2011.

The 2010 Fall Career Fairs student database was disseminated in November 2010. There are a total of 194 qualified students listed in the database. The database has proven to be a good source to recruit Hispanic interns and new permanent employees. Please continue to encourage the use of the database.

[Back to top](#)

NOPHNRCSE Latina Highlight

In an effort to encourage recruitment, retention, development and advancement of Hispanic women in NOPHNRCSE as well as NRCS, the Recruitment and Career Development Committee

as part of their Women's Issues subcommittee will be highlighting a female NOPHNCSE member in each issue of La Voz. If you would like to recommend a NOPHNCSE member to be highlighted in the next issue, feel free to email the Recruitment and Career Development Committee Chair (cori.calvert@ca.usda.gov) with your recommendation.



Astrid Martinez is currently serving as the State Soil Scientist in Wyoming but grew up in San German, Puerto Rico. Astrid attended the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez where she earned a Bachelor's of Science degree in Agronomy and then University of Massachusetts, Amherst where she earned her Master's of Science degree in Soils.

Astrid began her career with NRCS in Greenfield, Massachusetts. Astrid says her favorite thing about working for NRCS is "I get to do what I love, working with soils". Astrid's favorite part of being a NOPHNCSE member is working on the planning of the different NOPH conferences as Astrid explains "it gave me a satisfaction that everybody was happy at the end of the conference and the training provided was superb." Astrid would like to welcome all new members of NOPHNCSE and to let them know that they will enjoy working for the agency; they will meet lots of people that will help them through their career, and that it's an excellent place to work with great training opportunities.

Astrid's favorite things to do after work are relax, go for a walk, read, cook, watch a good game, and spend time with her daughter Rosario. Astrid's favorite place on earth is anywhere as long as she has the company of the people that she loves and cares for the most. In the future Astrid strives for a position at national headquarters.

At the next NOPHNCSE conference in San Antonio, Texas make sure to say hello to Astrid!

[Back to top](#)

Sylvia Mendez to be Awarded the Medal of Freedom

Sylvia Mendez is an American civil rights icon of Mexican-Puerto Rican ancestry. President Obama announced on November 17, 2010, that he will award the Medal of Freedom, the United States' highest civilian honor, to her in early 2011.

At age eight, she played an instrumental role in the Mendez v. Westminster case, the landmark desegregation case of 1947. The case successfully ended de jure segregation in California, and paved the way for integration and the American civil rights movement integration and the American civil rights movement.

In Mendez v. Westminster, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco established an important legal precedent by ruling school districts could not segregate on the basis of national

origin. Shortly thereafter, California Gov. Earl Warren pushed the state legislature into repealing laws that segregated Asians and Native American school children.

Thurgood Marshall, who wrote the NAACP's friend of the court brief for Mendez v. Westminster, used the decision as precedent when he argued Brown v. Board of Education in front of the U.S. Supreme Court – seven years later.

In 2007, to mark the Mendez trial's 60th anniversary, the U.S. Postal Service issued a special stamp.

[Back to top](#)

Job Application Support Cadre Framework

Cori Calvert, Recruitment and Career Development Committee Chairperson

The NOPHNRCSE Recruitment and Career Development Committee is proud to announce a new service to our NOPHNRCSE members. The Job Application Support Cadre will be available to review resumes, Optional Application for Federal Employment Form OF-612, and knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) narrative responses to NRCS job applications. The Cadre will provide comments and suggestions on submitted application materials directly to the applicant. All interested NOPHNRCSE members in good standing with five years or more of career experience may volunteer to be a member of cadre. If you are interested in becoming a Cadre member or if you have any questions please contact the Recruitment and Career Development Committee Chair, Cori Calvert, at cori.calvert@ca.usda.gov. Anyone interested in serving on the Cadre must apply by December 17th. It is anticipated that the Job Application Support Cadre will be ready to accept job applications for review by the first week of January.

DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Receive job application review requests from Recruitment and Career Development Committee.
- Review knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) narrative responses to job applications.
- Review resumes or Optional Application for Federal Employment Form OF-612.
- Provide comments and suggestions on submitted application material to applicant.
- Only resumes, OF-612s, and KSAs for NRCS positions will be evaluated by cadre.

PROCEDURES

1. At least two weeks before closing date of open position, applicant sends application materials (resume, OF-612, and/or KSAs) to Chair of Recruitment and Career Development Committee. If KSAs are sent for review, original KSA questions must be included.
2. Recruitment and Career Development Committee sends an email to the entire cadre with the position and location of the applicant's current position as well as the position and location of the applicant's desired position. The name of the applicant is withheld at this time.
3. Cadre members have two business days to respond to the Recruitment and Career Development Committee with their willingness to review the applicant's application materials. When two cadre members have volunteered to review, an email will be sent to all cadre members stating that no more volunteers are needed.

4. Recruitment and Career Development Committee supplies the provided application materials to the interested cadre members as well as the name of the applicant.
5. The Recruitment and Career Development Committee sends an email to the applicant identifying the name(s) and email(s) of the cadre member(s) who will be reviewing their application materials.
6. Cadre member has five business days to review application materials. Reviewing cadre member emails comments and suggestions directly to applicant. No cc of suggestions or comments is needed to Recruitment and Career Development Committee.

CADRE COMPOSITION

All interested NOPHNRCSE members in good standing with five years or more of career experience may volunteer to be a member of cadre.

TIMELINE

Business Day 1 – Applicant sends materials for review to Recruitment and Career Development Committee Chair.

Business Day 2 - Recruitment and Career Development Committee Chair emails all cadre members with information as described above in second bullet point of Procedures.

Business Day 4 – Cadre members have two (2) business days to volunteer to review application materials.

Business Day 9 – Reviewing cadre member emails comments and suggestions directly to applicant.

WHAT DO I DO IF I AM INTERESTED ON SERVING ON THE CADRE?

By **December 17, 2010**, submit your name to Cori Calvert (cori.calvert@ca.usda.gov) along with:

- Your current position
- Location,
- How many years of career experience you have.

The Recruitment and Career Development Committee will contact all selected cadre members by the end of December.

[Back to top](#)