

National Organization  of Professional Hispanic
Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees



La Voz

Newsletter

February 2011

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President's Message

Angel Figueroa, President



The 2011 Training Conference of both the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees and the Hispanic Emphasis Program Managers (HEPM) is scheduled for June 20-24, 2011 in San Antonio, TX. Bertha Venegas as chair of the Program's Committee and her team advised by Salvador Salinas, acting state conservationist for Texas, have been busy preparing a superb training session. Most of National Headquarters leadership has agreed to convene with us in San Antonio and we should make every effort to attend. Although budgets are always tight, training and civil rights activities are always a priority and I encourage our members to send their names following the instructions provided in the conference announcement that went to the states earlier. Please let me know if you need more information.

I am very excited about our job application support program and we have several volunteers that will help our members with their job application materials in any format that is required. Please make use of this resource if you are applying for jobs in or outside your state. Those of you who are applying for the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program may ask for this assistance.

Robert Apodaca, regional assistant chief; Rosendo Trevino, Mexico border conservation lead; and myself visited the Chief with some Hispanic national demographic data provided by Jacqueline Padron and Hispanic employment data for the agency. The Chief was very supportive of our organization and showed commitment to reaching his diversity goals that include increasing Hispanic representation in the agency. We plan to meet with the Chief periodically and will include other Hispanic NRCS leaders as well.

Please volunteer your time to run for the positions that will become open for nominations and serve other Hispanics in our organization.

I will see you in San Antonio!



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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 Emphasis Program Managers (HEPM) is scheduled for June 20-24, 2011. Texas NRCS employees are excited to be hosting the training conference with the help and support of Salvador Salinas, acting state conservationist for Texas.

This year will mark the 18th anniversary of the organization 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 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.

San Antonio has a lot to offer for the whole family so come early and stay late! Visit the San Antonio Convention and Visitors Bureau for information about San Antonio at <http://www.visitsanantonio.com/index.aspx>

See you in San Antonio!

HOTEL INFORMATION

The training conference will be held at the Westin Riverwalk, 420 West Market Street, in San Antonio, Texas. The hotel will honor the \$106 government rate three days before and after the conference. The cutoff date for reserving rooms is May 24, 2011. To make a reservation, click on the following link and follow the instructions:

<http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/StarGroupsWeb/res?id=1012103593&Key=A5262>

Additional information can be found at the hotels' website: www.westin.com/riverwalk

Driving directions to the hotel from the San Antonio International Airport/Interstate 35 South, take U.S. 281 South (Highway 37) into downtown. Take the Commerce Street exit and turn right onto Commerce Street. Turn left onto St. Mary's Street and then turn left onto Market Street. The hotel is located on the corner of Market and Navarro.

TRANSPORTATION

There are over [100 flights daily to San Antonio](#) and the airport is about eight miles from downtown San Antonio or a 15-minute taxi ride. Ground transportation includes SATRANS airport shuttle.

Find [San Antonio International Airport](#) flight information, transit services provided, flight time and mileage on their website, or call (210)207-3411 for more information.

San Antonio Rail Information

Amtrak Texas Eagle

<http://www.texaseagle.com/>

Amtrak

www.amtrak.com

224 Hoefgen 78205

210-223-3226

Fax: 210-527-9945

Individuals: 1-800-872-7245

Group Reservations: 1-800-872-1477

San Antonio International Airport downtown Shuttle - \$18 one way, \$32 roundtrip

<http://www.sanantonio.gov/aviation/downtownshuttle.asp>

San Antonio Airport Shuttle - \$18 one way, \$32 roundtrip

<http://www.sairportshuttle.com/>

Taxi cabs are available at the lower level curbside, outside of baggage claim, at Terminal A & B. For assistance, please contact the Airport Ground Transportation Agent wearing an airport badge. Fare to San Antonio downtown areas are approximately \$20 to \$23 (U.S.) per taxicab. (Up to 4 may share a cab.)

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Registering online

NRCS employees who are traveling on government time and expense can click on the following link to register online after February 15. You cannot use your issued government travel card to register. Government Purchase Cards MAY be used. Follow guidance from your state on paying for registration fees for conferences.

<http://www.nophnrcse.org/>

Steps to follow:

Registration - Government Approved Travel

Register online (follow your state's guidelines on registering for conferences)

Submit one form per person attending the conference

Registration - for GUEST or Additional Event Tickets

PRINT and MAIL Registration form with check or money order

Registration - Traveling on Your own Expense

Register online providing your own personal credit card or

Print registration forms and mail in with your check or money order

Contact Serafin Aguirre at Agurrrsm@hotmail.com or (281) 795-2198 if you have questions pertaining to registration.

TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL TOURS

(Wednesday, June 22, 2011)

TOUR #1 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. This tour will return to the hotel on or before 1:30 p.m.

TOUR #2 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. There will be time to enjoy lunch on your own. This tour will return to the hotel on or before 1:30 p.m.

TOUR #3 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. This tour will return to the hotel on or before 12:00 p.m. and lunch will be on your own. (Max 55 persons)

TOUR #4 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.

This tour will return to the hotel on or before 12:00 p.m. and lunch will be on your own. (Max 55 persons)

TECHNICAL TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS

NRCS Basic Concepts in Grazing Management Course

This 3 Day Course is designed to give students a basic understanding of the physiological processes, morphological development, nutritional qualities, palatability of range plants, economic analysis of costs and benefits, as a basis for grazing management for domestic and wild animals. This course will help students understand the impacts of grazing systems on vegetation, livestock, wildlife, watersheds and profitability. This course will direct students in the process of selecting and developing grazing strategies. SEATING WILL BE LIMITED.

Continuing Education Units (CEU) will be offered based on the training received in one or more of the following areas:

- Certified Crop Advisors
- Pesticide Applicators License
- Certified Professional Range Managers

Additional training that includes CEU credits can be found in the Agenda and is offered throughout the Conference.

EVENTS

President's Reception will be held on Monday, June 20, 2011 at the Westin Riverwalk Hotel from 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Come join us for complimentary cocktails and appetizers sponsored by the Westin.

Annual Business Meeting is scheduled immediately following the President's Reception at 6:30 p.m. at the Westin Riverwalk Hotel.

Ray T. Margo Luncheon will be on Tuesday, June 21, at 11:45 a.m. at the Westin Hotel. Presentation of Awards will be made at this time including the Award for Farmer of the Year.

Scholarship Night and Auction -will be held on Tuesday, June 21, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at La Villita. Located on the south bank of the San Antonio River, La Villita was San Antonio's first neighborhood. Now, the history of this small village combined with the present day culture of San Antonio, brings a wonderful array treasures to be discovered. La Villita is home to many stores including art galleries, craft shops, jewelry shops, and clothing stores. It also is home to many delicious restaurants which enrich the experience with the taste of San Antonio. Join us in raising funds for scholarships to assist students in their pursuit of an academic education.
http://lavillita.com/index.php?option=com_frontpage

Networking Breakfast and Career Fair will be held on Thursday, June 23 beginning at 7:00 a.m. We are inviting students from universities in the surrounding area to participate. This conference would be a great opportunity to expose students to what NRCS is and what service NRCS provides as an agency. It would also be a great opportunity for you to meet and recruit these students and NRCS personnel.

Banquet will be held on Thursday, June 23 beginning at 7:00 p.m. The Banquet will be held at Pedrotti's North Wind Ranch located in the outskirts of San Antonio. This year, the event will be a western theme so bring your boots and hat if you have them and enjoy an evening of "Charreada" pageantry. Transportation will be provided.

DRAFT AGENDA

Sunday, June 19, 2011

2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

ALL DAY

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

HEPM Registration
Planned Events
Planning Team Meeting

Monday, June 20, 2011

7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

6:30 p.m.

Registration
HEPM Training
Break
Orientation for New Employees Training – TEXAS
Texas Federal Women’s Program Committee Meeting
Texas Principal Staff Meeting
Texas Civil Rights Committee Meeting
Exhibitors Set Up
Planning Team Meeting
NRCS Basic Concepts in Grazing Management Course
Texas – American Indian Alaska Native Employee Meeting
(Invited)
Break
President’s Reception
NOPHNRCSE Annual Business Meeting

Tuesday, June 21, 2011

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

12:15 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

1:45 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

2:15 p.m. -2:30 p.m.

2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Registration
Opening Ceremonies
Presentation of Colors
National Anthem
Invocation
Chief Dave White *(Invited)*, NRCS
Salvador Salinas, Acting State Conservationist, Texas
Angel Figueroa, President, NOPHNRCSE
Break (Exhibits, Poster Presentation Area)
TBA
Eloris Speight *(Invited)*, Deputy Chief, Management
Lesia Reed *(Invited)*, Deputy Chief, Strategic Planning & Accountability
C. Wayne Honeycutt *(Invited)*, Deputy Chief, Science & Technology
Ray T. Margo Awards Luncheon
Dave White *(Invited)*, NRCS Strategic Plan – The Future of the Agency
Homer Wilkes *(Invited)*, Acting Associate Chief
Orientation for New Employees Training – Texas
NRCS Basic Concepts in Grazing Management
Texas American Indian Alaska Native Employees Meeting
Douglas Lawrence *(Invited)*, Deputy Chief, Soil Survey & Resource Assessment
Diane Gilburd *(Invited)*, Deputy Chief, Easements & Landscape

3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. Tony Kramer (*Invited*), Deputy Chief, Financial Assistance & Community Development
 3:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. Thomas Christensen (*Invited*), Regional Conservationist, Central Break (Exhibits, Poster Presentation Area)
 4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. “Meeting Tomorrows Challenges Today”
 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. Robert M. Apodaca, Assistant Chief-West
 Overview, Announcements
 SCHOLARSHIP/AUCTION NIGHT - La Villita

Wednesday, June 22, 2011

7:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Technical Tours
 7:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. NRCS Basic Concepts in Grazing Management Course– Field Exercise
 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Lunch On Your Own
 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Orientation for New Employees Training – Texas
 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. NRCS Basic Concepts in Grazing Management Course – Classroom
 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Texas Principal Staff Meeting (*Tentative*)
 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Civil Rights Committee Meeting (*Tentative*)
 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Texas American Indian Alaska Native Employees Meeting (*Tentative*)
 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Registration
 1:30 p.m. – 3:40 p.m. Breakout Sessions

	Technical Proficiency	Leadership and Outreach	Professional Development	Programs And Initiatives
1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Monitoring and Management of Stewardship Lands, John Glover (<i>Invited</i>), Branch Chief, Easement Division	Using the Earth Team as a tool to reach minorities Michelle Eginore (<i>Invited</i>), Natl. Volunteer Coordinator	USA Staffing – The new way of Applying for positions within NRCS Tiffinie Meyer (<i>Invited</i>), Human Resource Assistant, NRCS, TX Sue Elliott (<i>invited</i>), Human Resource Specialist, NRCS, TX	NRCS Conservation Initiatives, Troy Daniell, NRCS
2:40 p.m. – 3:40 p.m.	The use of GeoObserver for NRCS stewardship lands monitoring Tommie Parham (<i>Invited</i>), Director, National	Mentor/Protégé Program Mark Bushman (<i>Invited</i>), NRCS, Washington, D.C.	Retirement Planning Rodney Hyatt (<i>Invited</i>), Human Resource Specialist, NRCS, TX	Ecological Sites Initiative Mark Moseley (<i>Invited</i>), NRCS

	GeoSpatial Managemet Center			
Continuing Education Units (CEU) will be offered based on the training received in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified Crop Advisors • Pesticide Applicators License • Certified Professional Range Managers 				

3:40 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Break (Exhibits, Poster Presentation Area)
4:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Hispanics in NRCS
Jacqueline Padron, National HEPM, NRCS
4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Overview, Announcements

Thursday, June 23, 2011

7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. NRCS Leadership and Networking Breakfast
7:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. NRCS Basic Concepts in Grazing Management Course– Field Exercise
8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Career Fair
9:00 a.m. - 10: a.m. NRCS 101 (TBA)
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Texas – New Employee Training (*Tentative*)
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Texas Principal Staff Meeting (*Tentative*)
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Texas American Indian Alaska Native Employees Meeting (*Tentative*)
9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Concurrent Technical Presentations/Poster Presentations
10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Break (Exhibits, Poster Presentation Area)
10:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Concurrent Technical Presentations/Poster Presentations
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch (On Your Own)
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. NRCS Basic Concepts in Grazing Management Course – Classroom
3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Exhibitors Breakdown
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. **Breakout Sessions**

	Conservation Planning	Professional Development	Technical Proficiency	Programs and Initiatives
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Conservation Activity Plans- Origin/Progress/Future Gregory K. Johnson (Invited), Director, Financial Assistance Program Division	Our Tlaxcalteca, Coahuilteco Huichol ancestors and their role in early Texas life Ted Herrera (Invited)	Cultural & Medicinal Significance of Plants of South Texas Benito Trevino (Invited)	Organic Initiative – Conservation Practices and how they fit in Organic Farming Plans (TBA)

2:05 p.m. – 3:05 p.m.	<p>Watershed Conservation and Planning – The use of USDA ag. census data for conservation planning, outreach & advocacy</p> <p>Frank Clearfield (Invited), Director, Outreach & Advocacy Division</p> <p>Jan Marie Surface (Invited), Natural Resources Specialist, GLRI</p> <p>Ginger Harris, Michelle Radice, NASS Products & Services</p>	<p>Blue Cross Blue Shield Federal Employee Program and on-line consumer tools to promote health and fitness</p> <p>Dolly Mendez (Invited), BCBS Representative</p>	<p>Kika De La Garza Plant Materials Center - Pollinators</p> <p>(TBA)</p>	<p>Organic Initiative (Continued)</p> <p>Soil Health</p> <p>(TBA)</p>
<p>Continuing Education Units (CEU) will be offered based on the training received in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified Crop Advisors • Pesticide Applicators License • Certified Professional Range Managers 				

3:05 p.m. - 3:20 p.m.	Break
3:20 p.m. - 4:35 p.m.	<p>Border Bi-National Conservation Initiative</p> <p>Rosendo Trevino, Special Assistant to the Chief, MODERATOR</p> <p>David Gallagher (<i>Invited</i>), Foreign Agricultural Service, FAS</p> <p>Jose Manuel Perez Cantu (<i>Invited</i>), PRONATURA</p> <p>Jacinto Samuel Garcia Carreon (<i>Invited</i>), CONAFOR</p>
4:35 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Closing Remarks
6:30 p.m.	Board Buses to Banquet Location
7:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.	Banquet

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Conference Exhibit Opportunity to Promote Your Products and/or Services

Astrid Martinez, Exhibits Committee

The National Organization of Professional Hispanic Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees (NOPHNRCSE) is making exhibit space available to interested organizations that wish to display their information, services, and/or wares at its training conference. This is a great opportunity for your organization to visit with conservation professionals and to showcase your state, company and/or products. NOPHNRCSE has over 150 members; mostly composed of current and retired NRCS employees. NOPHNRCSE supports and encourages all Hispanic and other NRCS employees to develop and further their careers with the federal government and assists NRCS in the technology transfer of information to the Hispanic community. We are expecting more than 250 conservation professionals from across the country. On Thursday, June

23, we will have a career fair. This will be an excellent opportunity for you to meet and recruit students from universities around the area and NRCS personnel.

The exhibit area will be located near the conference activities, where there will be ample exposure and opportunity to meet with hundreds of conservation professionals. Exhibitors are asked to set up on Monday June 20 between 8am to 5pm, and breakdown their exhibits on Thursday June 23, after 3:30pm.

The costs for this opportunity are as follows:

Exhibit space and conference registration: This will include ¼, ½ or full page ad, a table, two chairs, listing in the NOPHNRCSE conference program booklet, and one conference registration fee (a \$425 value). See prices bellow.

- Exhibit Space and Conference Registration: \$600 with ¼ page ad
- Exhibit Space and Conference Registration: \$625 with ½ page ad
- Exhibit Space and Conference Registration: \$650 with full page ad
- Exhibit only (a table, two chairs, listing in the NOPHNRCSE conference program booklet, no other conference activities) no ad: \$300
- Exhibit only (a table, two chairs, no other conference activities) plus a ¼ page ad: \$325.00
- Exhibit only (a table, two chairs, no other conference activities) plus a ½ page ad: \$350.00
- Exhibit only (a table, two chairs, no other conference activities) plus a full page ad: \$375.00

For more information please contact Astrid Martinez at 307-233-6774 or astridrosario15@gmail.com. **Deadline to submit your registration is March 15, 2011.**

Please fill out the Exhibitor Registration with your choice and return with ad, if applicable, to:
Astrid Martinez, PO Box 1253, Casper, WY 82602 or astridrosario15@gmail.com

Deadline to submit your registration is March 15, 2011

Exhibitor Registration Form

Organization Name _____

Contact Person _____

Mailing Address _____

Telephone Number _____

Email address _____

Name on Badge _____

Name of Badge #2 _____

Need electricity - Yes _____ No _____

Special Needs: _____

Choose one of the following:

- Exhibit Space and Conference Registration: \$600.00 with ¼ page ad
- Exhibit Space and Conference Registration: \$625.00 with ½ page ad
- Exhibit Space and Conference Registration: \$650.00 with full page ad
- Exhibit only no ad: \$300.00
- Exhibit only plus a ¼ page ad: \$325.00
- Exhibit only plus a ½ page ad: \$350.00
- Exhibit only plus a full page ad: \$375.00

Please make checks payable to: NOPHNCSE – Exhibits

Or pay by credit card: cc# _____ exp date: _____ ccs#: _____

Thanks for your support!!!

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NOPHNCSE 2011 Election News

Mike Castillo, Elections Committee Chairperson

I would like to officially announce that the 2011 NOPHNCSE election will be starting soon.

According to NOPHNCSE constitution and bylaws the positions that will be open this year are **vice-president, treasurer and regional representatives for the South East, South Central and West regions.**

With this said, it is extremely important that all members pay their dues as soon as possible for the 2011 calendar year. As per constitution and bylaws in order to participate in election one must be a current paid member. **So if you are interested and/or plan to run for office or, most importantly, wish to nominate and vote in upcoming election, it is very important that your dues for 2011 are paid. The membership chair will be sending a notice out to let members know what the deadline will be in order to be considered a current or paid member.**

We have implemented all of our elections process on our new website. You must be a paid member and have a login and password to access the website.

The 2011 Election Committee will be working closely with all regional reps to make sure that they start getting the word out to members of the importance of getting dues paid right away.

Timeline that has been established for the 2011 Election will be as follows:

- February 5th thru March 5, 2011 - Nomination period
- March 20 to April 30, 2011 - Election period
- *May 7 to May 28, 2011 - Runoff Election period, if needed

The 2011 Election Committee would like to thank all those that participated in the 2010 Election process in some form or other.

Any organization is as strong as its members who care enough to participate in the process. Please participate in this important process.

2011 Election/ Nomination committee members are:

Mike Castillo, TX, Chair, SC Region
Cristina G. Clark, DE, Co-chair, NE Region
Carlos Luna, TX, Member, SC Region
Dawn Afman, CA, Member, West Region

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Deadline for NOPHNCSE Career Enhancement Grant is Feb. 28

Christina Clark, Career Enhancement Committee

The mission of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNCSE) is to motivate and mentor members for leadership roles to assist NRCS and partners in delivering natural resources conservation within private lands. With that mission in mind, the NOPHNCSE Career Advancement Grant was developed to financially assist NOPHNCSE members in acquiring the training and education they need to further their careers with NRCS.

The 2011 NOPHNCSE Career Enhancement Grant is being offered as a benefit to members in good standing and can cover costs related to higher or continuing education and training that will help them advance their career. Seven scholarships, one for each region, of up to \$1,000 each, will be awarded to members in good standing. Financial assistance for education for full-time NRCS employees is very scarce, so take advantage of this opportunity!

Members planning on taking a course in 2011 to further their career with NRCS should apply for the 2011 NOPHNCSE Career Advancement Scholarship by February 28, 2011. Interested members should email, fax, or mail the application packet, found on the NOPHNCSE website, to Arturo Carvajal (arturo.carvajal@ca.usda.gov). Fax is (530) 792-5627. The application will be reviewed by the "Ad Hoc – Career Enhancement Grant Committee" and scholarships will be awarded based on the answers in the application. Applicants must be members in good standing and willing to become involved in NOPHNCSE activities. Applications for education for upward mobility and series qualification will take precedence over personal development. Upon completion of the course, scholarship winners will need to submit proof of a passing grade or a certificate of completion to obtain the fees reimbursement.

Besides this article in this issue of La Voz, there are notes of encouragement from Edwin Martinez (MI) and Mari Hrebick (TX) for other NOPHNCSE members to apply. Edwin and Mari, who were grant recipients in 2010 already received reimbursement for their expenses in graduate courses and Professional Engineer (PE) class, respectively. After February 28, 2011, Arturo can be reached at a.carvajal@att.net

For any further questions, Arturo's personal mobile phone is (530) 861-3426.

Edwin Martinez, NRCS district conservationist in Michigan



Edwin Martinez, NRCS district conservationist in Michigan and PhD student at Michigan State University, received the 2010 Career Enhancement Scholarship in the amount of \$1,000.

The purpose of the Career Enhancement Scholarship Grant is to support opportunities for NOPHNRCSSE members that will provide them with professional growth and career development. Edwin was enrolled in two PhD graduate courses (6 credits) at Michigan State University last semester: Sustainable Sites and Landscape Development and Natural Resources System Modeling. The Sustainable Sites Course provided Edwin with practical and technical training on bio-engineering practices, sustainability concepts and storm water management practices. The Natural Resources System Modeling course provided Edwin with a great set of new tools to model natural process using mass balance concepts that can be applied to conservation of natural resources. The Career Enhancement Scholarship covered approximately 31 percent of the total tuition cost for those courses.

“NOPHNRCSSE is making a big difference in career and leadership development and I definitely encourage all NOPHNRCSSE members to apply for this great opportunity. As a member, take this opportunity for your own career development or encourage new NRCS employees to join this unique organization,” said Martinez.

Mari Hrebik, NRCS engineer in Texas



As a proud recipient of the 2010 Career Enhancement Scholarship, I can truthfully state that there are not many scholarship funds out there easier to obtain than our excellent NOPHNRCSE acholarship. The application process does not require any essays or written testimonials as to why you shall be deemed worthy of the scholarship. Once a recipient, attend and complete your course or training and submit your receipts, tuition and any certifications of completion to the Enhancement Scholarship Committee. They, in return, approve your submittals, request National Council to approve the reimbursement and your check is on its way in the mail in no time. That's all there is to it, it's absolutely painless! The Enhancement Scholarship is just another great perk that we as paid members have; take advantage of it and enhance your professionalism and career development. What are you waiting for?

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Award Nominations

Marina Barajas, Awards Committee

The Awards Team is soliciting your nominations for Awards recipients. We feel that there are employees in our agency and organization who contribute far beyond the call of duty. This is an excellent opportunity to voice your appreciation and nominate them for an award. Enclosed are the guidelines, categories and a nomination form. Please be prompt and send them to Marina Barajas by February 15, 2011.

2011 NOPHNRCSE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

Please check the appropriate category: (one category per nomination)

Visionary

Leadership

Hispanic Community

Natural Resources Conservation

Amiga/Amigo

Outstanding Member

Nominee Information

NAME: _____

TITLE: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

2011 Dues Paid: Yes No

Why this person should be considered for this Award:

Participation and Support to NOPHNRCSE:

Responsibilities and Contributions to NRCS:

Other Additional Information:

NOTE: Limit one nomination per form only! Nomination application must be fully completed to be considered.

Nominated
by: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Please return to: Marina Barajas, 430 G Street, Davis CA 95616 or email to Marina.Barajas@ca.usda.gov by February 15, 2011.

NOPHNRCSE Guidelines for Nominations

1. Nominee must be an ACTIVE member in their Hispanic Community.
2. Nominee must have at least one year's membership in NOPHNRCSE.
3. Nominee may nominate him/herself.
4. No person should be named an Award recipient for more than one Award in the same year.
5. Awards Team will be responsible for promoting availability of awards, soliciting and screening. Nominations and presenting awards at Annual Conference. They will also be the Judging Panel and have established a process for selecting the best-qualified nominations. Judging of all nominations will be completed by April 1, 2011.
6. Awards Team may reject any nomination of candidates that do not meet expected standards of documented performance.
7. Runner-up nominees are not considered automatic candidates in subsequent years. New nominations need to be submitted each year.
8. Nomination shall be made by submitting a complete nomination form to the Awards Team no later than February 15, 2011.
9. Selection, acquisition and engraving of appropriate Awards or certificate is a function of Awards Team in collaboration with the Conference Planning Work Group.

NOPHNRCSE AWARD CATEGORIES

Leadership

The NOPHNRCSE Leadership Award recognizes the accomplishments of proactive and motivated men and women who are active members in the Hispanic Community. The award especially recognizes their participation in and support of NOPHNRCSE in addition to their contributions in their profession and Hispanic Communities. This Award is given in tribute to the forerunners and pacesetters of the organization whose dedication and leadership resulted in the founding of the organization. Only one Award will be presented each year.

Visionary

The NOPHNRCSE Visionary Award recognizes the accomplishments of forward looking and innovative men and women who are active members in the Hispanic Community. The Award especially recognizes their participation in and support of NOPHNRCSE in addition to their contributions to their profession and Hispanic Community. This Award is given in tribute to pioneers of the organization whose hard work and vision resulted in the founding of the organization. Only one Award will be presented each year.

Award of Excellence in Natural Resources Conservation

The NOPHNRCSE Award of Excellence is designed to recognize individuals who, over a period of time, have contributed substantially and creatively to our Natural Resources Conservation profession. The recipient should exemplify excellence in a particular discipline and, possibly, in multi-discipline efforts that promotes excellence and creativity. The recipient also should demonstrate leadership and involvement in NOPHNRCSE. Awards of Excellence should not be given to members currently serving on the National Council or be a current chair of a standing committee. The Awards Team will decide the number of Award (s) presented each year.

Award of Excellence in Hispanic Community Outreach

The NOPHNRCSE Award of Excellence is designed to recognize individuals who, over a period of time have contributed substantially and creatively to Hispanic Communities. The recipient should exemplify excellence in a particular discipline and, possibly, in multi-discipline efforts that promotes excellence and creativity. The recipient also should demonstrate leadership and involvement in NOPHNRCSE. Awards of Excellence should not be given to members currently serving on the National Council or be a current chair of a standing or ad hoc committee. The Awards Team will decide the number of Award(s) presented each year.

Outstanding NOPHNRCSE Member Award

The NOPHNRCSE Outstanding Member Award is the highest recognition given by the members, themselves, to one of its members. The purpose of this Award is to recognize excellence in professionalism and leadership as a NOPHNRCSE member. It is based on achievements in NOPHNRCSE over an extended period of years and on participation and support of its mission. Only one Award will be presented each year.

Amiga/Amigo Award

The NOPHNRCSE Amiga/Amigo Award recognizes the activities of an individual(s) or organization, which have substantially contributed towards the improvement of the Organization and/or Hispanic Community at large, in regards to visibility, information dissemination and program accessibility. The recipient(s) should demonstrate an involvement with the Hispanic Community and by actions show support of NOPHNRCSE's vision and mission. Only one award will be presented each year.

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Financial and Travel Scholarship Applications Due by Feb. 28

Amanda Hasemeier, Student Financial and Travel Scholarship Committee

There isn't much time left for applicants to submit their applications on time, and applications must be post-marked February 28 or be submitted online by the end of the day, February 28.

The scholarship application is posted at the NOPHNRCSE website (<http://207.58.155.137/~noph/index.php/scholarships>).

This is a final request to membership to please help distribute the application or information about its availability, and if you know of any more potential candidates, please encourage them to apply.

For more information about the scholarship application process you can contact me at amanda.hasemeier@pa.usda.gov. This is the first year we using the online application method, and so far, links for information are working well. There have been many inquiries, but at this writing, no applications have yet to be submitted.

Tuesday evening of the conference will be Scholarship Night – always an exciting time!

Please start gathering interesting donations from your states you plan to bring to the auction. Proceeds from your bids help to support the scholarship and endowment fund and we've had very successful auctions in past years. Your donations make will make our success possible again in San Antonio!!

For more information about Scholarship Night or want to help out with this activity, please contact Frank Velazquez at frank.velazquez@mi.usda.gov.

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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 NOPHNRCSE member in each issue of La Voz. If you would like to recommend a NOPHNRCSE 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.



Heydsha Raquel Cordero Rodríguez, Soil Conservationist – Maryland

Heydsha Cordero has been working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for 5 1/2 years. She is currently serving as a soil conservationist in Maryland. Heydsha is a native of Moca, Puerto Rico. She received her bachelor's degree in Science in General Agriculture from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus.

Heydsha started her career with NRCS in 2005 as a soil conservationist SCEP student in Kalispell, Montana. After that, she completed her second summer in Helena, Montana. During her second summer, she was awarded with the NOPHNRCSE scholarship and participated in the annual conference at Orlando, Florida. In 2006 she worked as a volunteer in the Mayagüez Field Office (FO) in the Caribbean Area. After she finished her bachelor's degree, she was hired by Montana as a full time soil conservationist in the Great Falls field office where she worked for 19 months. Then she decided to move to Easton, Maryland, in Talbot County, where she is currently working as a soil conservationist. In April 2010 she completed a detail in the Caribbean Area serving the field offices of San Sebastián, Mayagüez and San Germán. At the present time, she is the Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager in Maryland. Her favorite thing about working with NRCS is the great variety of duties that she is able to do on a daily basis.

Heydsha's favorite part of being a NOPHNRCSE member is when the annual training conference comes, and she has the opportunity to work in several committees. She really enjoys working in different committees and to see the positive results after all the hard work at the end of the conference. Heydsha would like to say "Bienvenidos" and encourage all the new members of NOPHNRCSE to get involved in one of the many committees the organization has and meet as many members you can. Networking is the key of success.

Heydsha's favorite's things to do during her free time are to go to new places around the country and experience new adventures. Heydsha's favorite place on earth is anywhere in the world where she can have the company of her family and the people that she loves.

In the future Heydsha wants to be a district conservationist or outreach coordinator and gain as much experience and knowledge as she can.

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Job Application Support Cadre Now Available

Cori Calvert, Recruitment and Career Development Committee Chairperson

The NOPHNRCSE Recruitment and Career Development Committee members are 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. If you are a NOPHNRCSE member who is applying for an NRCS position and would like to have your application material reviewed by a cadre member, please contact the Recruitment and Career Development Committee chair, Cori Calvert, at cori.calvert@ca.usda.gov. Your application material will be reviewed by a cadre member who will respond to you directly with comments and suggestions within nine business days.

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Federal Hispanic Advisory Panel Debuts in February

By Sarah Mimms, smimms@govexec.com, January 26, 2011

The Hispanic Council on Federal Employment will hold its first meeting on Feb. 11 at the Office of Personnel Management. One of its primary goals will be to advise OPM Director John Berry on Hispanic hiring, recruitment, retainment and advancement.

According to a Jan. 26 notice in the Federal Register, the council is an advisory committee made up of “representatives from Hispanic organizations and senior government officials.”

At issue is a lag in Hispanic hiring in federal agencies. While the presence of other minority groups has risen in recent years, following an increased focus on minority hiring and retaining, the percentage of Hispanics in the federal workforce has grown at a much slower rate, flattening between 2008 and 2009.

According to a 2010 OPM report, Hispanics made up just 8 percent of the permanent federal workforce in 2009, compared to 13.9 percent in the private sector; nearly a 6-point gap. Other minority groups -- African-Americans, Asians and Native Americans -- represent a greater proportion of the federal workforce, than do their counterparts in the private sector. Among women, the gap between private and federal representation is much smaller than among the Hispanic population -- women account for 44.2 percent of the federal workforce, compared to 45.9 percent in the private sector.

Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 Stimulus Funds Coordinator Gina Weber, who is Latina, said minority recruitment is one of the agency’s top priorities. Weber was recruited by her supervisor straight out of college. “He actually went to my university and said, ‘Send me women’ and ‘Send me minorities,’” she said. “I think the issue . . . is that we [Hispanics] have never really considered the federal government as a good place to work, traditionally. We don’t have the same tools that a private company would work with. Unfortunately, a lot of times because of those limitations, we haven’t been as good as others [in recruiting], particularly among Latinos.”

Weber said the lack of Hispanics in higher-level federal jobs was of greatest concern. For example, African-Americans, she said, have senior-level officials who go out and actively recruit and provide a legacy of government service for that community, but the Hispanic population doesn’t yet have that history. Hispanics represented only 4 percent of federal employees at senior pay levels in 2009, according to the OPM report.

In a letter to President Obama accompanying a 2009 report on Hispanics in the federal workforce, Berry wrote that the lack of Hispanics was a pressing issue, and that OPM would take the lead in addressing the diversity issue. “Of greatest concern is that for the year ending June 30, 2009, the percentage of Hispanic new hires decreased from 9.2 percent to 7.3 percent. This is well below the Civilian [Private] Labor Force representation of 13.2 percent,” Barry wrote. “OPM is leading an interagency task force on diversity that will develop recommendations for improving our efforts toward a federal government drawn from the diversity of our nation.”

The council’s meeting on Feb. 11 is open to the public.

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