



LA VOZ

Newsletter of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic
Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees

March 2009 Newsletter

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President's Message

By Luis Hernández



NOPHNRCSE President
¡Saludos!

Let me start this message with good news. Juan Carlos Hernández, currently Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Lincoln, Nebraska has been selected as the new State Conservationist in Maine. Jose Castro, Assistant Director for the Caribbean Area, and I, Luis Hernández, were selected into the National Leadership Development Program.

We are making good progress in the planning of the 2009 Annual Training Conference. The hotel contract has been finalized. Conference approval request was submitted to NHQ. NRCS National Employee Development Center (NEDC) plans to offer several formal trainings in conjunction with the conference. The NRCS Civil Rights Division plans to offer 2009 Hispanic Emphasis Program Managers National Training in conjunction with the conference. The West National Technology Support Center plans to offer a 2-day energy workshop. The planning committee is working tirelessly to have everything ready for August. Please contact Amanda Hasemeier (amanda.hasemeier@pa.usda.gov), Conference Planning Committee Chair, or Irma Hernández (irma.Hernández@wdc.usda.gov), Conference Planning Committee Co-Chair, for any questions about 2009 Annual Training Conference.

Let me share an overview of other undergoing projects:

- Website Design – The National Council selected and approved a company that will be responsible for the design of a new website for NOPHNRCSE. We expect to have it finalized early this summer. Please contact Carmen Ortiz (carmen.ortiz@ca.usda.gov) or Lori Valadez (lori.valadez@tx.usda.gov) for any questions about the new NOPHNRCSE website.
- Career Development Survey – This survey is an opportunity for NOPHNRCSE members to have their voice heard. The reason that the National Council would like to collect this information is to hear directly from members regarding which career development areas are operating smoothly and which areas may need to be improved. Collected information will be elevated to NRCS leadership. Survey results will be presented during the 2009 Annual Training Conference. A hyperlink to the survey is available on the NOPHNRCSE website (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/>). The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete. Deadline for completion is April 6, 2009. Please contact Roney Gutierrez (roney.gutierrez@ca.usda.gov) for any questions about the Career Development Survey.
- 2009 Membership Drive – This is an effort to increase membership by 25%. It's also an opportunity to update membership dues. Contact your regional representative for any questions about the membership drive.
- 2009 Career Enhancement Grants – This program was established by the National Council in an effort to provide career enhancement opportunities to NOPHNRCSE members. Please keep your eyes open for this excellent opportunity. Additional information will be provided within the next month or so. Please contact Julie MacSwain (julie.macsSwain@mn.usda.gov) for questions about the 2009 Career Enhancement Grant.

There are other activities going on. I encourage each member to get engaged and contribute their time and talents. I thank those members already helping NOPHNRCSE achieve its mission.

Best Regards!!

NOPHNRCSE Annual Training Conference, Philadelphia, PA

Amanda Hasemeier, Conference Planning Committee Chair

16th Annual NOPHNRCSE Training Conference
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
August 3 – 6, 2009
Radisson Plaza-Warwick Hotel Philadelphia

Together, Helping People Help the Land

Now that March is on the calendars, we see conference planning gaining momentum. Ideas are becoming realities and dates are being fixed.

The year 2009 will be a memorable year. It began with worrisome news about our economy. We're a nation still at war. Budget news is uncertain. A new, historic Administration is bringing a message of change. Our focus for the 16th Annual Training conference is to look toward the goals we've set, culminating in this year's theme.

The conference theme for 2009 has brought us back to thinking what we are all about – our mission, our vision, what motivates us, what inspires us as NOPHNRCSE members and as dedicated employees of NRCS. During the week of August 3rd, the Hispanic Emphasis Program managers will come together to meet the new National HEPM, Jacqueline Padrón and National Employee Development Center (NEDC) instructors will be training registered employees. In addition, there is a newly developed 2-day Energy Workshop presented by the West National Technology Support Center that is planned. Most importantly, the week's activities will showcase that NOPHNRCSE is working together toward the vision displayed in Productive Lands – Healthy Environment by Helping People Help the Land.

We plan to accomplish the goal for the week by focusing on three main themes:

1. Leadership Training
2. Technical Training
3. Community Outreach

Stay on the look-out as the program agenda develops.

A workplace where we help foster an environment where people choose to work and thrive by contributing their unique experiences and talents collectively delivering amazing results is vital to our success as leaders. Technical Papers and Poster presentations highlighting work activities and successful outreach projects are one way conference participants can make an amazing contribution during the conference. (See article describing how you can submit an abstract or poster.)

The Program committee is going to need moderators to assist with the sessions. See who to contact in an accompanying article for anyone interested in helping the conference planning committee while developing and improving skills as a moderator.

Another article in this month's La Voz describes categories of awards granted to outstanding members of NOPHNRCSE. Your contribution in submitting nominations is very important. There's also an opportunity to nominate someone from the community as Farmer of the Year. Would you like to showcase yourself in "A Day in the Life? See the article describing the "A day in the Life" event and how to go about volunteering to be the featured NRCS star. Finally, your presence and participation during the week is another way to bring benefit to you and to the success of the conference.

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.

Conference Chair: Amanda Hasemeier – amanda.hasemeier@pa.usda.gov
Conference Co-Chair: Irma Hernández -- irma.hernandez@wdc.usda.gov
Awards Chair: Arturo Carvajal – arturo.carvajal@ca.usda.gov
Communications Chair: Lori Valadez – lori.valadez@tx.usda.gov
Equipment and Technology Chair: Luis Gamboa –
luis.gamboa@ftc.usda.gov
Exhibits Chair: Ronnie Skala – > ronnie.skala@tx.usda.gov
Hospitality Chair: Walter Albarrán – walter.albarran@ma.usda.gov
Local Arrangements: Cristina Clark-Cuadrado –
cristina.clark@pa.usda.gov
Moderators Chair: Milton Cortés – milton.cortez@nc.usda.gov
Program Chair: Edwin Almodovar -- edwin.almodovar@ny.usda.gov
Registration: Carmen Ortiz – carmen.ortiz@ca.usda.gov
Student Participation – Emily Bonilla – emily.bonilla@nd.usda.gov
Auction/Scholarship Night – Heather Medina -
heather.medina@mi.usda.gov
Technical Papers/Poster Presentations Chair: Tony Resendez --
tony.resendez@tx.usda.gov

The Radisson-Warwick Hotel Philadelphia is taking reservations under "NOPHNRCSE USDA". The lodging amount is \$155.00 a night.

Go on-line to see it for yourself <http://www.radisson.com/philadelphiapa>.

1701 Locust Street , Philadelphia PA 19103
Reservations: (888) 201-1718 US
Telephone: (215) 735-6000

Call for Papers

Tony Resendez, Natural Resources Committee

NOPHNRCSE's Mission is: to motivate and mentor members for leadership roles to assist NRCS and partners in delivering natural resources conservation.

The Vision is: to achieve a professional organization working in harmony with its partners for natural resources conservation.

NOPHNRCSE invites the submission of Abstracts for Technical Papers and/or Posters to be presented at the 2009 Annual Training Conference. We encourage all NRCS staff to participate and show-case their conservation activities across the nation.

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.
 - 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:
 - 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.
 - Farm experiences in maximizing fuel efficiency (i.e. program to do conservation tillage or no-tillage, which also improves soil quality and air quality).
 - 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.

Submission Guidelines

- Deadline for submitting Abstracts (up to 400 words) for Papers and Posters is April 17, 2009. Abstracts will be accepted by e-mail or FAX by COB on that Friday. Late submissions will not be considered!
- Abstracts for proposed Papers and Posters must be in English.
- There are a limited number of oral presentation slots available.

- Oral Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes with 5 minutes of Q&A.
- Conference registration is required for all NRCS employees.
- Accepted papers and posters must be submitted in electronic format and maybe utilized/referenced in future publications by NRCS and NOPHNRCSE.

Guidelines for Poster Design and Presentation

Mail to: Tony.Resendez@tx.usda.gov (address to send abstract or poster summary)

Check following points when planning and preparing your poster for NOPHNRCSE

1. Keep it simple; use the experience you had in previous summer work (possible watershed work experience would be great), team works in partnership, etc.
2. Make it self-explanatory; there will be time when poster is on display without you present, so be sure it tells a logical, coherent story. Remember, excessive detail hurts!
3. Make your poster easy to read. Large lettering, bold, but simple figures, and a clear, easy-to-follow layout are essential.
4. Send us a summary of your future project as soon as possible.
5. By May 4, 2009 we will select the best projects summaries and let you know for you to start working on the posters.

Guidelines with some practical suggestions for achieving a well-presented poster

Contents

Your poster should include the following

- Title, followed by name and affiliation of the author(s)
- Introduction – state the problem or area of investigation
- Purpose – what you investigated and why you are presenting this information
- Methods or your Internship Experience
- Results – graphs, photos, artwork, etc.
- Conclusion (Always last) – list finding, summary, interpretation

Legibility and Readability

1. Title and Headings

- Reserve the top 4 inches of your poster for the title, author's name(s), and affiliation(s).
- Use letters about 1 inch high (ALL CAPS) for the title.
- Use letters about ½ to 2/3 inches high for authors and affiliations.
- Use letters about 3/8 to 5/8 inches high for headings.

2. Text

- All text should be legible from 5 feet away. This means a minimum letter size of 3/16 to 1/4 inches for all text, including tables, figure captions, and labels.
- Keep text to a minimum.

3. Figures, Tables, and Photographs

- Figures can be understood much more easily and quickly than tables; convert all tables to figures if possible.
- Keep figures simple. Use bold lines and large symbols for easy reading from a distance.
- Each figure should be accompanied by a short line of interpretation that summarized the "take-home" message of the figure.
- Photographs should be clear, and show what they are intended to show. If they don't, consider artwork instead.
- If you must use a table, keep it simple – just a few row and columns.

Layout and Organization

- Poster size will be 36 by 40 inches. Reserve the top 4 inches of your poster for the title, author's name(s), and affiliation(s).
- Your poster should start with the introduction in the upper left corner and end with the conclusion in the lower right corner.
- Try to avoid using large paragraphs or blocks of text anywhere on your poster. Separate, individual statements are much easier to read.

Production Methods for titles Heading, and Text

Methods vary widely in cost, availability, and time required, get advice from teachers.

Use of Color

- Color can be used to help organize your poster and make it easier to read as well as more attractive.
- A backing of colored paper for each panel on the poster (extending about 1/2 inch beyond each edge) is an inexpensive and attractive way to highlight material.

Poster Assembly

Poster can be either mounted or unmounted:

1. Mounted – You can also mount your whole poster on one full-size foamcore or poster board backing, if you can conveniently transport it to the meeting.
2. Unmounted – This is lighter, and panels can be rolled up; a reverse roll will usually fix the curl.

Be prepared to assemble and hang the poster yourself. We will be using boards covered with carpet, therefore, you will need an adequate supply of "Hook" tape (Velcro type).

Contact persons

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

Heydsha Cordero, Natural Resources Committee Co-Chair, (406)727-7580 x 122, (406)727-9955 fax Heydsha.Cordero@mt.usda.gov

Award Nominations Sought

Arturo Carvajal, Awards Committee Chairperson

You can contact any of our committee members and they will be happy to accept your nomination(s). The nomination process will end on May 15, 2009. Just as a reminder here is the list of our distinguished volunteers:

Marina Barajas, Co-chair, California
Bertha Venegas, NOPHNRCSE Past-president, Texas
Mary Sanchez, NOPHNRCSE Past-treasurer, New Mexico
Manuel Matos, Minnesota

Bertha wrote the comprehensive article "Honoring our Members" explaining in detail the requirements of each Award Category. I encourage you all to read the previous information provided in the October 2008 issue of La Voz.

As a reminder, here are the 6 Award Categories:

1. Leadership
2. Visionary
3. Award of Excellence in Natural Resources Conservation
4. Excellence in Hispanic Community Outreach
5. Outstanding NOPHNRCSE Member Award
6. Amiga/Amigo Award

Note: Awards of Excellence should not be given to members currently serving on the National Council or be a current chair of a standing committee.

Our goal as a committee for this year is to have several candidates nominated for each of the above categories. Most important, during our Annual Training Conference in Philadelphia each outstanding member selected by the committee should receive an Award. Always remember that as members of this organization we are responsible for

acknowledging the good work of our outstanding members and we need your nominations to do it. If you have questions, feel free to contact me at Arturo.Carvajal@ca.usda.gov.

I am positive that many of you have done a little research and have already members' names in your minds and even better written down, and you know that they are in good standing (required). There is only one thing that we cannot do as committee members: we cannot do the work for you. Any of the runner-up candidates in previous years can be nominated again. So, if you want to nominate a candidate for any of the above categories don't forget that you should start your nomination today!

Moderators Needed for Annual Training Conference

Milton Cortes, Moderators Committee Chairperson

We are working on the details for the 2009 NOPHNRCSE Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and are requesting moderators to help facilitate the general session, workshop breakouts and panel discussions. Duties include assisting speakers with power point presentations, welcoming participants to the session, introducing the speaker and keeping the session on time.

There are plans for preparing first-time moderators in their assignments as well as helping to hone the skills of experienced ones, so please let one of the committee members listed below as to your interest in being a moderator.

Moderators Committee

- Milton Cortés – Chair, milton.cortes@nc.usda.gov
- Kristin Graham-Chavez, Co-Chair, Kristin.grahamchavez@az.usda.gov

Let us know of your interest in participating (with your supervisor's knowledge). Once you express willingness to be a moderator, you will receive follow-up information.

Conference Exhibit Opportunity to Promote your Products and/or Services

Ronnie Skala, Exhibits Committee Chairperson

We are making available exhibit space to interested organizations that wish to display their information, services, and/or wares at our 2009 NOPHNRCSE Annual Training Conference.

This is a great opportunity for any organization to visit with conservation professionals and to showcase their company. If any member knows of an organization that may wish to have an exhibit space at our annual conference, please have them contact Ronnie Skala at (254) 742-9872 or via email ronnie.skala@tx.usda.gov.

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 will have access to conference activities, breakfast, luncheon, scholarship supper, night activities and conservation tours.

A Day in the Life

Febe Ortiz, Program Committee Co-Chairperson

Last year was the first year to showcase the "A Day in the Life" presentations and it was a tremendous success. I heard from many, including senior leadership, about what a great addition this was to the conference.

I am glad to announce that the Program Committee is looking for interested persons to participate in the "A Day in the Life". The main focus is to showcase the competencies used in certain job series. Competencies are the personal and professional attributes that are critical to successful performance in the Senior Executive Service (SES) and fundamental to every employee. Competencies are very basic and inherent to our work as we assist natural resource managers on a day to day basis. We perform them everyday without even knowing.

Although there are 22 competencies, we don't all perform all of them. The competencies we use each day are specific to our chosen career path and profession. There are some we may never need to develop or master in our particular job series. However, having a basic knowledge and understanding of the competencies in other occupations may help you move up to that position, if this is your goal.

If you are interested, you will need supervisory approval before you submit your name. A DVD (7 to 10 minutes) of your typical day showcasing the competencies is part of this presentation and is required. You will be responsible for providing the DVD. Two of the DVDs last year were developed with the involvement of the state public affairs staff. So you may need to get others engaged in your state on this project. Again, you should make sure everyone is on board before submitting your name.

Provide your name and which competencies you will highlight by April 1, 2009 to febe.ortiz@ascr.usda.gov. A list of the competencies can be found at Executive Core Qualifications (<http://www.opm.gov/ses/recruitment/ecq.asp>). Once you are selected to participate, a teleconference will be scheduled to fill you in, answer questions and help further explain what is needed and how it all works.

I know the participants in the first "Day in the Life" had fun telling their story and filming the DVD.

So, here's your chance to get involved! If you have any questions, feel free to call at 202-205-0753 or e-mail me at febe.ortiz@ascr.usda.gov.

Membership Dues Mailing Problem

Rocemi Morales, Membership Committee

I would like to take this time to inform you of recent problems with the membership address in which the NOPHNRCS membership dues are received. Please receive my most sincere apologies in the event that your letter has been returned to you.

I have experienced an inconvenience with the post office and this mistake has caused your letters with membership dues to be returned to the sending address.

At this time the situation has been taken care of and you can proceed to re-send the membership dues to the same address: P.O. Box 466 Ashland OH 44805. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the refund for your repeated expenses, please contact me at 419-626-6419 ext. 106 or 787-431-7170.

I apologize for the inconvenience this may have cost you. I appreciate your time and commitment to the organization!

Mott-Regent High School Students Learn About Careers with NRCS

Mario Rodriguez, Agronomist, NRCS

During the third week of January, Mrs. Kari Mayer, business teacher at Mott-Regent High School, approached Cameo Frieze, Slope-Hettinger Soil Conservation District Manager, about having me talk in her business class. She wanted me to talk about my career experience with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the cultural barriers and obstacles that being a Puerto Rican encounters.

For few days, I worked on the Power Point presentation, looking for good pictures, demographic information from Puerto Rico (PR) and career information for the students. My objective at the end was to encourage these students to continue college studies and maybe think about a career with NRCS. So, in my search I decided to explain where I come from, and how I got here to North Dakota (ND). After that, gave them a review of barriers, obstacles and accomplishments that I have had. I realized that by making my

presentation an adventures tale, maybe they would pay better attention, and I would get a lot of questions.

January 27, 2009, the big day, I was welcomed by Mrs. Mayer's business class. By the time I finished preparing the presentation on the classroom computer; five students walked into the room talking, giggling, all excited. Mrs. Mayer introduced me to the class and made each student introduce themselves. After the introductions, I said my name again, and explained that my accent was funny, and that they can stop me anytime during the presentation to ask questions. That was the beginning of a great conversation. Between questions about culture, language, careers, education, agriculture and going to PR for shark fishing; these students made my day. We compared ND and PR in a lot of aspects. First, we talked geography, where PR is, how big and how far. Next, we went into demographics, habitants, languages, and schooling. And then, we went to my career experience. They learned that, with education, a little time and confidence in themselves, they can go wherever they want. They learned from my words that there is no need to be scared of differences. That the secret is to be open to hear, see, learn, and accept that the world is bigger than it looks and is open to all.

I really enjoyed each minute that I spent in this conversation. I know these young students now see the world a bit bigger, and they will look forward to making their careers an adventure, and maybe one day they will become part of the people who are "Helping People Help the Land."