



La Voz

Newsletter

October 2009

In this Issue:

- President's Message
- NOPHNCSE 2010 Election News
- Membership
- Philadelphia Conference Follow-up
- Upcoming Conferences
- And the 2009 NOPHNCSE Hispanic Farmer of the Year goes to...
- Member Receives Promotion
- Meet the South Central Regional Representative
- Hotel Selected for 2010 Conference

President's Message

Luis Hernandez, President



Dear NOPHNCSE Members,

Saludos!!

First let me thank each of you for your continuous support to NOPHNCSE. The 2009 NOPHNCSE annual training conference held in Philadelphia this past August was a success. We had 171 paid participants representing every NOPHNCSE region.

I thank the 2009 NOPHNCSE Conference Planning Committees and National Council for the hard and smart work. I also thank all of you who stepped up to the plate to ensure the success of the conference. The conference was co-hosted by five states: Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, New York, and New Jersey. I thank the five State Conservationists for providing necessary support and resources to ensure the success of the conference.

Many of you are asking for information about the 2010 annual training conference. Let me share the latest information on the 2010 NRCS Employee Organizations and SEPM's Joint Conference.

As you might know, the 2010 annual training conference will be a joint venture among the National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees (NOPBNRCSE), Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO), National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNCSE), and the Civil Rights Division Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPM's). The initial plans were to hold the conference during the week of April 5, 2010, in Kansas City, Kansas. After many negotiations with hotel facilities and NRCS upper management, it was decided to hold the

conference during the week of March 15, 2010, in Kansas City, Missouri. NRCS Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri are co-hosting the conference.

Negotiations of hotel facilities in Kansas City, Missouri, already have been finalized. Below you will find a hyperlink to hotel facilities. The Conference Planning Team is already established. Many of you will be part of the planning of this historical event, and I deeply thank you for that. The National Council appointed Lori Valadez (TX) and Carmen Ortiz (CA) to represent NOPHNRCS on the Conference Planning Team. Please direct questions about the 2010 annual training conference to Lori (lori.valadez@tx.usda.gov) or Carmen (carmen.ortiz@ca.usda.gov).

I encourage you to contact your regional representative and inquire how to get involved in NOPHNRCS activities. The organization is working on a set of projects where your help and talents are needed.

Holidays are approaching quickly. Spend time with your family and friends.

As always, do not hesitate to contact me for suggestions, ideas, or feedback.

Hasta Luego!!

NOPHNRCS 2010 Election News

Mike Castillo, Election/Nominations Committee Chairperson

I know that it seems like we just finished one election, but our 2010 annual conference will be held in conjunction with the NOPBNCSE and the APIO in March of next year in Kansas City, Missouri. This means we are going to have to push the election process up quite a bit as our 2010 conference is only five months away.

In years past our annual conference was held in the middle of summer, we did not have to get our election of officers until the end of spring. But with our conference moved up to March 2010, it means we will need to have our election process right after the first of year. Nomination/election forms will be coming out in early February 2010.

With this said, it is going to be extremely important that all members get their dues paid ASAP for 2010 calendar year, no later than January 2010. According to our Constitution and Bylaws, in order to participate in election, one must be a current year paid member. **So if you plan to run for office or most importantly wish to vote in upcoming election it is going to be very important that your dues for 2010 are paid up ASAP.**

Also with the introduction of our new Website, in order to be able to login and participate in the election process you are going to have to be a paid member on the website or it will not let you in.

The 2010 Election / Nomination 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 for next year paid right away.

The 2010 Election Nomination committee would like to thank all those that participated in the 2009 election process in some form or other. About 50 % of current paid members participated in last election. That means that our members are interested in the future of our great organization and who our leaders will be.

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

2010 Election/ Nomination committee members are:

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

Membership

Tim Garrahan, Membership Committee Chairperson

I want to thank everyone who became a new member in 2009 or renewed their membership for 2009. As a result of our membership drive in 2009, eight new members were recruited. At the banquet at our Annual Training Conference in Philadelphia, Eileen Vale and Luis Hernandez were recognized as the winners of the 2009 Membership Drive. Each one recruited two new members. Others recognized at the banquet were Jazelle Jusino, Salvador Salinas and Arturo Carvajal.

Because our Annual Training Conference will be in March 2010, the nomination committee will be starting the nomination and election process in January 2010. Only members who are in good standing (annual dues paid) are eligible to be members of the National Council or able to vote in the election. Mike Castillo is the Nominating Committee Chairperson and will be contacting potential nominees in January and February. As a result, **dues for calendar year 2010 must be paid by January 15, 2010.**

Dues may be sent to the following address: Tim Garrahan
7098 Atlanta Circle
Seaford, DE 19973

Please make out checks to NOPHNCSE.

In the near future, dues may be paid on our new website using a credit card.

If you are interested on becoming a Lifetime Member please contact Tim Garrahan at (302)678-4260 or via email at timothy.garrahan@de.usda.gov.

Philadelphia Conference Follow-up

- We had 171 paid registrants
- Students sponsored by NOPHNCSE: 8
- Students sponsored by NRCS: 1
- Approximately \$5,000 raised at the student auction

Upcoming Conferences

- **2010 Conference**
The 2010 conference will be a joint conference between NOPHNCSE, APIO, and NOPBNRCSE. Planning arrangements are currently being made for this event. Tentative plans are to hold the conference the week of March 15, 2010, in Kansas City, Missouri. The conference will be co-hosted by Missouri, Kansas, and Arkansas
- **San Antonio 2011 Conference**
The planning committee chairperson for the 2011 conference in San Antonio will be Bertha Venegas.

And the 2009 NOPHNCSE Hispanic Farmer of the Year goes to...

Edwin Almodovar

For the past couple years, the National Organization of Professional Hispanics Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees (NOPHNCSE) has been rewarding Farmers and Producers across the nation, for their exceptional efforts and highest commitment to conserving, enhancing, maintaining, and protecting our natural resources.

This year, we received 5 nominations from across our great nation. Nominees were judged based on their conservation on their farms or ranch, the impact they have on their communities, their conservation leadership activities and the economic viability of their operations.

The NOPHNCSE Program Committee was challenged by receiving 5 exceptional nominations, as each one of them was not just supported by the challenging criteria, but each one of them were putting conservation on the ground in ways beyond the reward of an award.

This year, the award was presented in Philadelphia, PA, to a farmer halfway across the world. Instead of going to bed, the nominee from Guam was up and receiving the distinguished Hispanic Farmer of the Year Award. Ginger Murphy, NRCS Associated Chief, presented the award to Ernest Wusstig for his exceptional conservation work in Guam. The award was presented at the Ray T. Margo luncheon among other distinguished award recipients.

Ernest and his beautiful wife, Frances, both left Guam on a Sunday morning, heading towards Philadelphia, PA. Ernest and Frances, owners of Island View Farms in Guam, were nominated by NRCS Guam Field Office for their efforts in conservation and impact they have made at the local level.

This year's recipient has also been an icon for many people for the way he has served this country and his community. His friends, coworkers and partners, have shared endlessly, that the recognition is most admirable to honor a farmer from Guam. NOPHNCSE was honored to present the 2009 Hispanic Farmer of the Year award to Ernest Wusstig.

Member Receives Promotion

Jacqueline Padron, National HEPM

Irma Hernandez, Stewardship Program Specialist, was promoted to a GS-14. Irma started her relationship with NRCS as a volunteer in Puerto Rico while she was completing her Master's Degree. As a volunteer, she presented her project at the NOPHNCSE conference and shortly thereafter, she was hired, 9 years ago, in New Jersey as a GS-9. Irma later was selected for a position in Delaware and accepted detail opportunities in Arizona and NHQ. A year ago, Irma was selected as a Stewardship Program Specialist at NHQ. This past year, she has been very busy designing and implementing the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

Irma, well deserved! You make us all very proud.

Meet the South Central Regional Representative

Mari Hrebik, South Central Regional Representative



Hello I am Mari Hrebik. I started with NRCS 6 1/2 years ago after graduating from New Mexico State University with a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering. In 2003, I started working for NRCS in my hometown of El Paso, Texas. I was the field engineer in the El Paso field office for 3

years. In June of 2006, I relocated to the Texas State Office in Temple as a Design Engineer. I love my job as I get to work on design projects throughout the great state of Texas.

I got married a year and a half ago to someone who also enjoys an NRCS career. My husband, a Wisconsin native, is a Construction Engineer for the Watershed office. We live in Temple with my two, very spoiled Pekingese, Princess and Angel. Although not much of a hobby person, I do enjoy jewelry making.

I joined our organization while in El Paso and really became active and excited about it when I made the move to Temple. In college, I was the president of a Hispanic Engineering organization, Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, and enjoyed every bit of it. Our NOPHNRCSE organization reminds me of that time in my life and it gives me much excitement to think that I can have the capacity to make improving changes within our organization. I am very eager about making our organization a stronger and more inspiring group. Thankfully to the South Central region's members I got the chance to become regional rep. I will do my best to perform this duty well; I'm really enjoying myself already.

Last but not least. I would like to thank Cris Perez, previous regional rep, for all the time and dedication he put into our region.

Hotel Selected for 2010 Conference

Lori Valadez, Member of the Conference Planning Committee

The Joint Training Conference of NOPHNRCSE, NOPBNRCSE, and APIO will be held the week of March 15, 2010, at the Kansas City Marriott Downtown. You can check out the hotel at <http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/mcidt-kansas-city-marriott-downtown/>. You will see that it is a nice facility that will suit our training needs and is within walking distance to restaurants, shops, and other attractions. The conference planning committees are getting geared up and more conference details will be coming soon.