



2018 NOPHNRCS 25th Anniversary Conference, San Antonio, TX...pg.4



IN THIS ISSUE



On behalf of the Ray T. Margo family, Minerva Margo presents NOPHNRCS President Michael Margo with a check for \$2,500 in honor of NOPHNRCS's 25th Anniversary in San Antonio, TX. The money will be used to support a student scholarship...pg 6

Hello NOPHNRCS Family!



I hope everyone is having a great summer so far! Summer is a time to enjoy the fellowship of friends and family. Our 25th Anniversary Leadership and Technical Training in San Antonio from June 5 - 9 provided such an opportunity for the NOPHNRCS family to unite in fellowship. A big thank you to our planning team who made such a memorable training event possible, our speakers and instructors

for sharing their time and expertise with us, and to Texas NRCS who helped sponsor the training. We had approximately 125 attendees which included NRCS employees, retired NOPHNRCS members, guests, and non-federal speakers. A total of eight NOPHNRCS past presidents and many charter members were in attendance. Our scholarship auction raised over \$2,100! Please log into our website to view PowerPoint presentations from our training sessions.



Importance of Native Pollinators in Agriculture...pg 7

In this issue of *La Voz*, you will see highlights from our conference including our NOPHNRCS award winners and student scholarship recipients. A very special thank you to the Ray T. Margo family: Minerva Margo and Sheila Margo Sanchez who donated \$2,500 (in honor of NOPHNRCS's 25th Anniversary) to support a student scholarship. We will join WiN, APIO, and AIANEA for our next conference in Spokane, WA in August 2019! Please contact me if you are interested in serving in the 2019 Conference planning team.



Welcome to Mississippi...pg 8

In other news, I would like to congratulate and welcome two new council members Urayoan Diaz-Pacheco from Iowa as Treasurer and Stella Santos from Texas as South Central Regional Representative. Thanks to Edgar Cantu and Flavio Garza for your time and service on our council. I would also like to recognize Vice President Bianca Diaz from NJ and Southeast Regional Representative Joxelle Velasquez from Mississippi for being elected for a second term. Thanks to all members who were nominated.

It was wonderful visiting with many of you in person last month in San Antonio. We are truly a family, so please stay in contact. Please remain engaged, motivated, and active in everything you do. I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer!

Sincerely,

Michael Margo
NOPHNRCSE President

New Council Members:

Stella Santos- [South Central Rep.](#)



My name is Stella Santos, I'm a Soil Conservation Technician in Uvalde, Texas. I started my career with NRCS in 1990 as Area Clerk then given the opportunity to train in place as a Soil Conservation Technician. I have been with NRCS for 28 years in my position which have given me the experience that allows me the opportunity to serve our farmers and ranchers in our community. I was honored to attend the very first NOPHNRCSE in San Antonio, Texas. I became a member of NOPHNRCSE in 1994 and also became a Lifetime Member. In the years of NOPHNRCSE existence, I have supported the organization in several capacities. I have served as the National Council Secretary from 2000- 2004. I have also served on various planning committees, moderator committee, auction committee, scholarship committee and now as South Central Regional Rep. In 2007, I was awarded the Natural Resource Conservation Award. I am married to Alfonso Santos and have three beautiful children Alfonso II 29, Nico 20 and Anyssa 19.

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*If you'd like to submit an article for the next "La Voz" _2018 Fall issue please get in touch with misha.vargas@me.usda.gov.
Deadline: November 1st, 2018.*

Continuation...

Urayoan Díaz - Treasurer



Urayoan was born in Ponce and raised in Bo Marueño, where he spent a childhood making good memories and going on adventures. Ever since an early age, his inclination toward agriculture and nature was obvious. He preferred spending time riding horses and harvesting coffee with his family rather than playing video games. It was during this time that he had the opportunity to experience the infamous "picada del Abayarde". Urayoan attended the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus better known by "El Colegio". He completed his bachelor in Agronomy.

After graduating, he worked in the private sector for 7 years as a Program Manager in the agricultural industry. A new chapter of life brought him to growing pumpkins and cassava on a farm in Juana Díaz, PR. Working on the farm reminded him of the good times of his youth and made him want to be a better land steward improve his soils and natural resources he depended on. He also saw how important personal relationships in the farming community are and liked helping other neighbors when he could.

2018 NOPHNRCSE 25th Anniversary Conference, San Antonio, TX

By Misha Vargas (Soil Conservationist-Bangor,ME)



NOPHNRCSE Members

Over the course of 25 years NOPHNRCSE has been working together to serve as an advocacy group for Hispanic employees by starting an outreach effort to recruit potential members. We have been supported as Hispanics and have had guidance on how to achieve leadership positions in our agency keeping in mind our number one commitment of “helping people help the land”.

NOPHNRCSE celebrated their 25th anniversary in San Antonio, TX where the first Interim Organization held their conference becoming the National Organization of Professional SCS Employees.

Joyful faces, loud laughs and great memories come and go across the lobby of the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel along with Spanish sentences that might end in an English quote, “Spanglish”, a familiar way of having a conversation with a Hispanic colleague. There’s an excitement to see everyone and it is clear that a week of wonderful things is ahead of us. Coffee and pastries are part of our mornings as we get ready to start our first day of NEDC training; Civil Rights, Managing for Excellence, Working Effectively with Hispanic Producers and Improving Conservation Delivery for Women Landowners and Producers.

An opening ceremony for the NOPHNRCSE Conference led Bertha Venegas (NRCS, TX) follows on Friday morning after a week of NEDC trainings. Surrounded by delicious food and great people we are welcomed by Salvador Salinas (Texas State Conservationist), Jeffrey Dzedzic (NEDC Director) and our NOPHNRCSE President, Michael Margo. In memory of our family and friends of Puerto Rico we had Edwin Almodovar (State Conservationist, PR) give a presentation of all the recovery efforts that have been a tremendous help in PR and Virgin Island.



Soil Health session

Sessions on Special Emphasis Program Managers, Career Development/Networking Outreach and Soil Health were offered as part of our conference where approximately 115 employees attended. These trainings provided employees with valuable tools for Agency Program delivery to undeserved communities, a renewed sense of engagement, and ways to translate leadership into their positions.

After our morning session followed by an exquisite luncheon, we are now networking, building relationships and gaining confidence. In that subject we all had a unique opportunity to listen to one of our key note speaker Eldonna Lewis Fernandez and learned how

Continuation...

Since 2015 Urayoan has been with the NRCS as a Soil Conservationist in Carroll, IA. He is thankful for having the opportunity of getting introduced to NRCS through a summer internship and the career possibilities of the future. He is very passionate about working with producers to help conserve our natural resources while helping them achieve their goals.

When ask to share with us some facts about him... Ura describes himself as a simple person who likes to laugh and make his dreams come true by working hard to reach his goals. He enjoys being active and doing outdoor activities such as cycling, CrossFit, hiking, kayaking and camping. He also brews his own beer and loves to be creative in the kitchen.

her experiences have helped her on gaining a better results through negotiation: “creating a win- win result by understanding the Pitfalls to avoid”. How to think like a leader and a negotiator were the “take home messages” of an amazing speech.

We cannot leave the scene without doing our annual salsa class where all the fun and dancing starts, music takes over as you could hear the 1,2,3 and 5,6,7 by the salsa teacher Misha (myself). Yes, it’s very helpful to get your body moving after a long day of training and what a way to get yourself a little loose.



Recipients of NOPHNRCSE 2018 Scholarship: (L-R) Ashley Romero, Nilda Ruiz, Tiffany Pérez, Damuel Morales

First day of NOPHNRCSE session is over, now is time to get our bidding number ready for the auction night to start. Glamorous lights are brightening the hotel conference room, loud conversations through the dinner buffet lines dominate the environment, and curious people come and go silently looking at the items for sale! Finally the auctioneer grabs the microphone and starts his unique chant, through the night numbers and more numbers kept increasing our scholarship funds all the way until we raised \$2,100 plus a donation from the Margo family: Minerva Margo and Sheila Margo Sanchez who donated \$2,500 (in honor of NOPHNRCSE’s 25th Anniversary) to support a student scholarship . Ashley Romero, Damuel Morales, Nilda Ruiz and Tiffany Pérez (the 2018

NOPHNRCSE scholarship recipients) where very excited to know how well auction night had gone and how supported they felt by their new NOPHNRCSE family.

As the second day of training goes by, employees continue learning from expert instructors on topics ranging from how to identify biases to developing conservation plans that include soil health practices.

After all the NOPHNRCSE past presidents shared their testimonials with great advices an amazing PowerPoint put together by Rocemi Morales brought tears to the room. This special presentation included pictures of members sharing how long they’ve been in the organization and why.

Needless to say that we ended the night with great music and dancing, big hugs and a “see you next year”...



NOPHNRCSE Past Presidents (and current) at the 25th Anniversary Conference: (L-R), Carlos Suarez, Humberto Hernandez, Pedro Ramos, Rebecca de la Torre, Michael Margo, Bertha Venegas, Rosendo Treviño III, Astrid Martinez, and Rafael Guerrero.



Minerva Margo, Michael Margo

On behalf of the Ray T. Margo family, Minerva Margo presents NOPHNCSE President Michael Margo with a check for \$2,500 in honor of NOPHNCSE's 25th Anniversary in San Antonio, TX. The money will be used to support a student scholarship.

North plain Region

NOPHNCSE Conference

By Joel Alicea (Soil Conservationist, MN)

From the first day of NOPHNCSE training I sat down with some peers during breakfast laughing over memories from college. It was a great opportunity to meet new people and catch up with some I already knew. The networking experience gave me the chance to meet colleagues from all levels within the agency, even retirees.

I was enrolled on the Career Development and Networking/Outreach training, and they got me engaged from beginning until the end of each presentation. During the training we got the opportunity to discuss our concerns and recommendations on how to work more efficiently with farmers and producers. The topics about leadership, communication, self-development, and opportunities to keep growing within the agency were enriching in a professional and personal level. They showed how with a good attitude, optimism and hard work, we can go above and beyond in our line of duty.

We all have different personalities and different ways of expressing ourselves, but after this training I have a better idea of how to communicate with coworkers and clients. I'm new to the agency and with this experience now I have a broader perspective of what the job entails, also helped me add new goals to achieve in my career. I will highly recommend this training to everybody.



Northeast Region

Importance of Native Pollinators in Agriculture

By Paula Salazar, USDA NRCS, Augusta, ME



Figure 1: Workshop participants collecting different types of pollinators

Recently the Knox–Lincoln Soil & Water Conservation District hosted a workshop presented by Eric Venturini (Xerces Society Member and Pollinator expert). A group of farmers, gardeners, and pollinator lovers, walked around farm land in Damariscotta, catching and IDing different pollinators on the farm, explaining their habitat and important role they play on the farming industry. Now, you are wondering, what are the different type of pollinators in Maine? Pollinators can be insects, like bees, moths, butterflies, beetles, flies, ants, wasps, and the list goes on. Hummingbirds are also pollinators.

The workshop started with participants collecting bees in a plastic tube to later be identified. There are more than 270 species of native bees in Maine, *UMExtension*. They all are important for the food production and agricultural industry, like Maine’s lowbush blueberry, fruit trees, and vegetables crops. Many agricultural producers bring honeybees to do the work, but it is costly for the farmers and stressed the honeybees due to transportation. Why bring bees when you have Native bees and other pollinators available? Native bees have several advantages over honeybees as pollinators. Many are active early in the spring, before honeybee colonies reach large size. They pollinate more plants by flying rapidly and pollinating more efficiently and the native bees would thus free up the increasingly scarce, in-demand honey bees for work elsewhere.



Figure 2: Orange Belted Bumblebee

The first and most abundant bee found on the farm was the Orange Belted Bumblebee. They are one of the first bees out of hibernation in early spring, playing a big role on the various early blooming fruit trees. Another important pollinator found in a squash flower was the Squash bee, which specialized in gathering nectar and pollen from flowers on the Cucurbit family: squash, zucchinis, cucumber, pumpkins, and melons, among others. The squash bees are more efficient when it comes to pollinating because they

make more contact with reproductive structures in the flower, start earlier in the morning and move rapidly from flower to flower without distracting with other plant species.



Figure 3: Morning Dew Farm

Now, what different management pollinator-friendly practices can you do in order to increase pollinators and their habitat? Hold off mowing the spring's dandelion and extend the fall mowing until the Goldenrods and Asters are done blooming; late fall blooming is the main wintering food source for bees and migrating monarch butterflies. Farmers can reduce the amount of ground disturbance by doing minimum tillage/ strip tillage to preserve the habitat of the ground-nester bees. Additionally, reduce the pesticides applications to increase pollinator's population. Hedgerows, thickets, set-asides, trees and snags are habitat components that provide cover and nest sites for many

wildlife species. Lastly, plant a variety of diverse plants throughout the growing season for food source, this includes trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses. Can you imagine a world without flowers? Pollinators are essential in the plant habitat community and play a big role for the food industry and everyone can do one small thing in order to conserve them.

South East Region

Welcome to Mississippi!

By Joxelle Velázquez-García, MLRA Soil Scientist, Meridian Soil Survey Office.



*(L-R) Front - J'Nay Domineck, Nolo Martínez, Renú Bradley Rivera-Cruz, Sylvia S. Noriega-Luciano, Josecarlo Rivera-Villalobos, Victor M. Laguer, Mario A. Velázquez, Kelvin Kennedy, and Clarence Finley
Photo courtesy of Mississippi Public Affairs.*

Mississippi's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was one of three states chosen to host student interns from the University of Puerto Rico – Mayaguez Campus.

The students are working through an agreement between NRCS and Hispanic Talent Development and Recruitment (Nolo Consulting, LLC). This agreement establishes a working and long-lasting opportunity for the Hispanic communities and recruitment priorities to attract talented individuals from Hispanic-serving institutions and other secondary education programs. The agreement will also support efforts and activities that build a robust and reliable pool of talented bilingual professionals that could help satisfy the agency's strategic goals to reach a growing number of U.S. Hispanic/Latino farmers.



Cotton Field in Fayette, Mississippi. Photo by Joxelle Velázquez-García, HEPM, NRCS-MS.



On Wednesday, July 11, Mississippi Soil Survey TSS staff through coordination with the Soil Conservation Staff from the Fayette field office, conducted a training day to provide experience in technical soil services. During the morning we visited a farmer to perform an evaluation for a potential construction of a pond in order to provide water for livestock. The evaluation consisted on several soil borings across the landscape to help determine the potential of the soil for an embankment pond. We also evaluated the drainage areas, water infiltration and water

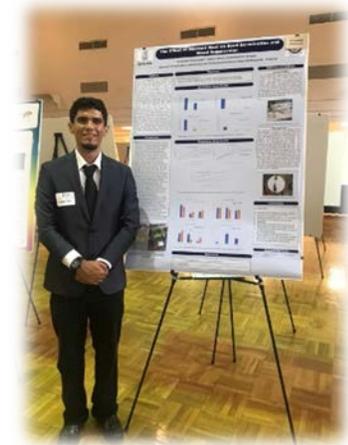
holding capacity in the surrounding areas. In this part of Mississippi, students were exposed to a very particular type of soil known as Loess. The major land resource area (MLRA) is known as the Southern Mississippi Valley Loess (MLRA 131). This MLRA is mantled with a thick deposit of loess overlying unconsolidated coastal marine sediment. Loess is an aeolian sediment formed by the accumulation of wind-blown sediments (predominantly silt). In these area soils are strongly sloping on side slopes in the highly dissected parts of the bluff hills that border the Mississippi River Valley.

The interns showed high interest in soil properties and asked questions about how those properties can positively or negatively affect the effectiveness of ponds. Also they learned how soil properties, potentials, and limitations are determined to NRCS conservation planning.



The interns' primary workstations are located in Areas 3 and 4 in Mississippi. They will continue assisting the field offices with day to day activities, which will include helping farmers and landowners, conducting field surveys, and attending field days. Tours at Alcorn State University, Mississippi State University, and other agricultural related facilities are also scheduled.

2018 Scholarship Recipients



My name is Christopher Flores-Lopez, and I was born in San Antonio, Texas on April 26, 1997. I can confidently say that I enjoy being in school. I have a desire to learn as much as I can from the exemplary professors at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. As I am writing this, I am just beginning my fourth semester of post-secondary education, and I am loving every second of it. I have learned to have a great respect for the time and energy my professors and their graduate students put into their writings, teachings, and research programs. My goal is to take the knowledge they are providing me in college into whatever future career I may hold. However, it is because of the generosity of independent organizations, and those of the like, that I even have the opportunity to attend my university in the first place. So from the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank everybody involved within the NRCS for the opportunity for me to better my future, and in turn, provide me with the means to give back to the community.

My name is Damuel H. Morales Barreto, I am a junior at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez, currently I'm part of the Department of Agriculture where I'm majoring a bachelor degree in General Agriculture. During my three years in college I have been part of different associations such as, Future Farmers of America (FFA) and "Generación Movimiento Verde". This is a student association that it was created to educate high school students in conservation, also I have been part of "5 Dias" the biggest agricultural fair of the island, the fair is devoted to educate people in agriculture. In 2015 I achieved the highest award on the Boy Scout being an Eagle Scout and I am at the moment finishing the Summit Award on Venturing. On my sophomore year in college I started to work with the Department of Agriculture, where we started building an appto facilitate the sale and marketing of their products through the island. Next summer (2018) I will be participating as a Student Trainee (Soil Conservation) on a pathways internship with the NRCS Field Office in Maysville, Kentucky.





My name is Ashley Romero and I am a senior student at University of Arizona – Yuma Campus pursuing a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Agricultural Technology Management and minor in Microbiology. I have been working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for a few years and have been building up my knowledge and experiences with agriculture through conferences, internships and volunteer service. Additionally, I have volunteered at a food safety lab in the Yuma Ag Center and have gotten a part-time position under the USDA-ACIS grant at Arizona Western College, which is centered on climate change and its complex biotic interactions that affect wildlife and agricultural ecosystems while equipping students with 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, science literacy, problem-solving, and communication. I am currently also employed as a land lab technician at a produce-based farm where I assist with daily farming activities and research seasonal crop results to develop effective planting and maintenance strategies. I expect to graduate in December 2018 and pursue a career in agriculture. My goal is to work in the government, with my top choice being the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I want to one day be able to make a difference and I know agriculture is the way to go.

Tiffany Perez is a rising senior at Humboldt State University where she is pursuing a degree in Wildland Soils. Her passion for wildlife and the environment fuels her goal: to restore deteriorating ecosystems to once again be self-sustaining. She enjoys volunteer work and is currently an office assistant to a Humboldt local non-profit called the North Coast Environmental Center. There she has been learning essential community building skills to accomplish another future goal of hers which is to educate under privileged communities about sustainable practices. She loves to hike, camp, bake, collect succulents, archery and yoga.



Howdy!

My name is Eduardo Jose De La Garza and this fall I will attend Texas A & M University in College Station, TX, where I will be majoring in Agricultural Science. I currently attend Eagle Pass High School where I’m to graduate from the top 10 % of my class. Since I began showing lambs in my county stock show when I was in 3rd grade I fell in love with the agriculture industry. In the future I hope to gain a career related to agriculture where I can enhance my abilities and knowledge. While in high school I was also member of the national honor society, Eagle Pass 4H Club and also I’m currently the Co-director for the 2018 Teen. A.C.T.S Catholic Retreat. Thank you for this scholarship, but, especially for believing in my dreams and helping me get one step closer towards a college education.

My name is Nilda Ruiz. My family and I immigrated to the United States from Michoacán, México. I am an incoming senior at University of California, Berkeley majoring in Conservation and Resource Studies set to graduate this next coming May as a first-generation college graduate. Although most of my time is spent studying and volunteering, I enjoy going to the gym, walking and going out to watch movies with my friends whenever possible. I am a tutor and translator at REALM Charter School, assisting mostly students of color and immigrants recently arrived from various countries such as Honduras and Algeria. After I graduate from UC Berkeley, I want to spend several years in the education system as a high school teacher, supporting and encouraging students to pursue a higher education like my teachers once supported and encouraged me. After my teaching career, I plan on enrolling in graduate school to earn a doctorate degree in conservation biology, and participate in research that provides solutions to habitat restoration and conservation of ecosystem functions and services. This coming fall, I am studying abroad at Costa Rica where I will create an independent research project, gaining skills I will need in future research.



Award Winners



Visionary Award - Milton Cortes is currently the acting State Soil Scientist in Raleigh, North Carolina. He was born in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico, and was raised in Bayamon. Milton graduated from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez campus, with a major in agronomy and soils. Milton started his career with the Agriculture Extension Service in Toa Alta, Puerto Rico, where he served as an area agronomist for 9 years and provided service to 5 municipalities.

In 1990, Milton was hired as a soil scientist for the Soil Conservation Service in Bucks County, Pennsylvania and then in Montgomery County. In 1993, Milton transferred to Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, as the Lajas Valley soil survey project leader. He also served as resource soil scientist for most of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. While in Puerto Rico, Milton served as the liaison for the climate project in the U.S. Virgin Islands. He was responsible for data collection, project station maintenance, and data collector software programming and settings.

In 1997, Milton was transferred to North Carolina as the NRCS Assistant State Soil Scientist in Raleigh. In April of this year, Milton was designated acting State Soil Scientist for North Carolina. Milton has also worked on an intermittent detail for about 2 years in Honduras, providing soils and agronomy assistance after Hurricane Mitch under the U.S. Agency for International Development. He has served as acting State Soil Scientist in Florida, North Carolina, and Wyoming, and as acting team leader for the former MLRA 14 Regional Soil Survey Office.

Milton serves as a mentor to various soil scientists and soil conservationists.

Outstanding Member Award - Bianca Diaz-Deliz is currently a soil conservationist in the Frenchtown field office in New Jersey. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, she earned her bachelor's degree in animal science from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez campus in 2014

Her career with NRCS started after learning about the agency at a college job fair. In 2012, Bianca was selected as a soil conservationist trainee for the Bangor, Maine field office — and in the summer of 2013, she worked at the field office in Augusta, Maine. When she returned to Puerto Rico for her senior year of college, Bianca worked at the Mayagüez and San Sebastian field offices in Puerto Rico. Upon graduation in 2014, she was offered the soil conservationist position in Augusta, Maine. In August 2015, Bianca moved to New Jersey to serve as a soil conservationist.



As a member of NOPHNRCSE, Bianca provided guidance during the planning and implementation of the 2017 *Leaders in Conservation* national training series, a joint effort with the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NRCS), National Organization of Professional Woman in NRCS (WiN), Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO), and the National Employee Development Center. In 2015, Bianca also participated as co-chair of the Program Agenda Committee and chair of the Moderator Committee during the NOPHNRCSE Leadership Training. Bianca has been on the NOPHNRCSE national council since 2016, and currently serves as vice-president.



Leadership Award Rafael Vega is originally from Lajas, Puerto Rico, but presently resides in Smithfield, North Carolina with his wife. He graduated with honors from the Inter American University of Puerto Rico with a bachelor's degree in environmental technology and a master's degree in environmental sciences. He began his career with USDA-NRCS in 2005 through the Student Career Employment Program.

In his 13 years with the agency, he has held a variety of positions including soil conservationist, district conservationist, and area easement specialist for the state of Indiana. In addition, Rafael has participated in many special projects including holding the positions of Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager, representative on the National Civil Rights Advisory Committee, Leadership Development Program Participant, and President of the Soil and Water Conservation Society—Hoosier Chapter.

As a NOPHNRCSE member, Rafael has served as Midwest representative, National Council member, and Scholarship Endowment committee chair. Rafael is currently the State Resource Conservationist for North Carolina. In his spare time, he enjoys reading, hiking, and traveling.

Amiga Award Janella Cruz is presently a soil scientist and Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager (HEPM) in upstate New York. Janella is originally from Bayamón, Puerto Rico. She earned her bachelor's degree in environmental science with a minor in chemistry from Universidad Metropolitana in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Afterwards, Janella attended graduate school at New Mexico State University, studying soil science and receiving a Master of Science in Agronomy with a minor in environmental management. During graduate school, Janella was elected to be the International Service Director (2005-2006) for the Rotaract Club, working on special projects for Centro Santa Catalina in Juarez, Mexico.



In 2009, Janella started her professional career with NRCS as a soil scientist in Rapid City, South Dakota. In 2010, Janella became a member of NOPHNRCSE where she has served as secretary and currently serving as East Region representative. During her career, Janella worked in the MLRA soil survey office in Flagstaff, Arizona, where she also served as the Area 1 representative for the Civil Rights Advisory Committee. In early winter 2014, Janella got a promotion to the Paul Smiths MLRA Soil Survey Office in upstate New York. In 2015, she was selected to serve as the HEPM for New York State where she continues to promote outreach projects for the agency.



Randal Blackwood is currently the supervisory soil conservationist for a team in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. He received his bachelor's degree in forest management from North Carolina State University in 1994. He began his career in timber procurement, later taking on the responsibilities of managing six contract logging crews. This involved budgeting, contracting, and field inspections of approximately 12,000 acres of timberland for harvest each year. His last assignment with International Paper was in the role of geographic information systems (GIS) forester. In this position, he served as the GIS trainer for 30 employees and managed the inventory and mapping databases for 300,000 acres of company-owned timberland.

When an opportunity became available, he moved back to his fourth-generation family farm and began work with NRCS in North Carolina as a district conservationist in 2002. He is working in one of the 10 highest ranking counties in North Carolina, based on the 2014 Agricultural Census (1st in beef cattle, 2nd for dairy, and 6th for poultry).

Randal is an activist. He builds relations of trust, respect, and ethics — and he enjoys working with minority groups. Under the new “team approach,” Randal has supervisory responsibilities in Randolph, Rowan, and Davie counties. As an NRCS employee, he exemplifies outstanding service to NRCS around the nation, to our clients, and to science through developing and implementing the sound technology transferred on grazing land resources.

Election Results

The 2017 NOPHNRCSE Elections took place further in the year because our website was being renovated. If you have not been in to check this version of our online system, please do so. I hope you enjoy the new features, and please email us with any recommendations or concerns.

July 2nd through July 10th was a busy time with elections for four NOPHNRCSE positions.

Vice President

Treasurer

South Central Regional Representative

South Eastern Regional Representative

We had a total of 12 nominees and 10 candidates for this election process 4 of which ran for treasurer.

The national council would like to thank each one of these members for their interest in being involved in NOPHNRCSE endeavors.

Stella Santos, Flavio Garza, Misha Vargas, Josean Torres, Urayoan Diaz Pacheco, Mari Hrebik, Edgar Cantu, Ricardo Ortiz-Rios, Eileen Vale, Yomaree Cortez, Bianca Diaz, & Joxelle Velazquez.

Please receive our heartfelt gratitude for holding NOPHNRCSE in such high regards and understanding the importance of your leadership in these ranks. We feel honored with your participation and encourage you to remain involve through our meetings while still maintaining interest to future positions in the council.

I would like to announce our newly elected positions and council members:

Vice President - Bianca Diaz

Treasurer - Urayoan Diaz Pacheco

South Central Regional Representative – Stella Santos

South Eastern Regional Representative – Joxelle Velazquez

To our new and returning council members, Welcome and Welcome back!!!

Thank you for accepting the responsibility of maintaining our organization in good standing. Our membership and this council will continue to foment the premise or our founding fathers within



Lifetime Membership Drive

Lifetime Membership benefits:

- Your paid life membership dues are not subject to increase.
- Life memberships can decrease administrative expenditures.
- Life memberships increase revenues.
- A life membership provides peace-of-mind in that dues are current and saves money for the member.

- A life membership provides opportunity to promote the organization, increase stature, and for grassroots educational and outreach programs.
- A life membership provides a springboard for a separate entity within the organization to manage and administer these financial gains.
- A life membership offers a great degree of prestige and identifies you as an individual apart from the regular membership.
- A Life membership could generate income if it “raffle-off” occasionally as part of our regular membership drive or during “scholarship night”.

Currently the fee for a lifetime membership is \$500.00

Payment Options:

- 1 payment of \$500.00
- 2 payments of \$250.00
- 4 payments of \$125.00
- 5 payments of \$100.00
- 10 payments of \$50.00

Rules:

- The first payment has to be sent with the application form and choose what type of payment option.
- You have until December 1, 2018 to complete your payments.
- If for some reason you cannot finish by March 1 we will give you until April 30 to finish your commitment. A written statement requesting extension should be provided to the membership chair by December 1st.
- No money will be forfeit.
- If you change your mind or cannot finish the payment plan even with the extension, the money will be credited for future years. No money will be return.
- Payment options: Contact Tim Garrahan. Once website is running payments will be able to be made online.

| Region | Representative | Phone | Email |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Caribbean area | Yadira Feliciano | 787-766-5206, ext.111 | Yadira.feliciano@pr.usda.gov |
| East | Janella Cruz | 518-327-3774, ext. 3 | Janella.cruz@ny.usda.gov |
| Midwest | Diana Avellanet | 269-467-6336, ext.3 | Diana.avellanet@mi.usda.gov |
| Northern plains | Roberto Luciano | 701-463-2851, ext. 244 | Roberto.Luciano@nd.usda.gov |
| South Central | Stella Santos | 830-278-2014, ext. 9101 | Stella.santos@tx.usda.gov |
| South East | Joxelle Velázquez-García | 601-483-4100, 113 | Joxelle.Velazquez@ms.usda.gov |
| West | Victor Hernandez | 530-792-5628, ext.3 | Victor.hernandez@ca.usda.gov |

