



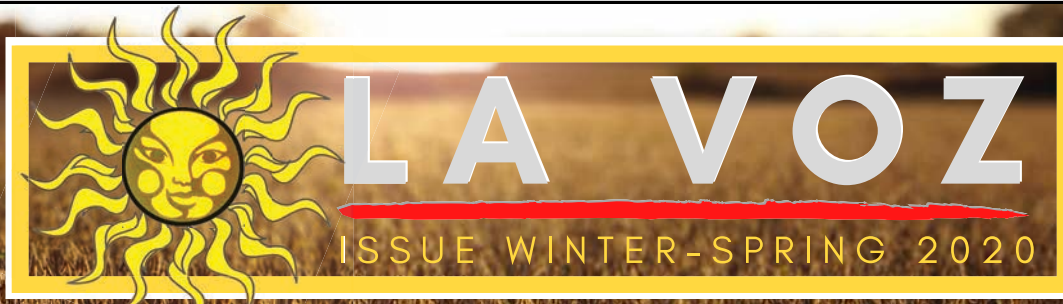
NPHNRCSE

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL HISPANIC NRCS EMPLOYEES



LA VOZ

SPECIAL EDITION



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

BIANCA DIAZ-DELIZ



Dear NOPHNCSE Members,

On this edition I would like to start by saying THANK YOU!

Thank you for all the efforts of our members and non-members who in one way or another collaborated behind the scenes to make sure that our Joint Employee Organizations Training Conference in Spokane, WA last August of 2019 was a complete success. The presidents of the six Employee

Organizations (NOPHNCSE, WiN, APIO, NOPBNRCSE, Equality USDA and AIANEA) are meeting monthly to share ideas, activities and possible future training conferences as a result of this event.

As we are transitioning and working on planning for future events and member needs, we want to hear from you! If there are any topics or ideas that you would like to discuss, as well as training, this is a great time to share them with us. Reach out to your regional representative for guidance and support.

In the upcoming months there will be opportunities to serve in acting capacities. Stay involved for roles as acting council member or apply for a vacant position on the national council. For more information, see article submitted by our Nomination Election Chair and our Ex-Vice President in this edition.

Finally, don't forget to share success stories with the rest of us. I hope all of you are looking forward to Spring and stay active and engaged in everything you do.

Respectfully,

Bianca Diaz-Deliz
President of NOPHNCSE

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear NOPHNRCSE members,

I want to echoes the President's message by saying thank you for all the outstanding work you do. We present you a Special Edition of *La Voz* that we hope you enjoy and share with members and non members alike. This is an opportunity to showcase the efforts and successes of NOPHNRCSE membership. Please, continue sending us the great work done in your States. If you have an article or success story you would like to share through *La Voz*, please send it to ricardo.ortiz-rios@usda.gov.

In other news, as we all know, we are currently facing an unprecedented challenge world wide with the sudden appearance and development of the COVID-19. Please, follow the guidelines established by your leadership (see also [myFPAC guidelines](#)) and CDC. Click [here](#) to learn more on how you can protect yourself from exposure to the virus. Together, we will overcome this challenge sooner.

Thriving **together**,

Ricardo Ortiz-Ríos

La Voz Editor

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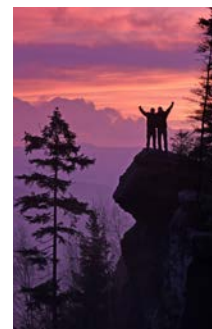
New Member's Spotlight; Membership information;
Call for Nominations; And more **P. 22 -25**

NOPHNRCSE: A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITIES

One of the goals of our organization is to provide **opportunities** for employees to acquire **experience**, while gaining **visibility** and **recognition**.

Available committee vacancies:

- COMMUNICATIONS
- CONSTITUTIONS & BYLAWS
- HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE
- FINANCE
- NATURAL RESOURCES
- PARTNERSHIPS (LEGISLATIVES & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS)
- RECRUITMENT & CAREER DEVELOPMENT



Contact your regional representative if you would like to serve in any of these committees.

JOINT EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATIONS TRAINING CONFERENCE

STRIVE FOR THE SUMMIT

NOPHNRCSE, AIANEA, APIO, EQUALITY USDA & WIN

BY JANELLA CRUZ, SOIL SCIENTIST, PAUL SMITHS, NY

On August 22 to 24, 2019, NOPHNRCSE, AIANEA, APIO, WIN and Equality USDA, celebrated the Joint Employees Organization Conference in Spokane, Washington.



2019 Joint Employee Organizations Training Conference "Strive for the Summit." Photos from Victor M. Hernandez, Heidi M. Ramsey, Astrid Martinez and Luis E. Aponte.

[Click here to see more pictures.](#)

This event brought organizations from NRCS together represented by our very own NOPHNRCSE, AIANEA, APIO WIN and Equality USDA. The partnership and leadership from these organizations presented an excellent networking opportunity for NRCS employees in different career stages gaining exposure to professional training as well as representing the diversity and inclusiveness from all organizations.

Click on the different organization logos to learn more.



STRIVE FOR THE SUMMIT: LEADERS TRAINING LEADERS CONFERENCE

BY VICTOR M. HERNANDEZ, OUTREACH COORDINATOR, DAVIS, CA



Dr. Sharon Nance spoke on the challenges and benefits of perseverance in her workshop. Photo by Victor M. Hernandez.

On the weekend of September 23-24, I had the privilege of being a moderator and speaker at the USDA NRCS Joint Employee Association Training Conference in Spokane, Washington. The conference was titled Kulia I Ka-Nu'u or Strive for the Summit, and was coordinated between Equality USDA; Women in Natural Resources (WIN); National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNRCSE); Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO); American Indian-Alaska Native Employees Association for NRCS (AIANEA); and the National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees (NOPBNRCSE).

The conference took a leader-training-leader approach, which provided for high-profile NRCS leaders to take center stage and reflect on challenges they faced throughout their careers. These leaders also spoke on how they persevered to reach their individual professional goals. The conference was scheduled with two full days of activities and three learning tracks, which focused on leadership, diversity, equity, inclusion, and technical leadership. The learning tracks consisted of breakout sessions with topics on employee relations, emotional intelligence and conflict management, to include generational diversity in the workplace. The days agenda also included salsa dancing, high-intensity interval training, a silent and live auction, association meetings, and countless opportunities to grow and network with our NRCS counterparts from around the country.

I especially enjoyed the breakout session on "Intersections of Identity: Women Leading NRCS." The track featured three state conservationists and California's own Dr. Sharon Nance, who spoke of waiting for a younger generation to arrive. "My job, my advocacy, has been to hang on, until you could get here," said Dr. Nance. "That was my job, and now you are here. Now, it is your turn."

Personally, I found the joint employee association training was an outstanding opportunity for me to refocus my career and challenge myself to new heights.

The association committees are open to NRCS employees at every level and are an excellent vehicle for picking up new skills for your resume that you may not otherwise gain in your normal day-to-day activities. Membership is open for all associations and all are welcome to join.

2019

FARMER OF THE YEAR

Twisted Sweetgum Farm LLC

The National Organization of Professional Hispanics NRCS Employees congratulates the 2019 Farmer of the Year awardee: **Twisted Sweet Gum Farm.**

Twisted Sweet Gum Farm is a family enterprise, the owners are Benigno Gonzalez with 49% share, Betina Gonzalez with 49% share and Courtney Wells (daughter) with 2% share with a total of 221 acres of land. Benigno comes from Mexico and started working in North Carolina doing what he knows best, farming. Everything was a challenge at that time, especially the language; several years after living here he married Betina and adopted her child from a previous marriage (Courtney).



Pictured Left to Right: Benigno and Betina Gonzalez from Twisted Sweetgum Farm, and Luis Cruz-Arroyo, NRCS Caribbean Director.

Both Benigno and Betina have been working on farms since childhood – neither strangers to hard work. They own several acres of land initially utilized for cattle production and later decided to diversify their operation with the construction of four chicken houses (layers). With this success they have progressively built the operation to include three separate farms all with four layer houses on each incorporating the latest technology for the greatest efficiency. This turn of events worked out better than expected and they decided to create the entity: Twisted Sweet Gum.

Twisted Sweet Gum as an entity not only provides a national service with their poultry production but they are committed to help every worker that is employed and working for them. They not only provide a job (income), but also a home. They have separated a piece of their land to build living quarters (2 or 3 bed rooms, living room, 1 or 2 bathrooms, kitchen, porch and balcony), they also have several mobile homes utilized in the same capacity. They do not charge rent – the employee's only pay for their living expenses and utilities, and have the responsibility for general maintenance of the house and grounds. 90% of their employees are of Hispanic origins and Twisted Sweetgum as become an oasis for many in their community.

Twisted Sweetgum is actively working with USDA-NRCS, not only with the conservation practices and planning on all working lands but also opening their farm to several technical trainings held at their facilities. For example, they were part of the National Employee Development Center (NEDC) training held in North Carolina: Working Effectively with Hispanic Farmers. The farms have met the NRCS level of a resource management level (RMS) regarding animal mortality, waste management and erosion control around all facilities. This level of management requires them to apply organic waste at agronomic levels and maintain buffers around all environmentally sensitive areas. Next year they will be working with NRCS to develop a conservation plan for their pasture land in Davie County.

They are leaders in the Hispanic community as well as to other farming enterprises in their immediate area as pioneers in technology and practices with "Mountaire Farms".

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2019 NOPHNRCSSE AWARDEES!



Pictured Left to Right: Noel Soto, Maria Hrebik, Fabio Garza, Bianca Soto, Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez, Serafin M. Aguirre.

Awards presented at the 2019 Joint Employees Organization Conference in Spokane, WA.

LEADERSHIP AWARD

Maria Hrebik, Civil Engineer at Temple, TX.

VISIONARY AWARD

Flavio Garza Jr., Resource Team Leader at Laredo, TX.

RAY T. MARGO OUTSTANDING MEMBER AWARD

Bianca Soto, Soil Conservationist at Cambridge, MD.

EXCELLENCE IN HISPANIC COMMUNITY OUTREACH AWARD

Serafin M. Aguirre, District Conservationist at Eagle Pass, TX.

EXCELLENCE IN NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION AWARD

Dr. Edwin Martinez-Martinez, Natural Resource Specialist at Burke, VA.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Noel Soto, Resource Conservationist at Harrisburg, PA.

NOPHNRCSSE recognized Noel for his years of service in NRCS, and for the positive impact and everlasting contributions his work and commitment towards the Hispanic Community through out his career has made.

NOPHNCSE AWARDS NOMINATIONS

BY AWARDS COMMITTEE

NOPHNCSE members:

This is the time of the year where we recognize the hard work and commitment of our NOPHNCSE members. Please, nominate candidates you consider meets the description of the categories below. Your respective regional representatives will provide further information on deadline to submit nominations and forms as soon they are available.

NOPHNCSE AWARD CATEGORIES

Leadership

The NOPHNCSE 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 and support of NOPHNCSE 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 creation of the organization. Only one award will be presented each year.

Visionary

The NOPHNCSE 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 NOPHNCSE 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 creation of the organization. Only one award will be presented each year.

Award of Excellence in Natural Resources Conservation

The NOPHNCSE Award of Excellence in Natural Resources Conservation 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 promote excellence and creativity. The recipient also should demonstrate leadership and involvement in NOPHNCSE. Members currently serving on the National Council or serving as a current committee chair are not eligible for Awards of Excellence. The Awards Committee will decide the number of award(s) presented each year.

CONT'D: NOPHNCSE AWARDS NOMINATIONS

Award of Excellence in Hispanic Community Outreach

The NOPHNCSE Award of Excellence in Hispanic Community Outreach 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 promote excellence and creativity. The recipient also should demonstrate leadership and involvement in NOPHNCSE. Members currently serving on the National Council or serving as a current committee chair are not eligible for Awards of Excellence. The Awards Committee will decide the number of award(s) presented each year.

Outstanding NOPHNCSE Member Award

The NOPHNCSE 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 NOPHNCSE member. It is based on achievements in NOPHNCSE over an extended period of years and on participation and support of the NOPHNCSE mission. Only one award will be presented each year.

Amiga/Amigo Award

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



2019 Scholarship Awardees



JULIO CESAR MENCHACA

My name is Julio Cesar Menchaca, I am from Rio Grande City Texas and currently a student at Texas A&M University Kingsville pursuing a degree in Range and Wildlife Management with a minor in Plant and Soil Science. I actively participate in two different organizations like; Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) The Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society and practice plant identification with The Rangeland Plant Id

team. I just finished my first summer as a Pathways intern in Texas and I look forward my next summer experience. I enjoyed every moment and every experience with everyone at the field office and in the resource team. They all played a very vital role in my professional development with the NRCS and I look forward for the next summer to gain more experience within the Agency.

EMILY DOSS

Emily is from Roswell, New Mexico. She is a sophomore at New Mexico State University (NMSU) where she's majoring in Range Science with a minor in Wildlife Science.



STUDENT'S CORNER

The ***Student's Corner*** is a section within our website dedicated to provide information about NOPHNRCSE **scholarships** and other financial aid opportunities to help students pay college. You can also find additional learning resources and work experience opportunities such as **internships, fellowships, resource books** and **websites**.

Click to learn more:

- [NOPHNRCSE Scholarship](#)
- [Paying for College – Student Resource Guide](#)

2020 NOPHNRCS Scholarship Announcement

The National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNRCS) has the mission to motivate and mentor members for leadership roles to assist NRCS and partners in delivering natural resources conservation. Following our mission, NOPHNRCS is proud to present the 2020 NOPHNRCS scholarship program.

This year, NOPHNRCS will award a total of three \$1,000.00 academic scholarships to qualified students that are pursuing a degree in Agriculture, Natural Resources, or Natural Resources Conservation related field of study at an accredited school of higher education.

Due date for consideration is May 1, 2020.

Student Eligibility Requirements:

- Be US Citizen and show proof of U.S. citizenship - copy of Birth Certificate or Naturalization Certificate only, if the application is selected as a winner.
- Graduating High School students accepted to an accredited college or university and registered students with at least one full academic year remaining before completing under-graduate education. Demonstrate integrity, ability, and competence in work. Graduate students are not eligible for this scholarship.
- Show interest in pursuing a career in Natural Resources Conservation
- Have a grade point average of at least 2.75 on a 4.0 scale
- Submit a complete application package which includes: application form and requested documentation.

One of the three scholarships NOPHNRCS offers is a specially funded scholarship established by a notable member and her family to encourage new generations of Hispanics to pursue careers in Public Affairs, Agriculture or Natural Resources Conservation. The **Martha Guerra-Arteaga Scholarship** is specifically for a female student with a major in Public Affairs, Communications or Natural Resources Conservation.

Application form, please [click here.](#)

Additional information:

<https://nophnrcse.org/nophnrcse-scholarships/>



Martha Guerra-Arteaga was born May 27, 1967 in McAllen, Texas. Martha graduated from Texas A & M University in 1989 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Speech Communication. Martha served as a Public Affairs Specialist for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS) for thirteen years. During her years of service, she received the prestigious USDA Group Honor Award from the Chief of the NRCS for providing outstanding outreach programs aimed at the Hispanic Community and socially disadvantaged. She was a member of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees and the Southwest Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society.

Ray T. Margo Jr. Memorial Scholarship



Ray T. Margo devoted his entire professional career as a public servant to the people of the United States. He received a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science from Texas A&M University in 1956. His career began with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in 1956 as a Soil Conservationist. Ray was a distinguished veteran, having served in the U.S. Army. During his time with the army, Ray completed a 16-month tour in Korea. When Ray returned, he continued to work with the SCS all over South Texas before transferring to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he ultimately retired in 1993 as the State Conservationist.

Ray was recognized for his work with several achievement awards including USDA's Superior Service Award. He represented USDA on several foreign assignments including assignments to Portugal, Peru, Colombia, Chile, and Mexico. While in Mexico, he presented three papers at the first national Soil and Water Conservation Congress in Texcoco, Mexico.

He was active with the National Committee of Boy Scouts of America by serving on the Philmont Scout Ranch Committee. In 1993, he helped establish the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNRCSE) and became the organization's first interim president.

On behalf of the Ray T. Margo Family and in commemoration of NOPHNRCSE's 25th Anniversary, a one-time \$2,500 scholarship will be awarded in 2021. The Ray T. Margo Jr. Memorial scholarship is a specially funded scholarship, established by a notable member and his family to encourage new generations of Hispanics to pursue careers in Agriculture, Natural Resources, or Natural Resources Conservation related field of study at an accredited school of higher education.

Student Eligibility Requirements:

- Must be US Citizen and show proof of U.S. citizenship - copy of Birth Certificate or Naturalization Certificate only, if your application is selected as a winner.
- Graduating High School students accepted to an accredited college or university and registered students with at least one full academic year remaining before completing undergraduate education. Demonstrate integrity, ability, and competence in work. Graduate students are not eligible for this scholarship.
- Show interest in pursuing a career in Natural Resources Conservation.
- Have a grade point average of at least 3.50 on a 4.0 scale.

Submit a complete application package which includes: application form and requested documentation.

For additional information, please contact:

Francisco Orsini-Rodriguez

Scholarships@nophnrcse.org

Phone: (775) 524-5124 Ext. 117

or

Yomaree Cortes-Díaz

Scholarships@nophnrcse.org

Phone: (336) 629-4449 Ext. 1650

MINORITY LANDOWNER CONFERENCE HELD IN TEXAS

BY MELISSA BLAIR, PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST, CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

More than 200 minority agricultural producers including SWCD board members, NRCS staff and partner organizations were in attendance from across Texas and other states at the 5th Minority Landowner Magazine Workshop from April 30 to May 2 at South Padre Island, Texas.

The workshop held in partnership with USDA and Minority Landowner, provided

educational training and agricultural tours to help minority producers from Texas and other states to help them learn about USDA-NRCS technical and financial assistance, planning for the future, and business planning. The rainfall simulator was demonstrated by Zone 3 Agronomist, Nathan Haile after a soil health presentation to show attendees first hand the impact soil health has on some many aspects of their ag operation from rain infiltration to loss of inputs through runoff. Texas NRCS State Conservationist, Salvador Salinas was the banquet keynote speaker on Wednesday evening.



Rain simulator demonstration. Photos provided by the Melissa Blair.



"This conference is just another example of the commitment Texas NRCS has to outreach efforts by ensuring farmers and ranchers have access to critical information that will further assist them in their operations," said Drenda Williams, Texas NRCS Assistant State Conservationist - Operations. **"NRCS not only provides access to federal programs but also conservation technical assistance, which is available to every producer through their local field office."**

Salvador Salinas, Texas State Conservationist.
Photos provided by the Melissa Blair.

USDA SHARES AT MAFO CONFERENCE

BY MELISSA BLAIR, PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST, CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

USDA shared with attendees from across the U.S. at the 30th anniversary of the MAFO national farm worker and rural community conference held in San Antonio in May. Texas NRCS State Outreach Coordinator, Bertha Venegas, who is also on the planning committee for this event, and Texas Farm Service Agency (FSA) District Director of Programs, Joel Garcia, shared a presentation on how USDA programs and assistance can help farm workers transition to beginning producers. Attendees also had questions that were answered by staff at the USDA booths, including Risk Management Agency and the National Agricultural Statistics Service.



Attendee at NRCS booth.
Photos provided by the Melissa Blair.

THE GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE: IMPROVING THE GREAT LAKES REGION THROUGH SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

BY DR. EDWIN MARTINEZ MARTINEZ, NATURAL RESOURCE SPECIALIST - GREAT LAKES

The Great Lakes

The Great Lakes (Lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario) are large bodies of fresh water and are among the most important natural resources in the world. Accounting for more than 20 percent of the world's fresh water and over 10,000 miles of shoreline, they provide drinking water for populations around the basin and habitat for an immense and diverse group of plants, wildlife and aquatic organisms. The Great Lakes region is known for its immense network of coastal marshes, inland wetlands and forests which provide critical ecological functions including water filtration and storage, flood control and nutrient cycling.



Frozen Lake Michigan - Point Betsy Lighthouse.
Provided by Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Background

Through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), funding is appropriated each year to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which then in turn provides portions of the funding to other federal agencies, including USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Federal agencies use GLRI funding to strategically target the biggest impairments to the Great Lakes ecosystems and accelerate progress toward achieving the long term goals established in the Great Lakes Action Plan. The Great Lakes Action Plan lays out a framework that federal agencies will use during five-year periods to protect water quality, control invasive species and restore wildlife habitat.

A regional working group involving several federal organizations coordinates GLRI activities and makes recommendations on how to implement the policies, strategies, projects and priorities: Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Agriculture, Department of Army, Department of Homeland Security, Department of the Interior, Department of Commerce, Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of State.



GLRI NHQ Team Visit to Minnesota - Forestry Project Review with Landowners. Provided by Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez.

Since 2010, GLRI has served as a catalyst for unprecedented federal agency coordination and partnership to protect and restore the largest system of fresh water in the world. Efforts in the eight Great Lakes states (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) are focused on priority watersheds that have the biggest impacts on improving water quality. Through the GLRI, NRCS has provided Farm Bill programs and other assistance to farmers and landowners to combat invasive species, protect watersheds and shorelines from non-point source pollution, and restore wildlife habitat.

CONT'D:

THE GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE:

IMPROVING THE GREAT LAKES REGION THROUGH SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

USDA NRCS GLRI Accomplishments

The EPA has provided USDA NRCS approximately \$227 million in funding through several Interagency Agreements to support achieving Great Lakes Action Plan goals. These funds are used by NRCS for conservation practice implementation primarily through Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

NRCS has funded more than 2,700 contracts to help farmers and private landowners implement conservation practices on over 613,000 acres within the Great Lakes Basin priority watersheds. Through these efforts of implementing conservation practices to target phosphorus reduction, over 1.1 million pounds of phosphorus has been reduced in GLRI targeted areas.

NRCS GLRI efforts also target wildlife habitat and invasive species control. Over 7,900 acres of wildlife habitat has been protected, restored and/or enhanced through GLRI

by implementing 84 contracts totaling \$284,534. Over 2,600 acres of aquatic/terrestrial invasive species were treated and controlled by GLRI funded contracts at 70 sites totaling \$539,200.



GLRI Demonstration Farm Day in Wisconsin.
Provided by Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez.

GLRI Projects:

- NRCS is also working with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on edge-of-field monitoring. Field level water quality is monitored to determine benefits of conservation practices in priority watersheds located in Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, New York, and Indiana and several projects have been funded via GLRI.
- Through GLRI funding, NRCS, USGS, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, and Purdue University have developed a partnership and are monitoring sediment and nutrient export in water from subsurface drain tiles on select farm fields in four priority watersheds to help evaluate the connection between water quality improvements and soil health practices.
- Outreach and education are another major component and through GLRI, the Great Lakes states have entered into more than 95 agreements with local conservation entities to provide technical assistance, outreach, workshops, and educational demonstration farms.
- Some of these local conservation partners are: Soil and Water Conservation Districts, universities, state Departments of Agriculture, and state watershed organizations. As part of this partnership approach, NRCS can publicly showcase and demonstrate leading innovative conservation practices via a network of demonstration farms.
- NRCS has also developed a unique partnership with the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) to collaboratively reduce nutrient and sediment loss with an emphasis on significant reduction of phosphorus loading to the Great Lakes region. GLC has successfully supported over 117 local projects via the Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program.

CONT'D:

THE GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE:

IMPROVING THE GREAT LAKES REGION THROUGH SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

Other Conservation Initiatives in the Great Lakes Region:

NRCS also has other conservation initiatives in the Great Lakes region that are being implemented to enhance water quality, such as: National Water Quality Initiative, Western Lake Erie Basin Initiative and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

Challenges

The biggest challenges to the Great Lakes' ecosystem include nutrient and chemical pollution, invasive species and habitat degradation. Another challenge, on an administrative level, is having multiple governmental jurisdictions within the Great

Lakes region: a multinational effort between the United States and Canada requires a significant amount of commitment, coordination, planning, communication, and collaboration between multiple federal agencies and local partners, eight states units of government and nearly 40 Tribal Nations.



GLRI Partnership Meeting Site Monitoring and Soil Health.
Provided by Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez.

About the Author:

Dr. Edwin Martinez-Martinez is a Natural Resource Specialist who manages the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for NRCS in Washington, D.C. He has more than 14 years of experience in the field of natural resources.

Dr. Martinez-Martinez also has experience supporting local, state, national and international efforts through working in multiple locations, including Puerto Rico, Nebraska, California, Michigan, Maine and Washington, D.C. He has been working in the National Headquarters Office since August 2016. He is very appreciative of every opportunity that comes his way and certainly the exposure that the National Office Leadership Team have provided to him including; detail experiences, working directly with 8 great State Conservationists and their state staff, working hand in hand with two Regional Conservationists and other agency Senior leaders, managing a budget of over \$227M in interagency agreements, and the unique partnership coordination efforts performed as part of GLRI.

¡MES DE LA HERENCIA HISPANA!

BY DEBRA PARSONS, WINTER GARDEN SWCD, TX

The very best representation of Crystal City was on display Monday, September 30th, as the city came together as one for an extraordinary evening to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. Hispanic Heritage Month is a national celebration from September 15th to October 15th annually that recognizes contributions made and the important presence of Hispanic and Latino Americans to the United States. Over 200 attendees filled the festively decorated Crystal City



Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration at Crystal City, TX.
Picture by Debra Parsons, Winter Garden SWCD, TX.

high school auditorium as the school drum line procession under the direction of Joe Honstein began the evening celebration. Constable Luis Hinojosa served as master of ceremonies for the program and gave a brief overview of the significance of September 15th and related facts. The Presentation of Colors was made by the American Legion Melecio Post 396, and the Pledge of the Allegiance was led by National Honor Society President Albertico Hernandez. The Benediction led by Pastor Zaragosa "Charlie" Cadena, Jr. of Cristo Fuente de Agua Viva Church followed. Mrs. Dina Roiz then sang a touching song written for her by her brother entitled "Dime con quien tu andas, y te dire quien eres."

Edward Churchill, new Superintendent for Crystal City schools, welcomed all guests to the high school. Welcoming remarks were then delivered by Texas State House District 80 Representative Tracy O. King. Mr. King welcomed the guests for Judge Joe Luna who could not attend and thanked the public for inviting him to speak. In keeping with the 2019 Hispanic Heritage Month theme "A History of Serving our Nation," King credited the many accomplishments of Hispanics and praised the work of the Hispanic community in his district, the state and the nation.

Speaker USDA-Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCS) District Conservationist and Resource Team Leader (RTL) Flavio Garza then presented a brief history of the Winter Garden Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), a local government whose office is in Crystal City, and its partnership with NRCS. Originally known as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), NRCS was born out of the Dust Bowl, a phenomenon occurring in the 1930s wherein dust storms severely damaged agriculture in the prairies. ***"The SWCD and NRCS share a common goal: to assist farmers, ranchers and landowners with their natural resources concerns through technical assistance and financial assistance programs"*** said Garza.

Garza explained two of the most popular NRCS conservation programs, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). ***"EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. Through EQIP, farmers and ranchers may receive help to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land. CSP is another voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities"***.

CONT'D: ¡MES DE LA HERENCIA HISPANA!

Garza also shared that NRCS works with the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA). FSA offers farm programs for commodities and farm loan programs as well, and the eligibility paperwork is shared between the two agencies. All USDA applications and conservation work is confidential.

Following Garza, Mayor Frank Moreno presented keynote speaker Lieutenant General (Retired) Ricardo S. Sanchez with a proclamation acknowledging the city's appreciation for Sanchez's courage and outstanding military service. Sanchez's story is an extraordinarily moving one, as he began sharing examples of discrimination, he experienced early in his military career merely because he was Hispanic. To overcome the adversity before him, he chose to volunteer for assignments and duties to advance his career. He was once told by a superior officer that he would never succeed because he was indeed Hispanic. While hurtful, this attitude did not deter Sanchez as he led by example and was rewarded for his efforts by rising to the challenges before him.

Keeping with the 2019 Hispanic Heritage Month theme, **A History of Serving our Nation**, Sanchez shared a story of the first casualty under his command in Afghanistan. While waiting for his application for citizenship in the United States to be approved, a young man, a Mexican national, was killed in combat while serving in the United States Army. The young man's remains were returned to Mexico. ***"This story is a prime example of the extraordinary sacrifices Hispanics have made to our nation,"*** stated Sanchez. Sanchez praised all the Hispanic service men and women who served under his command for their courage and unwavering loyalty to their country. At retirement, Sanchez was the longest serving V Corps commander and the highest-ranking Hispanic officer in the U. S. Army. Sanchez then acknowledged the contributions made by Hispanic leaders in attendance in their various capacities including the elderly service members participating in the color guard, Department of Public Safety Troopers Yanez and Gomez, and Flavio Garza. His final message to the crowd for the evening was directed to the parents. Sanchez said, ***"Encourage your children to have pride in themselves and their heritage; never forget where you come from."***

After CCHS Principal Cerna presented speaker appreciation gifts to Sanchez, King and Garza, the El Ballet Folklórico de Cristal performed two dances to the traditional Hispanic songs *"Guadalajara"* and *"Son de los Aguacates"* under the direction of high school student chorographer Alejandra Corona and sponsors Veronica Hoffman and Maricela G. Guzman. After the performance, the crowd moved to the foyer and cafeteria areas to view the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program booths. CTE are educational programs that middle and high school level students are eligible to participate in. The programs offer a pathway through a series of courses that prepares the student for more training in their chosen career path. CTE programs on display during the evening include Culinary, Cosmetology, Welding and CNA. The CCHS National Honor Society and Student Council participated as ambassadors and hostess during the event. Cerna stated, ***"This event depicted the strength, talent, and unity which is characteristic of the CCHS students, staff, and community."***

Vendors who participated during the event were the USDA-NRCS and USDA-FSA, Vida Y Salud Health Systems Inc Departments (WIC, Dental, Nursing, Behavioral Health, Outreach and Recruitment), MRGDC 9*1*1 and 2*1*1, AVANCE, Family Service, Connections, and Maverick County Hospital - Ryan White Program.

CONT'D: ¡MES DE LA HERENCIA HISPANA!

The crowd was treated to a "Taste of the Town" setting wherein they could mingle and visit the booths for a taste of the specialties of local restaurants. A big thank-you to those who participated in the food portion of the event: Richardo's, Cinco Hermanas, Anthony's, Javelina Café, Firehouse Bar & Grill, Rebecca's Restaurant, SFE (a school vendor), as well as samples from the school's Culinary Arts Department under the direction of Coach Rhonda Solansky.

SWCD board members Jane Rutledge, Mario Escobar and John Flanagan were all in attendance. ***"On behalf of all of the SWCD board members, we are ecstatic to see our vision of Hispanic Heritage Month celebration in Crystal City come to fruition; it is the SWCD's first evening event to sponsor, and our first endeavor with Crystal City and CCHS as well,"*** stated SWCD Board Chairman Escobar.

The CCHS staff and SWCD would like to thank all of those involved in making the first annual Hispanic Heritage Month in Crystal City a big success!! Thank-you to our master of ceremonies Luis Hinojosa, the American Legion members, Pastor Cadena, Jr., Mrs. Dina Roiz, Edward Churchill, Jorge Cerna, Tracy O. King, Flavio Garza, Ricardo S. Sanchez, Frank Moreno, El Ballet Folklórico, and school volunteers Dr. Ninfa Cadena, Jody Cerna, Diana C. Guerrero, Veronica "Betty" Carranza Perales, the CCHS Student Council, Law Enforcement Club, Robert Dodge, and all CTE Program staff and students. This event would not have been possible without the overwhelming community support of all of our sponsors: Lopez Health Systems, Medina Electric, 4A & 4B EDC, Crystal Dental Care, PFS Group, Border Federal Credit Union, Capital Bank of Texas, Tavo's Towing, LLC, HEB, ALM Computers, Zavala County Bank, Solansky's, J & J Excavating, Zavala County Farm Bureau, USDA-NRCS, USDA-FSA, Zavala County Sentinel and the Texas/Mexico Border Coalition CBO. A very special thank-you to Ms. Julia Martinez from CCHS for all her hard work.



Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration at Crystal City, TX. Picture by Debra Parsons, Winter Garden SWCD, TX.

FROM MEXICO TO THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY: A SHARED PASSION FOR CONSERVATION

BY KATHY FERGE, OUTREACH COORDINATOR AND TRIBAL LIAISON, OR



Heather Medina Saucedo, USDA NRCS basin team leader based in Tangent, OR, shares NRCS perspectives on forest planning. From left to right: Heath Keirstead, Benton SWCD Communications and Community Engagement Manager; Exchange students Ana Paola Rangel Romero, Nancy Rodríguez Castillo and Omar Osvaldo Rodríguez Castillo; Faye Yoshihara, landowner; Heather Medina Saucedo. Photo by Kathy Ferge.

Shared enthusiasm for forest management overcame language differences as university students from Instituto Tecnológico Superior de Irapuato (ITESI) in San Felipe, Guanajuato, Mexico toured oak woodland restoration projects with the Oregon Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Three forest engineering students, Nancy Rodríguez Castillo, Ana Paola Rangel Romero, and Omar Osvaldo Rodríguez Castillo, visited two properties in Corvallis, Benton County, Oregon, and met with landowners and NRCS staff. District Conservationist Tom Snyder has worked with local landowners Kevin Kenaga and Faye Yoshihara, and their neighbors, Janet Ohmann and Joe Crockett, to open up

oak habitat by removing fir trees and other competitors as part of the tri-county Oak Habitat Implementation Strategy for Linn, Lane, and Benton Counties.

During the oak restoration site visit, Snyder explained aspects of the NRCS planning process which helps landowners, such as the Kenaga-Yoshihara family and the Ohmann-Crockett family, achieve their land management goals. NRCS works collaboratively with the Benton Soil and Water Conservation District as a funding and planning partner. Kenaga and Yoshihara shared their management plans for the property, which includes forest, wetland, and riparian areas.

A tour of their forested lands revealed areas in which Douglas fir and big leaf maple continue to overshadow Oregon white oaks, as well as places where clearing had already taken place, giving the oaks access to sun and water. One of the couple's favorite projects is the release of their Old Oak, estimated to be over 300 years old. Work is also underway to rehabilitate riparian areas. This labor-intensive process includes hand-pulling weeds and replanting desirable native species.

"I take away ideas that can be carried out in Mexico to conserve and protect our natural resources as they are essential for all living beings."— Nancy Rodríguez Castillo.

The visiting Laja students are part of an international exchange funded through the International RiverFoundation's Twinning Program.

Visit the [Story Map](#) to see the full story.

5TH ANNUAL LATINO FARMER CONFERENCE HELD IN TULARE, CA

BY CHRISTINE CHAVEZ, OUTREACH SPECIALIST, DAVIS, CA

On November 19 of 2019, over 300 people attended the 5th annual Latino Farmer Conference at the International Agricultural Center in Tulare, California. Farmers from Salinas and as far south as San Diego County gathered to network, attend workshops and learn from one another.

NRCS State Conservationist Carlos Suarez opened the session. He encouraged farmers to reach out to NRCS offices and seek help with conservation for their farms. Following Carlos, a panel of farmers discussed challenges and opportunities they have experienced. The panelists also took questions from the audience. During the Q&A from the audience a farmer stood up and said, "I want to say that Priscilla Baker is a good, good person, if you need help go see her." Baker is a soil conservationist in the Madera field office.

In between the workshop's morning sessions, farmers had a chance to visit with over 30 agricultural vendors who had assembled near the main ballroom. California Department of Food and Agriculture, Farm Link, E Harvest Hub and USDA agencies (NRCS, FSA and RMA) all provided materials and information to the farmers.

During the lunch hour farmers heard from Jorge Inestroza, a farmer from Porterville, California. Jorge thanked the NRCS Visalia field office for all the work they have done to help with different resource concerns on his farm. Jorge also encouraged farmers to work together and to keep going even when it seems to hard to continue.



Martin Guerena from National Center for Appropriate Technology speaks to the farmers about irrigation management.
Photo by Christine Chavez.



While talks are still ongoing, our partner [National Center for Technology](#), or NCAT, is considering hosting the next conference in San Diego County. Lastly, we would like to thank everyone who helped with this year's event. We could not have done this conference without you.

CA State Conservationist, Carlos Suarez, speaks to Univision. Photo by Christine Chavez.

Click [here](#) to see the video.

WHAT IS THE FARMERS' BOTTOM-LINE WHEN ADOPTING A CONSERVATION PLAN?

BY VICTOR M. HERNANDEZ, OUTREACH COORDINATOR, DAVIS, CA

Leading up to the week of April 23 to 25, I was invited by **Hue Dang** and **Terryl Kocsis**, lead organizers of The Economics of Conservation Planning course, to participate in a group led by Economist **Hal Gordon** alongside EDS instructor **Pedro Torres**. For the past couple of years, I have wanted to better understand and possibly assist with the course's development of the section on Sociology concepts. So, I jumped at the opportunity when I learned the class would happen in Davis.

The course was designed to put the class participants into the farmers' shoes. But prior to jumping into those big shoes, we were provided the tools to build up our business acumen, conducting a production analysis, assessing net worth and measuring return on investment.



Terryl Kocsis, Resource Conservationist (Toolkit/FOTG) and lead organizer, provides direct feedback and support for the learning concepts of Economics of Conservation Planning. Photo by Victor M. Hernandez.

Farmers often, if not daily, see themselves facing critical business resource choices. In some cases, conservation agriculture may require taking land out of production or possibly relinquishing conventional practices and adopting new ones. Likewise, resource conservationists must balance conservation stewardship and program goals with the farmer's conservation and production needs and willingness to adopt conservation practices.

We found as a class that generally farmers must ask themselves how any one specific conservation practice will affect their bottom line. Applying the course basic business principals and sociology concepts, we were able to better understand the farmers decision making process for balancing their farm business and resource conservation practices.



From Left to Right: Point Blue Partner Biologist Rachel Smith; Agricultural Engineer Blair Bain; and Area Biologist Jeremy Todoroff present their farm model. Photo by Victor M. Hernandez.

In agriculture, the many variables of farming outweigh the fixed elements. We as science-based technical experts can help farmers mitigate the variable impacts so that the fixed elements can remain stable and protect against capital loss. But we must provide sound advice to aid in the decision making process.

So, what is the farmers' bottom-line when adopting a conservation plan? Return on Investment? Yes and no.

Always remember, that no two farmers will have the same outlook and each conservation plan must be custom tailored.

In the end we found that "we" (now standing in the farmers shoes) certainly had a lot of concern for our return on investment. But in my opinion, the farmers bottom line is having quality information to make sound decisions so that a return on investment may be sustained over time.

IMPERIAL SERVICE CENTER SPOTLIGHT

BY REBECCA SANCHEZ, NRCS EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER/WRPI INTERN, IMPERIAL, CA



Left to right: Former District Conservationist (DC) Eric Peitz, current DC Jose Luis Herrera, Chase Choate of the Quechan Tribe, and Soil Conservationist Kevin Carpenter.
Photo courtesy of Eric Peitz.

The Imperial Service Center is located in Imperial County, CA, 15 miles from the Mexico border. The field office is led by District Conservationist **Jose Luis Herrera** and Soil Conservationist **Kevin Carpenter**, Farm Bill Assistant **Marina Breitigam**, ACES Planner **Terry Newell**, and myself, **Rebecca Sanchez**, WRPI Intern.

The climate here is hot and dry in the summer and mild in the winter, allowing for a 12-month growing season. Winter crops grown in the Imperial Valley include lettuce, onions, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, and potatoes, among others.

Total agricultural revenues in the Valley exceed \$2 billion per year, and many large produce companies exist in addition to many traditional farmers who exceed the average gross income limitation. The target customer for Farm Bill programs

programs is roughly 40% of the overall producers in the area. The Imperial Service Center works with a very diverse farmer base, that includes Korean, Chinese, Indian, Native American, and Hispanic producers.

Key partners include the Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers Association and the Imperial Irrigation District, which delivers 3.1 million acre-feet of water per year to the Imperial Valley via the all-American Canal. Producers in this region use an average of 5.6 acre-feet of water per year.

Recently, the Imperial Service Center worked with the Quechan Indian Tribe with removal of invasive plants and restoration of wildlife habitat. (See story above.) Their first Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program contract started in 2010, and today, nine years later, we can see the results.

NRCS provided technical and financial assistance to remove the invasive plants and to plant native species. The biggest challenge was to have wildlife habitat come back. Fortunately, biodiversity is increasing, and the native species that were planted are now blooming. Also, the presence of bobcats and caterpillars that were once rare can now be seen.



Left to right: Farm Bill Assistant Marina Breitigam, and Earth Team Volunteer/ WRPI Intern Rebecca Sanchez.
Photo courtesy of Eric Peitz

"The project has been a challenge due to available water and nutrients for the protection of new plants," said Herrera. Overall, the project has been a great success for the Imperial Valley Service Center and the Quechan Tribe.

FARMS LEADERSHIP, NRCS AND WIND WOLVES PRESERVE HOLD OUTREACH EVENT IN KERN COUNTY, CA

BY FABIAN ACUÑA, AGRICULTURAL ENGINEER, BAKERSFIELD, CA

On March 5, NRCS staff members from the Bakersfield Service Center participated in a partnership event for 11 students from multiple high schools in Kern County. Hosted by the Wind Wolves Preserve and orchestrated by NRCS personnel, students from the Center for Land Based Learning were split into two groups and participated in various educational activities. Students learned about greenhouse plant propagation, habitat restoration activities, and native plant identification.

A wildflower ID walk was led by Range Specialist **Alex Hepler** and Soil Conservationist **Erwin Duenas**. Students were taught proper identification techniques and learned about sensitive species in the area including the endangered Bakersfield cactus, *Opuntia basilaris* var. *treleasei*.



Jesse Bahm and Kathryn Prince (right) demonstrating how to safely catch and identify water bugs from a nearby stream.
Photo by Fabian Acuña.

Some of the more intensive activities included a plant restoration project that was led by Wind Wolves Rangers and a riparian ecology/invertebrate ID activity that was led by NRCS Biologist **Jesse Bahm**, Soil Conservationist **Caleb Griffin** and NRCS Partner Biologist **Kathryn Prince** from Xerces Society. The restoration activity allowed participants to properly plant and name their own trees. In total, the group planted 20 common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and 19 bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*). The riparian invertebrate ID station included catching and identifying water bugs with Bahm and Griffin from a nearby stream. Students were also able to learn about insects and catch butterflies with Prince.

"I really enjoy working with the students and seeing their interests come alive when they get to sample for macroinvertebrates," said Bahm. "It's fun to watch how some students are at first grossed-out by the inverts and don't want to handle them. But when they see a few brave students handling them, they eventually realize that they aren't gross and are even pretty interesting."

Additional NRCS staff that assisted with oversight, consultation and expertise included

Alexus Parker, Amy Rocha and Marcos Perez.

The event lasted about three and one-half hours.

Overall the event was a success and provided a great networking and educational experience for students.



NRCS staff, Wind Wolves Rangers and the Center for Land Based Learning students pose for a group photo. Photo by Fabian Acuña

New Spotlight Members

RAFAEL GONZALEZ PAGAN

Rafael is the soil conservationist in Jackson County, Minnesota. On his spare time, he likes to travel and read. Rafael studied in the University of Puerto Rico Agricultural science where he focused his studies in horticulture and crop protection. When he graduated, he worked in a seedery called AgReliant. There wasn't a lot of opportunity to grow in that company, so he decided to move to the United States to find more opportunities. He ended working with the IRS in Austin Texas and then moving to Jacksonville Florida to keep growing within the department of the treasury. Even though there were opportunities to grow with the IRS, Rafael's mind was set on working in agriculture. Finally, Rafael got an opportunity working with NRCS in the state of Minnesota. Rafael is currently living in Spirit Lake, Iowa and can be contacted at rafael.gonzalezpagan@usda.gov.



NARCIZO GUERRERO-MURILLO

Narcizo Guerrero-Murillo, was born in the Purépecha indigenous community of San Juan Nuevo Parangaricutiro in the State of Michoacán, Mexico. He is the son of emigrants who worked in the U.S. under the Bracero Program. Guerrero-Murillo graduated as an agricultural engineer with a specialization in Zoology from the Michoacán University of San Nicholas de Hidalgo, holds a Master's Degree in Natural Resource Management from the University of Central Washington in Ellensburg, WA, and a Doctorate from the University of Texas at El Paso. He started his career at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), as an Earth Team Volunteer in 2000 and since then has worked in several states. He currently serves as Regional Resources Conservationist and is stationed in San Bernardino County, CA.

GERALDINE NAHOMI VEGA PIZARRO

I am Geraldine Nahomi Vega Pizarro, the new soil scientist at the Tolland Soil Survey Office. I am from San Juan, Puerto Rico. I worked as a soil scientist in the Hill Country in Kerrville, Texas for almost two years. I started my career in the agency as a Soil Conservationist Student Trainee in Texas in 2015. Later in 2017 I started my internship as a Soil Scientist in Kerrville and got converted to a permanent position after graduating from College.

I studied soil science and geology in the University of Puerto Rico- Mayaguez. I like to describe myself as a soil scientist with the heart of a geologist. I love to use my geology knowledge to study the relationship between rocks, soils and landscape evolution. That was the focus of my master degree in college. Working for the agency allows me to combine both disciplines and I loved it!

Teaching is also one of my passions, so doing outreach activities talking about Earth Sciences is something that I really enjoy in the agency.



NOT A MEMBER YET?

JOIN US TODAY!

The purpose of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees is to assist NRCS in the delivery of program benefits and services to the Hispanic and Latino community by strengthening NRCS efforts in recruitment, retention, development, and advancement of Hispanics and Latinos. Our members are dedicated to the stewardship of our natural resources while working with Hispanic and non-Hispanic customers in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

SOME OF THE GREAT BENEFITS OF JOINING ARE:

- Professional and career development – training, workshops and information on NRCS employment opportunities.
- Leadership development – NOPHNRCSE leadership positions provide opportunities to plan and develop projects, coordinate with partners, and enhance leadership skills.
- International conservation – interact with members who have completed NRCS international assignments and also volunteer for international assignments.
- Public service – use your professional skills to assist NRCS provide services to the Hispanic community.
- Members may request funds to engage in outreach activities to promote information about NRCS programs and training within NRCS.

Learn more about: [Membership types and benefits](#); and [how to apply](#).

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2020-2021

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

BY MILTON VEGA, ELECTIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR

The Association's Elections Committee would like to head start the planning and nominations process for this year's elections. During this session, our candidates will be running for the following positions:

- **President**
- **Executive Vice-President**
- **Secretary**
- **Regional Representative (Northern Plains, Midwest, Northeast, and Caribbean)**

The election process begins in the Fall by establishing a nomination time frame followed closely by the election and selection process.

All members of the Association whom are in good standing from the Northern Plains and the Caribbean are eligible to be elected to officer and Council positions and to nominate other eligible members. The committee seeks two candidates.

If you wish to nominate yourself to one of these positions OR to nominate another eligible member, you must submit the following information to the Nominating Committee by the deadline in our circular newsletter once that is established.

- The position for which the individual is being nominated.
- The name, e-mail address, and phone number of the individual being nominated.
- The name, e-mail address, and phone number of the individual making the nomination (if not self-nominating).

The Elections Committee will submit its final report to the Council by the middle of the fall season. All proposed nominees who meet the eligibility requirements will have their names included on the ballot for the election and will have a clear identified voting period.

Please send nominations by e-mail message to milton.vega@usda.gov or submit nominations online in the [NOPHNRCSE](#) website.

NOPHNRCSE

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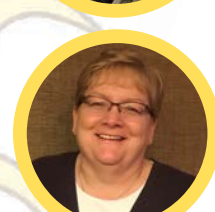
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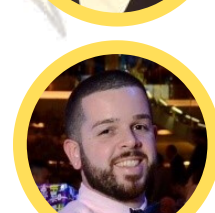
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REPRESENTATIVE**

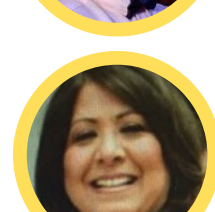
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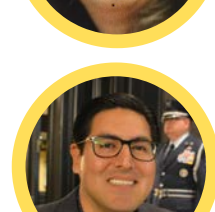
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