

## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

VICTOR MANUEL HERNANDEZ



### Hispanic Leaders,

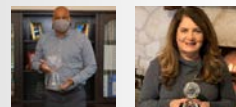
Welcome to your Spring edition of *La Voz*. Since our leadership transition this past winter, your NOPSY organization 'con cariño' has made great strides. I am inspired every day by the passion, perseverance, and dedication of our National Council (and active members). Over the last month, you have seen the creation of a members-only sharing platform - [FPAC Hispanics NRCS Employees on M.S. Teams](#) -, the Capacity-Building Workshop series, and a more transparent national council. Also, since October 2020, we have been working diligently to evolve and develop an organizational operation manual.

The goal is a unified voice and a streamlined process for continuity of operations. These activities are in keeping with my administration's promise to fortify the foundation of our NOPHNRCS organization. Yet, we cannot do it alone. It's the collective that will continue to put NOPHNRCS at the forefront of USDA Hispanic recruitment, retention, and advancement efforts. We must bring a stronger NRCS leadership member effort toward bringing our motto of 'Hispanics, Partners for Success' to life.

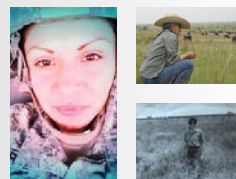
The [Capacity-Building Workshop series](#) is now available on-demand! This content is now available through your Microsoft Stream, Hispanic Employee Leaders channel. These workshops have been coordinated with 'you' our members in mind. I want to take this opportunity to thank our "NOPSY" members across the U.S. who have presented and shared their experiences for career advancement, whether on special assignments through Detail opportunities or in their respective career fields: Florida State Conservationist Juan Hernandez, Caribbean Area Director Luis Cruz-Arroyo, Virginia State Conservationist Edwin Martinez-Martinez Ph.D., Caribbean Area Soil Scientist Manuel Matos, North Dakota Resource Conservationist Roberto Luciano, Kentucky Area Engineer Carlos Roda, California Regional Ecological Site Specialist Kendra Moseley, Marianna Florida District Conservationist Brendaly Rodriguez, Connecticut & Rhode Island State Soil Scientist Deb Surabian, Rhode Island State Conservationist for Programs Brunilda Velez, and Wyoming State Conservationist Astrid Martinez. Your experience is invaluable, and through your leadership, you are paving the way to success for others to follow. I cannot close without highlighting National Council officers, Office of the Treasurer Urayoan Diaz-Pacheco, and North East Region Representative Milton Vega, who have been overseeing and coordinating this workshop series. To all the members who collaborated in this initiative, your dedication to excellence inspires and reminds us why we are here: **to support our members.** *Continue on next page.*

## IN THIS EDITION

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Join  
**NOPHNRCS**



**The Future is Brighter!** Over the next few months, we will be developing the first NOPHNCSE Virtual Conference, a significant undertaking that can only happen with your vision, ingenuity, and support. **We want to hear from you, our NOPSY members.** In the following weeks, your respective region representative will coordinate a region member meeting.

We ask our NOPSY members-at-large, especially those in leadership positions, what are training topics of highest interest to you as a professional and leader? What are platforms within your office to share the NOPSY brand? What are platforms available to you in your leadership capacity to be inclusive of NOPSY? Let's build your 2021 NOPHNCSE virtual conference together.

**Scholarship opportunities!** I want to remind you of the Milton Cortés Colón in Memorium, the Martha Guerra-Arteaga, and NOPHNCSE scholarship deadline that is fast approaching. Please, keep sharing this unique opportunity across your network. Your connections with HSI colleges and universities bring us closer to creating a network of aspiring Hispanic Ag-Professionals.

On behalf of the National Council, Office of the President, we thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

*Victor M. Hernandez*  
V.M. Hernandez, M.S  
President

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear NOPHNCSE members,

We present you the 2021 Spring 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 NOPHNCSE 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](mailto:ricardo.ortiz-rios@usda.gov) or [sonia.burgos@usda.gov](mailto:sonia.burgos@usda.gov).

Thriving **together**,

**Ricardo Ortiz-Ríos**  
La Voz Editor



## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Tell us how we are doing! What topics, resources, or tools you would like to find in future editions of La Voz? Send your feedback to: [ricardo.ortiz-rios@usda.gov](mailto:ricardo.ortiz-rios@usda.gov) or [sonia.burgos@usda.gov](mailto:sonia.burgos@usda.gov)

### USEFUL LINKS:

- **Onboarding @ NRCS**
- **Employee Resources; Employee Assistance Program (EAP); Reasonable Accommodations**
- **FPAC Resources: [myFPAC Quick Links](#), [FPAC Unpacked Archive](#)**

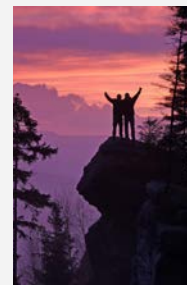
## NOPHNCSE: A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITIES

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

Be part of our working committees:

- **AWARDS**
- **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.





## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2020 CHIEF'S CIVIL RIGHTS AWARDEES!

### THE CHIEF'S WORKFORCE DIVERCITY AWARD

Carlos Suarez  
California State Conservationist



Carlos Suarez, California State Conservationist.

### NATIONAL NRCS INDIVIDUAL CIVIL RIGHTS AWARD

Bertha Venegas  
Texas State Outreach Specialist



Bertha Venegas, Texas State Outreach Specialist.

### NATIONAL NRCS TEAM/GROUP CIVIL RIGHTS AWARD

#### NRCS Soil and Plant Science Division's Leadership, Development, and Recruitment Team

Leslie Glover II, NHQ Assistant Program Manager,  
Luis Hernandez, Northeast Soil Survey Regional Dir., MA  
Ben Hannibal, Management Analyst Washington, DC  
Kendra Mosely, Regional Ecological Site Specialist  
John Andreoni, Management Analyst Denver, CO

Philip Smith, Area Resource Soil Scientist Salinas, CA  
Janella Cruz, Soil Conservationist Santa Fe, NM  
Manuel Matos, State Soil Scientist Caribbean Area  
Charles Kome, Soil Scientist Washington, DC  
Katherine Gerdes, Soil Scientist Fort Morgan, CO



Top row (left to right): Leslie Glover II (Co-Lead), Luis Hernandez (Co-Lead), Ben Hannibal (Co-Lead), Kendra Mosely, John Andreoni (Co-Lead). Botton row (left to right): Philip Smith, Janella Cruz, Manuel Matos, Charles Kome, and Katherine Gerdes.

**[Watch the Awards Ceremony Here.](#)**

## NRCS TEXAS CELEBRATES WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

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

In March, Texas NRCS celebrated **#WomensHistoryMonth** by recognizing women for their contributions to agriculture and conservation. Our Federal Women's Program members and public affairs specialists produced seven different articles featuring female employees and producers across the state. The articles were sent out to over 4,000 GovDelivery subscribers as well as ag media outlets across the state. Many of these outlets picked up the articles and ran them in their publications, some even as cover stories. The articles can be accessed by clicking their links below:

### **The Land Was Calling**

by Dee Ann Littlefield, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

### **A Mission to Help: Behind the Scenes of Conservation in Texas**

by Alexandra Smith, NRCS Soil Conservationist

### **A Place to Come Home to**

by Juliet Carter, NRCS Soil Conservationist, Stephenville

### **Thankful for Learned Values and Traditions**

by Cassandra Osborn, NRCS Soil Conservationist, Dumas

### **Interview with a Wild Woman: Deborah Clark**

by Angela Moody, NRCS Archaeologist and Alexandra Smith, NRCS Soil Conservationist

### **Ranching for Future Generations**

by Juliet Carter, NRCS Soil Conservationist

### **Raising Texas Wagyu Beef on the Concho: A Look at Kimberly Mull,**

by Stephanie James, NRCS Soil Conservationist

## KERN COUNTY FO CO-HOSTS SPANISH IRRIGATION AND SOIL HEALTH WORKSHOPS

BY MARCOANTONIO SALAZAR, AGRICULTURAL ENGINEER AND CA HSEPM, BAKERSFIELD

Recently, staff from the NRCS Bakersfield Field Office, the NRCS California Hispanic Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM), and American Farmland Trust (AFT) teamed up to create a workshop series entirely in Spanish. The series was designed to inform and educate specialty crop farmers from the San Joaquin Valley, coastal areas, and southern California on USDA-NRCS programs and technical expertise available to the Hispanic farming community.

The topics of the workshops focused on irrigation systems, irrigation water management, and soil health practices available through NRCS programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The series was called *"Talleres Para Manejo de Sistemas de Riego y Prácticas Agrícola para la Salud del Suelo"* (Workshops for Irrigation Water Management and Soil Health Practices).

The first workshop, presented in November 2020, focused on explaining NRCS as an agency and how we serve the agricultural community. Then we spoke about the basic elements and ideas to install an efficient irrigation system. NRCS worked closely with producer **Manuel Medina** of Kern and Tulare counties who had previous EQIP contract experience. Medina was more than happy to allow us to record a video explaining the basic components of an irrigation system feeding his vineyard and his personal experience working with NRCS through its 5 Steps to Assistance.

The second workshop, presented in April, focused on having good irrigation management and the benefits of implementing soil health practices. We explained the Cropland In-Field Soil Health Assessment Worksheet as a tool to identify soil health resource concerns such as compaction, soil organic matter depletion, aggregate instability, and soil organism habitat loss or degradation, as well as the conservation practices that could help farmers improve soil health.

In total, we had around 35 Hispanic farmers who attended the workshops. In these workshops, we provided information to approximately 21 male and 14 female specialty farmers from California, Mexico, and Puerto Rico who showed an interest in these technical workshops.

A special thank you to **Carmen Carrasco** of AFT for helping us with planning, providing the Zoom meeting platform, and spreading the word of the presentation. The NRCS Bakersfield Service Center staff who collaborated in the workshops were **Santos O. Colberg**, soil conservationist, **Emmanuel Gonzalez Hinojosa**, soil conservationist, and myself.

**To view the recorded workshops, visit the links below:**

- [November 11, 2020, Zoom Workshop: "Irrigation Management: Irrigation System Installation, NRCS Programs & Technical Assistance"](#)
- [April 1, 2021, Zoom Workshop: "Irrigation Management and Soil Health"](#)
- [April 27, 2021, Radio Program @ El Gallito on "Cover Crops"](#)



Left to right: Soil Conservationist Santos Colberg and Agricultural Engineer Marcoantonio Salazar present on the basic elements of an irrigation system in Spanish, 'Sistemas de Riego - Componentes Básicos'.  
Photo: Emmanuel Gonzalez-Hinojosa



# 2021 NOPHNCSE Scholarship Announcement

The National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNCSE) has the mission to motivate and mentor members for leadership roles to assist NRCS and partners in delivering natural resources conservation. Following our mission, NOPHNCSE is proud to present the 2021 NOPHNCSE scholarship program.

This year, NOPHNCSE will award four \$1,000.00 and one \$2,500.00 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.

Two of the four scholarships NOPHNCSE offers are specially funded scholarships established by notable members and their family to encourage new generations of Hispanics to pursue careers in Public Affairs, Agriculture or Natural Resources Conservation. These are:

- The **Martha Guerra-Arteaga Scholarship**: Specifically for a female student with a major in Public Affairs, Communications or Natural Resources Conservation.
- The **Milton Cortés Colón Scholarship**: Consideration will be given to a qualified student that is pursuing a degree in Soil Science, Agriculture, Natural Resources, or Natural Resources Conservation-related field of study at an accredited school of higher education.

On behalf of the Ray T. Margo Family and in commemoration of NOPHNCSE'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.

## Application forms:

- [NOPHNCSE, Martha Guerra-Arteaga, and Milton Cortés Colón Scholarships](#)
- [Ray T. Margo Jr. Memorial scholarship](#)

For additional information, please visit: <https://nophncse.org/nophncse-scholarships/>

### NOPHNCSE - Scholarship Committee

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&

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## Cont'd: 2021 NOPHNRCSSE Scholarship Announcement

### **NOPHNRCSSE Announces “In Memoriam” Scholarship for Distinguished Member Milton Cortés**



Starting in 2021, NOPHNRCSSE will offer a new scholarship in memory of Milton Cortés. Mr. Cortés worked 40 years in public service and his illustrious career took him to fulfill a wide array of technical, leadership, regional, and international assignments. Milton served as an Extension Agent in Toa Alta, Puerto Rico (1981-1990), Soil Scientist in Skippack, Pennsylvania (1990-1993), Resource Soil Scientists/Soil Survey Project Leader in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico (1995-1997), Assistant State Soil Scientist in North Carolina (1997- 2018) and State Soil Scientist in North Carolina where he was the first Hispanic employee to serve in this capacity in NC (2018-2020). Among his accomplishments, he collaborated in the update or completion of the South Eastern Soil Survey, the San Germán Area of Puerto Rico Soil Survey, and the Lajas

Valley Soil Survey. He served as liaison for the Climate Project in the U.S. Virgin Islands, assisted in the translation of two editions of the NRCS worldwide-used soil taxonomy, served as the main soil data steward for the Web Soil Survey and was responsible for the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) for North Carolina. In 2000, Mr. Cortés was detailed to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for two years to provide soil and agronomy support in Honduras as part of the agency's emergency aid and recovery efforts after Hurricane Mitch. Later on, he assisted after Hurricane Georges recovery efforts in the Caribbean. Milton was recognized in January of 2002, for his outstanding contributions to the success of the “USDA Hurricane Mitch/Georges Reconstructions Project in Central America and the Caribbean.”

Beyond the wide array of his accomplishments, Milton's mayor interest was vested on guiding, mentoring and coaching employees to achieve their full potential. Milton was a Charter Member of NOPHNRCSSE and remained active by participating in different committees and helping newcomers grow in the agency. This devotion made him a deserving recipient of the “Amigo Award” in 2015 and the NOPHNRCSSE “Visionary Award” in 2018. Mr. Cortés's impact benefited many soil conservationists, soil scientist, specialists and state and national leaders. Even after his passing, Milton's influence on the Hispanic leadership across this nation will be everlasting. The Milton Cortés Scholarship Fund will award \$1,000 to a deserving student pursuing a degree in Soil Science, Agriculture, Natural Resources, or Natural Resources Conservation with a GPA of 2.75 or higher to assist them completing their education and potentially pursuing a career in Natural Resources Conservation.

Milton Cortés was a devoted employee, mentor, friend and dedicated to his faith and family. Milton was survived by his wife Lourdes Jimenez, who will continue to be part of the NRCS family. If you are interested in issuing a monetary contribution to the Milton Cortés scholarship endowment fund, donations can be sent through PayPal via the following hyperlink ([HERE](#)) or QR Code shown below. In the case a donation is made through PayPal, please send a short confirmation email to [urayogan.diaz-pacheco@usda.gov](mailto:urayogan.diaz-pacheco@usda.gov) stating: Your Name, Amount Donated, and any other useful information to confirm the transaction. For additional details, please contact the NOPHNRCSSE Office of the Treasurer, Treasurer Urayoan Diaz-Pacheco at [urayogan.diaz-pacheco@usda.gov](mailto:urayogan.diaz-pacheco@usda.gov).



Milton Cortes Scholarship Fund  
QR Code

## 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](#).

Follow us





# NOPHNRCSE

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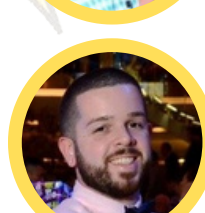
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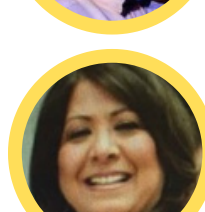
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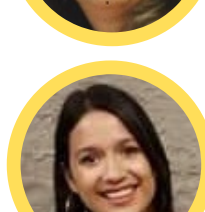
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