



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

March 2003

The President's Greeting

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Only one thing can be said about last year and that's, WOW! Amazingly, this year promises to be even more remarkable.

The passage of the Farm Bill, the passage an unprecedented budget for conservation, and the recently published EQIP proposed rules, to name a few of the many changes we are all facing, translates into a significant increase in workload for all our membership. Add to this the Technical Service Providers and competitive outsourcing and only then are the significant changes in how we do business becomes evident.

These times also presents NOPHNRCSE with an opportunity to influence the direction and future of conservation that can benefit our members and Hispanic community at large. We need to make sure that our leadership,

at all levels, understands our concerns and issues through our day-to-day contact with our leaders. As hard as we may try, in order to be effective, our work cannot be from the top down but rather must be from all directions at once.

As we work with our Local Work Groups, partners, and clients, we begin to understand the barriers a chili farmer in New Mexico or a dairy producer in Florida faces every day. We see how government can sometimes help an individual or hinder their progress. We are in a time where we can make significant progress in breaking down these barriers. Many of our members are working on National committees, drafting rules and

revising program manuals. Let these members and your National Council know what you are facing and suggestions on how to overcome your challenges.

As many of you may know, the Conference Planning Committee is well underway in planning our 2003 conference. This year offers several training opportunities for all members and a special conservation tour to see some on the ground conservation efforts of the Iowa conservation partnership. This year we will once again be joined by the Hispanic Emphasis Program Managers. I hope to see you in Iowa.

At this time, I ask only one thing of you. No matter how busy you may be, remember, that at the end of the day only thing that counts, is your family. Take care of your families first.

Pedro Ramos
President

Scholarship Applications Due April 1

Submitted by Amanda N. Hasemeier, Chair, Scholarship and Endowment Fund Committee

NOPHNRCSE is planning on awarding three, \$700.00 scholarships to eligible students this year, but the deadline is no later

than April 1. Students can be graduating high school or already enrolled in an accredited college or university to be eligible. Every member can assist in getting this information about the scholarships to friends and family or institutions in their community.

All necessary information and application form is available on the NOPHNRCSE website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/index.html. If you want further information, call Amanda at 717-237-2236 or VC at 9039-2236 or Amanda.Hasemeier@pa.usda.gov.



Message from Midwest Regional Conservationist Charles Whitmore and Iowa State Conservationist Leroy Brown

The work of NRCS employees is outstanding and deserves the recognition of being a strong, dedicated, and diverse workforce.

Dear Fellow Members,
We want to extend a warm welcome to all of you attending the 2003 National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees Conference and Hispanic Emphasis Program Managers' Training Conference, June 16-19, 2003. We, here in Iowa and the Midwest Region, are very excited to host this meeting and encourage you to take some time to enjoy the sites and sounds of Des Moines and surrounding areas. This week will be a great time to catch up with old friends and meet new ones.

The conference theme, "Welcoming the Challenges of Conservation Opportunities",

parallels how the NRCS is preparing itself for future demands on delivering the best possible service to our customer while dealing with a smaller workforce and increasing workload. It is a challenge, but not unlike other challenges we have faced before.

The work of NRCS employees is outstanding and deserves the recognition of being a strong, dedicated, and diverse workforce. We adapt to challenges with our solid technical credibility, our grassroots based contacts, and most of all, our employees. This is a difficult time in our country with the threats of terrorism and eco-

nomie insecurities. You play an important role in the efforts that make our country safe. Conservation of our natural resources insures that U.S. citizens have safe food to eat and clean water to drink. You provide services to farmers and ranchers that help them continue to be productive and protect their livelihood. We cannot overlook the importance of the work we do.

So, enjoy the conference, learn from each other, and look forward to the challenges to come. Just remember, NRCS was born out of a national crisis and must continue to look forward to new opportunities to help our neighbors and partners.

Conference Planning Underway

NOPHNRCS is pleased to be teaming up with the Hispanic Employment Program Managers again this year. The joint NOPHNRCS/HEPM Training Conference is scheduled for June 16-19, 2003 in Des Moines, Iowa.

This year's conference theme is "Welcoming the Challenges of Conservation Opportunities". To make the most of these opportunities, training sessions on both technical and professional development will be offered. In addition, participants will be treated to a conservation tour.

The conference will be held at the West Des Moines Marriott. A block of rooms has been reserved under the group name NOPHNRCS. The rate is \$67/night. To reserve your room, please call 515-267-1500.

Additional information regarding the conference will be available soon. Please check out the NOPHNRCS website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/ for more conference information.

2003 National HEPM Training Conference

The 2003 National HEPM training conference will once again be held in conjunction with the annual NOPHNRCS conference, in Des Moines, Iowa. The HEPM training will be held on Monday, June 16, 2003. In order to attend the training session, HEPM's should begin working with their supervisors to obtain approval. Look for additional information in future issues of "La Voz" and over email. If you have questions, please contact **Rick Tafoya**, National HEPM, at his office (505) 758-3863, Ext. 3 or by email: ricky.tafoya@nm.usda.gov



Call for Posters and Technical Papers for Training Conference

*Submitted by Juan C. Hernández,
Chair, Natural Resources Committee*

The Natural Resources Committee from the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNCSE) is calling for posters and technical papers for our next training conference to be held on June 17-19, 2003 in Des Moines, Iowa. The conference theme is "Welcoming the Challenges of Conservation Opportunities." If you have been working in any innovative project or any unique ways to outreach minority customers, please consider presenting a poster or a technical paper.

The selected presenters may attend at government time and expense, with approval from proper supervisor. If you are interest in making a technical paper presentation or a poster at the NOPHNCSE conference, please send a one page abstract or a poster proposal by April 18 to **Juan C. Hernández** at (717) 334-2317 ext.101 or email at Juan.Hernandez@pagettysbu.fsc.usda.gov

Abstracts for posters and technical papers for conference presentations are due April 18.

Being an NRCS Married Couple

Yamillette and Carlos Suarez

Being a married couple working for SCS and NRCS for the last 10 years has been fun, interesting and adventurous. We have worked in 4 states (WV, PA, IN and WI) and spent almost two years in Managua, Nicaragua. During those years, we started a family that now consists of our 5-year-old daughter, Andrea and our 2-year-old son, Alex. They joined us on our international assignment to Nicaragua. That assignment was knowledgeable, gratifying and the most wonderful experience of all. When we tell people that we worked for the NRCS International Program in Nicaragua, they think about all the dangers and risks that we might have experienced while there. The truth is, it was a fantastic opportunity to apply all the knowledge and skill we have acquired from years of working with NRCS in the States. For example, giving an agricultural town north of Managua the chance to reconstruct a bridge destroyed by Hurricane Mitch so that they could transport their agricultural products was the most fulfilling experience. We would do it again 10 times if we would have to.

Finding Those Who Serve

NOPHNCSE would like to find the names and method of contacting members who have been deployed for military service. It would be nice to be able to contact them and offer support during this time.

Please send the member's name and contact information (i.e. postal or email address) to Sharyn Alvarez at sharyn.alvarez@usda.gov, and she will share that information with NOPHNCSE members through La Voz.

NOPHNCSE Members On Military Duty

Pete Martinez of the Southeast Regional office staff is currently at Fort Gordon. He can be reached at cw32b@hotmail.com.

Edwin Almodovar, soil conservationist, Lafayette, Indiana, is a Specialist with the 209th Quartermaster Company in the Army Reserve. He is married to Glenda and has a daughter, Thais. His wife and daughter are staying with family in Puerto Rico until Edwin's safe return. You can reach Edwin by email: Edwin.almodovar@us.army.mil

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(Being an NRCS Married Couple continued)

Throughout the years working with NRCS, we have not only gained experience applying sound conservation on the ground but have made many, many good friends in every state we have worked in. We have grown not only professionally but as a couple. We are definitely not the same married couple who would wake up at 9 am a Saturday morning, have breakfast, read the paper and go back to sleep until 3pm, wake up and go to watch a movie at the theater (no kids yet of course!). Those times are gone and for the good. Now all our free time belongs to our kids and twice a month we would go out for a romantic date to a nice downtown restaurant. Actually we just like to visit one restaurant because we love their Paella Valenciana.

We do have a non-written rule at home and it is that “we don’t talk about work on our free time at home” (if there is such free time with two little ones). We are looking forward to the next 20 years with NRCS, the new cities, states or countries that the future and NRCS may bring us.

Yamillette Suarez is a Civil Engineer at the Madison Field Office, Wisconsin

Carlos Suarez is the Assistant State Conservationist for Operations at the Richland Center Area Office, Wisconsin

Lori and Jose Valadez

Jose and Lori met while both worked for NRCS in Texas. Lori says she tells people that Jose fixed her computer one day (Jose is a computer specialist) and that was it. She decided he was the man for her. Lori and Jose used to think that being married and working for the same agency made them unique, but not anymore. They know at least five other married couples working for NRCS. Working for the same agency certainly has its advantages. For example, when one of them wants to talk about a work situation, they don’t have to spend a lot of valuable time in explaining who everyone is and what the background is. Another advantage is that they both know everyone at office social functions.

Jose has worked for NRCS since 1985. He started as a student trainee and then moved on to a soil conservationist position. He has spent most of his career as a computer specialist, both in Texas and now in Montana. Lori has worked for NRCS since 1988. She has worked as a public affairs specialist in Kansas, Texas, and Montana.

They are now located in Bozeman, Montana, and have a three-year-old son named Elijo.

Moderators Needed for Annual Conference

The speakers committee is seeking moderators for the upcoming Annual NOPHNRCSE Conference. Interested parties should send their name, email address, and telephone numbers to both addresses below:

mike.squires@mo.usda.gov
julie.jacobs@il.usda.gov

Where Are They Now?

Effective 12/15/02, **Angel Figueroa** accepted the position of Natural Resources Specialist with the Animal Husbandry and Clean Water Programs Division at Headquarters based in Beltsville, Maryland. Angel will be working with the national leadership in animal agricultural and water resources policy and coordination.

Angel is one of the growing numbers of NOPHNRCSE members serving NRCS at the national headquarters. Angel can be reached at (301) 504-2225, and at voice mail 9002-504-2225.

Interested in being a moderator for the annual training conference? Contact Mike Squires or Julie Jacobs at mike.squires@mo.usda.gov or julie.jacobs@il.usda.gov.



USDA and Hispanic Radio to Sign Partnership Agreement

Submitted by Manuel Ayala, Jr.

A draft Partnership Agreement (PA) has been developed between USDA and the Hispanic Radio Network (HRN). The agreement would commit HRN to broadcast 72 radio programs (4 per agency) in their 160 radio station affiliates in the United States and Puerto Rico. In addition, 7 newspaper articles would be published in all 102 newspapers across the U.S. and Puerto Rico. The radio broadcasts reach an audience of more than four million Hispanic listeners and the newspapers have a combined circulation rate of 4.6 million copies.

HRN is a non profit organization that provides information and educational format types of programming to its Hispanic audience. HRN is similar to the Hispanic National Public Radio. The PA is intended to strengthen USDA's relationship and outreach activities with educational

institutions, professional and minority organizations and the overall Hispanic community by way of the HRN Weekly Radio Programs. The PA is designed to attract students and potential candidates for employment, research and services to various program opportunities in the field of agriculture. HRN's radio programming and coordination activities will facilitate access to Hispanics in program areas of interest to USDA in the U.S and Puerto Rico.

One of the key responsibilities of USDA will be to advise USDA employee groups and organizations, educational institutions and other partners serving Hispanic American communities of the PA and request their participation in its implementation activities, as appropriate.

NOPHNRCSE can assist tremendously in identifying subject

matter areas for broadcast, identifying role models, assisting with interviews or being interviewed. NOPHNRCSE members will have opportunities to tell their own stories and what inspired them to get into natural resource conservation and the satisfaction they get from their careers.

I encourage you to think about the opportunities that you will have and to be ready when you are called to assist or participate when the PA is signed. As the Hispanic population continues to increase, we need to be informed so we can better inform our customers and our next generation of NRCS employees. We have the chance to reach out to the Hispanic community once the PA is signed. What role does NOPHNRCSE want to play in this? We need to be ready when called upon to help in getting out the message we want to deliver regarding programs, employment, and stewardship.

Hispanic Radio Network is a non profit organization that provides information and educational format types of programming to its Hispanic audience.