



La Voz

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

June 2004

Conference Update

*By Carmen Ortiz
Chair, Conference
Planning Committee*

Local transportation may be arranged with the Super Shuttle servicing the Sacramento Airport (SMF). Reservations could be made online at https://www.supershuttle.com/WebRez/WebRez/ASP/Res_LogIn.asp or by phone by calling 800-BLUE VAN (258-3826).

The cost is \$13 one way to the Holiday Inn, 300 J. Street, Downtown Sacramento. Find out more information about the Super Shuttle in Sacramento at <http://www.supershuttle.com>.

If you decide to rent a car, be advised that cost is \$15 for valet parking and \$10 for self-park at the city garage.

Candidate for President

*By Bertha T. Venegas,
candidate*

I am officially announcing my candidacy for President of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNRCSE). My name is Bertha T. Venegas, and I am a Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Coordinator in San Antonio, Texas. I am a charter member of NOPHNRCSE and have supported the organization since its inception. I have served in various positions including Vice President and Committee Chair.

If I am elected to President, I am committed to:

- Addressing members' issues concerning employment, promotion, placement and hiring
- Assisting NRCS in the delivery of program benefits and services to
- Hispanic communities in the conservation of natural resources
- Fostering and developing strong partnerships to accomplish the goals of the organization

Throughout my 15 years with NRCS, I have held various positions from Soil Conservation Aid, Soil Conservationist, District Conservationist to RC&D Coordinator of

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Candidate for Executive VP

*By Tamara Buitenwerf,
candidate*

Tamara, daughter of Daniel L. Martinez and Constance S. Clausen, spent most of her growing up years in Kingsburg - a farming community in the central valley of California. Since her days in high school, Tamara has been involved in leadership and agriculture. Entering college as a USDA Multicultural Scholar, Tamara quickly became more involved in those very areas. From her collective experiences as an executive officer of the student senate, an executive member of Alpha Delta Chi, member of the agriculture college Student Executive Council, her work experiences in outreach with the Forest Service and her time as a student trainee with NRCS as well as many other activities, this bright and enthusiastic woman offers many skills and talents to any organization.

After graduating from California State University, Fresno, this independent woman moved to Northeast Iowa to continue her career with NRCS. She is currently a soil conservationist

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which I hold today. These key leadership positions have given me the experience a President needs to advance the mission of our organization. I have worked in the field with farmers, ranchers, partners and the urban population implementing conservation programs based on the needs of our customers and taking into account our natural resource base. Along the way, I have garnered the respect of fellow employees, customers, partners and NRCS leadership.

Adding to my career portfolio, I have served as Federal Women's Program Manager for the State of Texas addressing civil rights issues and as a representative on the Civil Rights Committee. As Coordinator, I foster

partnerships on behalf of RC&D and serve as USDA Liaison to the Alamo RC&D Area providing leadership and technical assistance. I have certification in nonprofit management and extensive knowledge of the fundamental functions of an organization.

I have earned numerous recognitions including the 1997 National Civil Rights Award given by Chief Paul Johnson for developing an outreach program targeting females and minorities for interest in Science and Engineering and ensuring equal assistance to all landowners, and the NOPHNRCS Leadership Award in 1998 and 1999 for providing leadership and guidance to committees that are

the foundation of the organization.

As you can see my skills and accomplishments are many. I have the necessary traits to lead the NOPHNRCS in its mission to motivate and mentor members for leadership roles to assist NRCS and partners in delivering natural resources conservation.

My husband, Rolando, and I have two children, Justin and Andres. I enjoy quality time with family, fishing, hunting, photography and genealogy.

I ask for your vote in the upcoming election. I am committed to providing quality leadership to elevate our organizations' visibility.

Thank you for your support.

With a little help from your friends . . . anything is possible

By Eddie M. Garcia, Soil Conservationist, Austin, Texas

I began my career as a GS-3 Soil Conservation Technician Aide on August 12, 1979. My first and only duty station was in Rosenberg, Texas. I worked for several DCs and four Assistant State Conservationists while in Rosenberg. As I climbed the career ladder to a Civil Engineering Technician in December of 1989, I continued to pursue the possibilities of becoming a Soil Conservationist one day. With guidance and mentorship from Jerry Williams, former AC in Bryan, TX; Grady Dillard,

DC in Rosenberg; Adolf Perez, former HEPM from Texas; Salvador Salinas, also former HEPM; and David Myers, Retired DC from Houston, TX; I enrolled in Houston Community College System's Agriculture Program. They had the classes that were required by then SCS (NRCS). It took me four years of night school and several summers to accomplish this mission. In May of 1993 I graduated with honors with an Associates of Applied Science in Agriculture. The hours I had taken in Agriculture Science and

Soils qualified me for the GS 457 series. As luck would have it, the CET position with the Texas Prairie Wetlands Project came available and I was asked to consider the position. Since the position was a GS 9, I agreed to do the TPWP for a while. Well that was 9 1/2 years ago. I have designed and installed 18,000 to 20,000 acres of the current 30,000 plus acres of waterfowl habitat along the 28 counties bordering the Gulf Coast of Texas. I was in a great partnership with NRCS, Ducks Unlimited, US Fish & Wildlife and Texas

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Anything is Possible continued

Eddie Garcia reaches his goal.

Parks & Wildlife Department. Yet, I felt it was time to move on! I started applying for Soil Conservationist positions this year. Normally I would be considering retirement in five years. However in November of 2000 a young man came into our lives that changed my retirement goals. My wife Rose and I adopted Jacob Acosta Garcia at a ripe old age of 18 months. With Jacob in the picture (soon to be 5 years old in July) we had to make long range plans. With this in mind I felt the need to attempt to get a Soil Conservationist job so I could work fewer

counties and maybe get closer to family. Well, Austin was offered to me and I accepted it without hesitation. Austin is within 3 hours of both of our parents. Not to mention that we have family here in Austin and in San Antonio. We are excited about the move. Things are falling in place for the Garcia's. I am glad to have management give me the opportunity to work as a Soil Conservationist in Austin. I bring years of urban experience to the team. As a member and past officer of NOPHNRCSE I bring that experience to

the table also. I am committed to make this office to be one of the best in the state of Texas. There were times when I wanted to give up this quest, but there were always fellow NOPHNRCSE and NRCS members that kept encouraging me to pursue this. I tip my hat to all of them for believing in me and supporting me. Life in NRCS has been good, but you have to make things happen for yourself. If the doors open a little, you have to step in. Don't stay outside looking in wondering...what if? Never give up!

Candidate for Executive VP continued

in the Clayton County Service Center. In the two short years since arriving, Tamara has been involved in many areas which include but aren't limited to: an Area Quality Steering Team, outreach, state civil rights committee and volunteered to assist with agriculture work in Nicaragua (using her own time and expense). Her involvements with NOPHNRCSE *so far* include: 2003 Planning Committee, 2004 Awards Committee and Midwest Regional Representative.

Outside of work, whether it is coaching soccer, teaching the junior high bible study or hanging out with friends, Tamara spends much of her time with others. Tamara also enjoys spending time with her husband, Ryan,

running veterinary calls, piddling around on their 3 acre farm, reading a book or decorating the house.

Vision

- To work together for natural resources conservation.
- To serve and involve every member.
- To build bridges and foster positive relationships with all parts of the Hispanic community.
- To make life better for Hispanic NRCS employees.
- To make NOPHNRCSE a powerful voice for the community.
- To showcase the value that Hispanics bring into any organization.
- To make NOPHNRCSE a better

organization for the future.

- To develop leaders in every aspect of NRCS.

Goals

- Create an effective National Council.
 - Improve the NOPHNRCSE website and use it as an outreach tool.
 - Improve communications between NOPHNRCSE and the NRCS family.
 - Fully appoint all committees.
 - Create a strategic plan.
 - Assist in the achievement of equal representation in every state and territory.
 - Increase NRCS performance in the delivery of program benefits and services to the Hispanic community.
- Your Vote is Appreciated!



Meet the Midwest Regional Representative

*By Tamara Buitenwerf,
Midwest Regional
Representative*

Growing up in central California, I didn't even know where Iowa was located on the map. I soon found out and spent the 2001 summer as a student trainee soil conservationist in there. After going back home and finishing my last year at California State University, Fresno, I moved to

northeast Iowa and have been working as a soil con here since June of 2002. That's a pretty simple introduction, wouldn't you agree? But like all of you, there are so many experiences and life lessons that make me who I am today. The events and decisions that brought me here are quite interesting to say the least. But, I won't

take the time today to entertain you with my experiences. Should we cross paths at a meeting or at the NOPHNCSE conference, I'd love to share some of those stories. Here's how you can find me:
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Midwest
Region has
new regional
rep.