



September 30, 2011

**Inside this issue:**

All Employees Meeting Training	2
New NRCS Caribbean Area Employees Welcomed with Civil Rights and Outreach	2
NRCS CRAC Members Recruit Students at UPR-Mayaguez Job Fair	2
Civil Rights Advisory Committee Members	3
Women & LGBT SEPM Accomplishments	3
Disability SEPM Accomplishments	3
Veterans SEPM Accomplishments	4
Other SEPM Accomplishments	4
Civil Rights Complaint Process	4
Employee Resources	4



- **Reorganized 17 Puerto Rico Conservation Districts**
- **60% of FY11 Farm Bill Program participants in are Beginner, Limited-Resource, or Socially-Disadvantaged Farmers**
- **15% of FY 11 Farm Bill Program participants are Women**

## Our Purpose... Our Passion

Welcome to the fiscal year 2011 annual newsletter of the Caribbean Area Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC). CRAC members represent field and state office employees from Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, and serve in an advisory role to the Director. We meet quarterly in different locations throughout Puerto Rico. All employees, with supervisor's permission, are encouraged to attend our meetings.

There are eight Special Emphasis Programs (SEP) that are part of the Civil Rights Advisory Committee:

- African Americans;
- American Indians/Alaska Natives;
- Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders;
- Persons with Disabilities;
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Individuals;
- Hispanics;
- Veterans; and
- Women

These SEPs are an integral part of the overall equal opportunity program in NRCS. These programs are coordinated through the National SEP Managers (SEPM's), who are assigned to the Outreach and Advocacy Division. The SEPMs serve as the principal staff advisors to the Director of the Outreach and Advocacy Division on legislation, policies, employment, and program issues impacting our stakeholders. See page 3 for contact information for the Caribbean Area SEPM's.

## Our Mission...

*To provide counsel and recommendations to the Director on civil rights for all clients and employees.*

## Our Vision...

*A diverse workforce that, by reflecting the face of the Caribbean Area, will provide equal opportunity and quality of service to all customers.*

The Civil Rights Advisory Committee:

- Identifies and brings to management's attention any trends, problems, issues or concerns.
- Monitors recruitment practices and makes recommendations for ensuring that under-represented groups are made aware of employment opportunities for career positions, temporary summer employment or special appointments.
- Focuses the attention of management on specific personnel practices or problems of an Equal Opportunity nature which are producing or could produce dissension and dissatisfaction among employees.
- Monitors the policies and overall effectiveness of the Affirmative Employment and Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Programs with regard to recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention.
- Acts as a forum for an exchange of ideas and action proposals on sensitive issues, matters, or concerns of an Equal Opportunity nature.
- Promotes and communicates the efforts of management to achieve and operate a realistic and ongoing Equal Opportunity program.

For more information on how to become involved, please contact any of the CRAC members for the Caribbean Area or visit our website at: [www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov/about/Civil\\_Rights/index.html](http://www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov/about/Civil_Rights/index.html).



**CRAC Chair, Carlos E. Morganti, discusses Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act at the December 2010 NRCS All Employees Meeting.**

## All Employees Meeting Training

NRCS Caribbean Area Civil Rights efforts were highlighted at the December 7, 2010 All Employees Meeting, held in La Parguera, PR. Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) Chair, Carlos E. Morganti, provided 72 NRCS Caribbean Area employees with an update of the Committee's accomplishments. Morganti also delivered a powerpoint presentation describing the requirements of Ti-

ties VI (Equal Opportunities in Program Delivery to Clients) and VII (Equal Employment Opportunity) of the Civil Rights Act.

Also presented was a discussion of our Outreach Program's mission, vision and purpose. Innovative outreach methods and tools were discussed and staff members charged with increasing NRCS's visibility in our local communities.

## New NRCS Caribbean Area Employees Welcomed with Civil Rights and Outreach Training

To help meet our Fiscal Year 2011 Business Plan goals & objectives, the CRAC held a training session for new employees at the State Office on November 29, 2010. Ten new NRCS employees (Michelle Catoni, Linnette Rosado, Yadira Feliciano, Zahira Vega, Vivian Vera, Betzaida Hernández, Sonia Burgos, Rolando Collazo, Javier Torres, Rafael Sierra & Mario Rodríguez) received Civil

Rights & Outreach training as part of their Orientation course. The new employees learned about Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 through a presentation delivered by CRAC Chair, Carlos E. Morganti.

Part of the session included a discussion of the Outreach process. Various types and examples of outreach activities were introduced for discussion by the trainer and participants.

The Titles VI and VII presentation was of particular interest to new employees, who had many questions on the non-discrimination process in program delivery and EEO. Use of the non-discrimination statement in all official documents was emphasized during the training.

Participants were pleased with the training and agreed that they had a better understanding of the subject after this session.

- **Participated in Agropolis: 1-week farmer & community agriculture fair w/ over 20,000 attendees**
- **Participated in Congress of Livestock Marketing Opportunities with over 500 attendees**
- **Participated in Veterans Job Fair**

## NRCS CRAC Members Recruit Students at UPR-Mayagüez Job Fair



**NRCS Recruiters at UPRM Job Fair (L-R): Carlos Suárez, Carlos Morganti, Mario Rodríguez, Terry Howard, Elizabeth Hernández, Natalie Irizarry, Juan Hernández, Edwin Almodóvar and Luis Hernández.**

NRCS Caribbean Area Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) members and state-side NRCS staff par-

ticipated in the University of Puerto Rico – Mayagüez (UPRM) annual job fair on September 30, 2011 to recruit students to the NRCS Student Temporary Employment (STEP) and Student Career Experience Programs (SCEP). These programs provide college students with the opportunity to work with NRCS over two summers in any state or territory.

NRCS team members interviewed and evaluated students for Civil Engineering, Soil Scientist, Soil Conservationist and Biologist disciplines. The day before the Job Fair, the NRCS team visited UPRM's Agriculture Sciences and Agricultural Mechanical Technology Departments and Civil Engineers Student Association to deliver presentations emphasizing the challenges and opportunities of working with NRCS. Human Resources staff also discussed

the benefits of federal employment and working with NRCS. Team members included Carlos Suárez, Florida State Conservationist (STC); Juan Carlos Hernández, Maine STC; Edwin Almodóvar, Caribbean Area (CB) STC; Carlos E. Morganti, CB CRAC Chair; Mario Rodríguez, CB CRAC Vice Chair; Elizabeth Hernández, CB Human Resources Manager (HRM); Terry Howard, Florida HR Specialist; Luis Hernández, Arkansas State Soil Scientist; Natalie Irizarry, Wisconsin Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager (HEPM); and Jorge Lugo, CB HEPM. Over 350 students visited the NRCS booth and received information on work opportunities. Of these students, 65 were interviewed to further evaluate their potential to work with NRCS.

## Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) Members

<b>Carlos E. Morganti</b> , Chair	787-831-3416
<b>Mario Rodríguez</b> , Vice Chair	787-841-3275
<b>Nilda González</b> , Secretary	787-766-5206 x.239
<b>Fernando Arroyo</b> , Civil Rights Advisor/ Liaison	787-766-5206 x.238
<b>Lydia Collazo</b> , Federal Women's & GLBT Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM)	787-743-2743
<b>Jorge Lugo</b> , Hispanic SEPM	787-831-3416
<b>Ramona Maldonado</b> , American Indian/ Alaskan SEPM	787-837-4450
<b>Hilton Miró</b> , Asian/ Pacific Islander SEPM	787-766-5206, x231
<b>José Rivera</b> , Disabled SEPM	787-817-2473, x115
<b>Rudy G. O'Reilly, Jr.</b> , Black SEPM & Member at Large for USVI	340-692-9662 x. 106
<b>Luis García</b> , Veteran's SEPM & Member at Large for PR	787-766-5206 x. 221
<b>Julie Wright</b> , Outreach Coordinator	340-692-9632 x. 107
<b>Elizabeth Hernández</b> , Human Resources Manager / CRAC Advisor	787-766-5206 x. 228
<b>Edwin Almodóvar</b> , Caribbean Area Director / Deputy Equal Opportunity Officer	787-766-5206 x. 237

- **Conducted 10 outreach activities in Guánica/ Rio Loco watersheds under the Coral Reef Initiative**
- **Held 5 EQIP Organic / 2008 Farm Bill public outreach meetings**
- **Participated in UPR Extension Service "Women in Puerto Rico's Agriculture" workshop with 50 women farmers & ranchers**

## Women & LGBT SEPM Accomplishments

Federal Women's Program (FWP) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) SEPM, Lydia Collazo, produced 7 program flyers and newsletters highlighting FY11 program accomplishments, distributing copies to all Caribbean Area staff members.

In celebration of Women's History Month, a poster "Caribbean Area NRCS Females Working Hand-in-Hand with Local Customers to Conserve our Natural Resources" and a "First Females" booklet highlighting the accomplishments of two Caribbean Area staff were created and circulated to all employees. FWP newsletters highlighted Women's Equality Day, progress of women in federal government and Women in PR Agriculture Outreach Workshop.

LGBT newsletters highlighted repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and June LGBT Pride Month celebrations, including San Juan's Gay Pride Parade.

## Disability SEPM Accomplishments



Disability SEPM José Rivera received on-the-job-training for Building Site Accessibility Compliance and completed inspections and reports for Juana Diaz, Camuy and Mayaguez field offices (FOs).

Information on Puerto Rico TTY system location and the TTY Procurator Impediment Conference was reported to

Human Resources and Telecommunications Relay Service information was forwarded to all staff.

Information about the 1990 American Disabilities Act (ADA) was distributed to all DC's and FO staff, and the SEPM assisted 3 NRCS employees (2 females and 1 male). Information on Titles

VI and VII and NRCS recruitment opportunities was delivered to students at the Soller Vocational School in Camuy, PR. Also, information about FCC's Next Generation 9-1-1, Presidential Proclamation of the ADA anniversary, and information about National Disabilities Awareness Month poster was distributed to all staff.

## We're on the Web!

[www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov)



Follow us on Twitter @NRCS\_Caribbean & Facebook under NRCS Caribbean

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## Helping People Help the Land...

### Veterans SEPM Accomplishments



**Veterans SEPM, Luis García, receives Civil Rights Employee of the Year Award at the December 2010 NRCS All Employees Meeting.**

Veterans SEPM, Luis A. García, participated in 3 Job Fairs and 4 outreach events to promote USDA-NRCS Veterans employment opportunities this fiscal year. He provided two job referrals for Agency employment.

He also distributed outreach materials to Caribbean Area NRCS employees, including:

- Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act posters for display in all Field Offices;
- Copies of the "Stars & Stripes" and "El Morro" newspapers to keep employees informed about veterans-related activities and news; and
- Factsheets from the Veterans Hospital to keep all USDA Veterans informed about new services or changes.

### Other SEPM Accomplishments

On June 2, 2011, CRAC Advisor, Fernando Arroyo, and CRAC Chair, Carlos E. Morganti, conducted a one-day workshop for 4 SEPMs at the Caguas Service Center. The main training topics were General Manual Title 230: Equal Opportunity, Part 403: Special Emphasis Programs, and SEPMs' roles and responsibilities. Lydia E. Collazo, FWP & LGBT SEPM; Jorge L. Lugo, Hispanic SEPM; Hilton Miró Detrés, Asian/ Pacific Islander SEPM; and Luis A. García, Veterans SEPM, participated in the training.

### Civil Rights Complaint Process

Elizabeth Hernández: Human Resources Manager, Caribbean Area State Office, 787-766-5206 x. 228 or [Elizabeth.Hernandez@pr.usda.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Hernandez@pr.usda.gov)  
If you believe you have been discriminated against because of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment), religion, age (if over 40), national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or reprisal for equal employment activities, in an employment matter or in the workplace, and wish to initiate an Equal Employment Opportunity complaint, you must contact your EEO counselor within 45 days of the alleged discriminatory action. Contact the USDA-NRCS Civil Rights Employment Division at 301-504-2181 for assignment of an EEO counselor.

NRCS Civil Rights Employment Division  
5601 Sunnyside Avenue  
Mail Stop #5472  
Beltsville, MD 20705-5472

### Employee Resources

#### Sexual Harassment Contact (Training & Concerns)

Elizabeth Hernández: Human Resources Manager, Caribbean Area State Office, 787-766-5206 x. 228 or [Elizabeth.Hernandez@pr.usda.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Hernandez@pr.usda.gov)  
Sexual Harassment Hotline: 1-888-FIGHT IT (1-888-344-4848)

For information, advice, or assistance, call this toll free number from any phone. The hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. An NRCS staff member will respond during a 8-hour, workday. If a person is away from the desk, or if you call outside work hours, or on a weekend, an answering machine - one solely dedicated to this hotline which remains in a private, locked office - will tape whatever information you care to disclose.

#### RD & NRCS Employee Assistance Program

Confidential, professional counseling at no cost to you.  
Call 1-888-243-5744 or TDD # 1-800-627-3529.

Provided by The Sand Creek Group Ltd., Stillwater, MN. They can help you deal with difficult problems (relationship issues, separation or divorce concerns, alcohol or other chemical abuse, concerns about your job, loss and grief, financial crisis, parent/child difficulties, and many other personal problems).

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.