

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVITY REPORT FY 2012



A CIVIL RIGHTS MESSAGE FROM THE STATE CONSERVATIONIST

Salvador Salinas, State Conservationist

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The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has a great legacy of providing practical, science-based, site-specific technical assistance to cooperators/land managers to plan and apply conservation practices to address natural resource concerns on private lands.

Our conservation tradition includes delivering these services to all persons through the long standing partnerships with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), in addition to numerous other partnerships. This conservation legacy is the result of the dedication and hard work of Texas NRCS employees at all levels of the agency across the state in getting conservation on the ground.

It is a goal of this agency to treat all employees and cus-

tomers with dignity and respect and to ensure that all people are aware of and have an equal opportunity to receive assistance and participate in our programs.

The Texas Civil Rights Advisory Committee (TCRAC) played a critical role in Fiscal Year 2012 in this effort. Under the leadership of Manuel DeLeon, chair, the Committee has done an excellent job in achieving this goal. Their many accomplishments are showcased in this Activity Report.

The Committee completed Civil Rights Compliance reviews in 49 field offices this fiscal year. Positive work that employees are doing in the area of civil rights are recognized through the Texas Civil Rights Awards. Follow-up actions are being taken to address deficiencies identified in the reviews.

Committee members also served on multiagency Accessibility Review Teams (ART) to conduct accessibility compliance reviews in 30 co-located Service Center Agency offices in the state. These reviews identified physical barriers that are an impediment to persons with disabilities

regarding access to the office in order to receive assistance. Identified deficiencies are being addressed by the leasing staff of the Service Center agencies. A similar review was conducted in one stand alone field office this year.

Program application and participation data for cost-share programs have been distributed to the field offices to assist in evaluating and taking actions to ensure that equitable assistance is being provided to all persons.

The Civil Rights portion of the Texas NRCS web site is updated regularly to ensure that information relative to activities of the CRAC; and Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity in our agency is available to employees and others.

Appreciation is expressed to the CRAC and the Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPM's) for their work this year; and to all employees who share in our Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity responsibilities. By working together, Texas NRCS employees have demonstrated that Civil Rights is not just another job, rather, it is the way that we do business.

COMMENTS FROM THE CRAC CHAIR

Manuel DeLeon, Chair

Another year comes to a close as NRCS is faced with many new challenges now and in the future.

Although we have experienced times of adversity, the TCRAC has exhibited outstanding teamwork and collaboration to achieve many accomplishments. I would like to reflect on some of the highlights and changes that occurred in the past fiscal year.

- All SEPMs and others from the TCRAC continued to work tirelessly in recruiting new employees.
- The Veterans Emphasis Program (VEP) was split from the Disability Emphasis Program (DEP) and are now recognized as two separate programs.
- The Texas StrikeForce Initiative Team was tasked with developing a State Specific Strategic Plan to address issues in socially disadvantaged communities along the Texas/Mexico border.
- Garry Stephens, NRCS Tribal Liaison received the American Indian Alaska Native Employee Association's "Community Outreach Award."
- Brannon Sledge, TCRAC member and David Daniels, manager of the Black Emphasis Program (BEPM), helped celebrate National GIS (Global Imaging Satellite) Day at the Prairie View A&M (PVAMU) University campus by demonstrating use of NRCS equipment.
- Kristen McDaris, manager of the Federal Women's Program (FWP) inventoried and redesigned the electronic listing of library items that are posted to the state share point site for all employee access.
- All TCRAC members helped complete the Civil Rights and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) field office reviews.

We also had changes in TCRAC leadership and involvement. First, a big thank you is extended to Susan Baggett, NRCS State resource conservationist, for her patience and support while acting Civil Rights Liaison. We welcomed Drenda Williams who will serve as the Civil Rights Liaison, after being hired as the Assistant State Conservationist for Operations in early September. We said goodbye to Jerry Pearce, American Indian/Alaska Native Emphasis Program Manager (AI/ANEPM) and Justin Clary, Disability/Veterans Program Manager (DEPM/VEPM). We welcomed Melony Sikes from Zone 2 as the AI/ANEPM, as well as Troy Daniell, DEPM, and Doug Rose, VEPM, from the state office. Kristen McDaris also joined us from the state office as the FWP Manager, along with Flavio Garza, Jr. from Zone 3 as the Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager (HEPM). In addition, Dee Ann Littlefield, State Public Affairs Specialist, and Bertha Venegas, State Outreach Coordinator were appointed as advisors to the TCRAC. Last but not least, Laura Broyles from Zone 2 will be Chairwoman of the TCRAC beginning FY13.

I appreciate all who I have had the great pleasure of interacting with while serving on the TCRAC. I am especially appreciative of Mickey Black and Salvador Salinas for granting the opportunity and flexibility to carry out the responsibilities as member and chairman of the committee. I am also grateful for the opportunities, experiences, accomplishments, and friendships that developed while serving on the committee. I invite each of you to consider serving on the TCRAC or assisting with other opportunities that may interest you. Serving may require stepping out of your comfort zone, but as Albert Einstein stated, "The only source of knowledge is experience."

Thank you! I encourage all of you to continue working hard to fulfill the NRCS-TCRAC mission. I wish you the very best in the coming year.

FEDERAL WOMEN'S PROGRAM

Kristen McDaris, Program Manager

The purpose of the Federal Women's Program (FWP) is to provide equal employment opportunity, as well as promotion, training, career development, and advancement opportunities affecting female employees and NRCS applicants.

In 1986, the Texas FWP Advisory Committee (FWPAC) was structured to include a program manager, associate program manager, a team liaison, and a representative from each of the designated regions in the state. The responsibility of the committee is to help carry out and implement strategies to identify barriers, develop solutions, and draft plans to assure equal treatment to all employees.

I began serving as the Texas FWP manager in 2012, which made this my fifth year serving as the state office representative on the FWPAC. I also began serving on the TCRAC in 2012. I had the privilege of working with NRCS district conservationists in distributing NRCS summer internships and recruitment opportunities, applications and information to school districts and FFA/FHA school counselors. In 2012, the FWP also received 23 applications from female, high school students of which NRCS was able to hire 12 new Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) summer interns. We also had five Return to Duty Interns from the previous summer STEPs and we were able to convert three of the STEPs to the Student Career Experience Program (SCEPs). I also worked with public affairs staff on conducting video interviews which captured the NRCS working experiences of these summer interns. These videos will be used to showcase their stories to future applicants.

I hosted an exhibit booth at the College Career Fair at the University of Texas-Austin and provided handouts and other materials on Intern positions with NRCS. There were 37 college students that visited our booth and took career information for future reference. I also served on a Special Emphasis Program (SEP) team of four people for the National FWP Manager, which focused on student recruitment and retention in promoting NRCS as the employer of choice.

I implemented an online FWP Lending Library that displays pictures of the 168 books and reference materials available from a variety of topics such as self-esteem, motivation, leadership skills, history and more. The references in the library are available to all NRCS employees to check out and borrow, by calling the FWP manager. In sharing ideas during national teleconferences with other FWP managers, I was able to assist two managers in developing an online FWP library in their states.

I was involved with the state office team that conducted ADA reviews for the Groesbeck and Belton field offices and Civil Rights reviews at the Meridian, Hamilton, and Gatesville field offices.

These past five years have flown by fast, but it has been a learning experience and worthwhile collateral move.

BLACK EMPHASIS PROGRAM

David Daniels, Program Manager

I had the opportunity to staff a booth at the annual career fair that was held on the campus of PVAMU. The purpose was to provide information about NRCS in an effort to recruit for summer and full time employment. Job sheets on how to access USA Jobs were available for attendees visiting the booth.

I staffed a booth at the Landowners Association of Texas (LAT) annual meeting held in Crockett. This was a great opportunity to discuss the technical assistance that NRCS provides, along with explaining NRCS programs that can benefit minority producers.

Groups I presented NRCS information on the importance of soil and water conservation to included Roberts Elementary in Clute and a Boy Scouts group in Richwood. NRCS booths were set up at a Nature Day and Migration Celebration events to discuss the importance of preserving our natural resources. I also discussed NRCS career opportunities with high school and community college students that were in attendance at these events. Numerous Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts troops and vocational agriculture students took part in these events.

A booth was staffed at the annual Boy Scouts Jamboree in which thousands took part in the program at the Reliant Center in Houston. A NRCS booth also was staffed at the annual GIS Day held on the campus of PVAMU, which also served as an opportunity for recruitment and outreach.

A NRCS demonstration was given to the students of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) at PVAMU. The purpose was to discuss the roles of NRCS and agency employment.

Attended the annual Ag Field Day at PVAMU in which I had the opportunity to discuss programs with minority producers on a one-on-one basis.

I also took part in quarterly teleconferences with the TCRAC to provide reports on outreach efforts and provided information to our local team on CR and ADA concerns during staff conferences.

I performed three CR office reviews and three ADA office reviews. Made contact with new employees and SCEPs to check on the status of their progress during the summer.

Ensured that information on the Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher claims process was sent to local media outlets for dissemination.



Staffed a booth at the annual career fair held on the campus of Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU). The purpose was to provide information about NRCS in an effort to recruit for summer and fulltime employment. Job sheets on how to access USA Jobs were given to all that visited the booth.



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Conservation

Our Purpose. Our Passion.

HISPANIC EMPHASIS PROGRAM

Flavio Garza Jr., Program Manager

When the opportunity presented itself to be the Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager (HEPM) for Texas, I did not hesitate to accept the nomination. I realized that the responsibility would be challenging, but wanted the chance to give back to NRCS. I also saw it as an opportunity to make a difference. Many thanks to my predecessor as HEPM, Erasmo Montemayor, who helped make it a smooth transition for me.

As expected, it's been a very challenging, yet exciting and busy year. From participating in recruiting the best qualified employees to conducting various outreach activities to assisting with Civil Rights and Accessibility Compliance reviews. The most challenging part of being an HEPM is recruiting top qualified people to come work for this agency. It has taken time and effort to forge alliances with students, professors, counselors, university administrators and other agency personnel to get to where we are today. Two of my main goals were to recruit and retain as many qualified employees as possible and provide outreach information to as many producers as possible.

I participated in several HEPM training teleconferences, including a USDA departmental HEPM training. I completed and submitted quarterly reports to the National HEPM.

I announced the National Hispanic Heritage Month Poster Contest to all employees in the state. This year's theme was "Diversity United, Building America's Future Today." I also provided several informational emails to all employees during the observance of National Hispanic Heritage Month, including copies of the commemorative poster.

I have been working with the State Outreach Coordinator and Public Affairs Staff (PAS) in getting Conservation Planning and Program fact sheets translated into Spanish.

This year I was able to carry the outreach program to students beginning their education in community and junior colleges. I was able to attend career fairs at four colleges where a majority of the students are Hispanic. This effort resulted in outreach to over 1,540 students at those four colleges. Part of this effort included a recruitment presentation to high-achieving minority high school students. These students are specifically seeking a degree in the agricultural, engineering or science fields.

An excellent rapport has been maintained with the counselors, professors and administrators at Texas A&M University-Kingsville (TAMUK) College of Agriculture. This university has traditionally been a hiring source of Hispanic SCEP and CIP employees, not only for Texas, but also for many other states. Currently, I am working with administrators and professors in the Department of Agriculture, Agribusiness, and Environmental Sciences, as well as the College of Engineering to get students interested in possible careers with the agency. Tough economic times and rising costs of higher education have forced many students to look at community and junior colleges as a starting point towards a college degree. I've continued to work with many of the community, junior and technical colleges in South Texas by going to the classrooms and career fairs to inform students of the many careers available with NRCS once they enroll in a four year university.

In the fall of 2011, I assisted the outgoing HEPM as part of the recruitment team for a career fair at TAMUK. During this event, the eight-member team visited 13 agricultural and engineering classes where presentations were given to about 230 students. About 75 students visited the NRCS recruitment booth and were

provided information about the agency and career opportunities. Of those, 28 students were interviewed and entered into the National Recruitment Database.



Robert Schmidt (center), NRCS district conservationist, provides career counseling to a student at the Javelina Technology & Engineering Career Fair hosted by Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Pictured at left is Erasmo Montemayor, NRCS district conservationist, who also assisted with the NRCS information booth.

I gave a careers presentation at Laredo Community College (LCC) in Laredo to 30 students. I participated at a job fair at Texas State Community College (TSTC) in Harlingen, where approximately 360 predominantly Hispanic students participated. The majority of those who stopped by the NRCS booth inquired about careers. I also participated at a career fair in March at TAMUK where we had 308 students come by the NRCS booth for career information. In September, I coordinated and planned another career fair at TAMUK - the 2012 Javelina Technology & Engineering Career Fair. We had approximately 520 students participate. Of those, 55 students were entered into the National Recruitment Database. Classroom visits were also scheduled the day before this event. We made presentations to approximately 245 students at the College of Agriculture.

In addition to my recruitment efforts, I also assisted with a number of field office Civil Rights reviews which included Pleasanton, Seguin and LaGrange. I was also involved in the multi-agency accessibility review team in conducting the Accessibility Compliance reviews for Willacy, Nueces, and Jim Hogg County Service Centers.

I was appointed to serve on the Texas State StrikeForce Initiative Team that was charged with developing a State Specific Strategic Plan to address issues in socially disadvantaged communities in counties along the Texas/Mexico border. We identified potential partners, as well as activities, so that we can go into these communities and offer training and other informational resources. Information about conservation programs is also being distributed throughout the field offices in Spanish.

As part of the StrikeForce Initiative, I helped the Texas USDA-NRCS public affairs staff coordinate an interview and photo shoot with Webb County SWCD Cooperator and Rancher, Sergio "Keko" Benavides. Mr. Benavides is a fourth generation cattle rancher who started working alongside his father learning the everyday responsibilities of the cattle business. He has worked closely with NRCS in carrying out his conservation plan which includes planning and implementation of conservation practices such as brush management, cross-fencing, and livestock water.

I look forward to an exciting 2013 and remind all employees to contact me with any issues, concerns or recommendation on how to make your Hispanic Emphasis Program work better in Texas.



Flavio Garza Jr., NRCS HEPM, is interviewed by Univision Laredo KLDO-TV at a Landowners Workshop in Laredo, Texas. Univision is one of many minority media outlets utilized by NRCS to reach out to socially disadvantaged and historically underserved producers.



Flavio Garza Jr., Texas HEPM (far right), and Troy Daniell, Texas DEPM, (third from right), are pictured with Special Emphasis Program Managers from around the U.S. The group participated in a SEPM training in Dallas, Texas in July 2012.



As part of the Texas Strike-Force Initiative, Sergio "Keko" Benavides (left), Webb County landowner and rancher, is interviewed by Bob Stobaugh, NRCS audio visual production specialist. Benavides discussed his ranching operation and how he has worked closely with NRCS to implement his conservation plan.

DISABILITY EMPHASIS PROGRAM

Troy Daniell, Program Manager

I was selected to serve as the Disabilities Emphasis Program Manager for Texas in March. Since that time, I have assisted with completing eight Service Center reviews to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Information was also provided statewide on the Texas Agri-Ability Program, including feature videos. Additional feature stories were sent out to highlight how people with various disabilities are overcoming their challenges in order to accomplish work and enjoy life.

Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires NRCS to provide reasonable accommodation to employees and applicants for employment, unless to do so would cause undue hardship on the agency. In general, an accommodation is any change in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities.

There are three categories of reasonable accommodations:

- 1.Modifications or adjustments to a job application process that enable a qualified applicant with a disability to be considered for the position such qualified applicant desires; or
- 2.Modifications or adjustments to the work environment, or to the manner or circumstances under which the position held or desired is customarily performed, that enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of that position; or
- 3.Modifications or adjustments that enable a covered entity's employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment as are enjoyed by its other similarly situated employees without disabilities. Reasonable accommodation removes workplace barriers for individuals with disabilities.

Employees who identify themselves as having a disability must inform their supervisor that an accommodation is needed for them to do their job at optimal levels. There are a number of possible reasonable accommodations that can be considered.

An accommodation is "reasonable" if it seems reasonable on its face, or typical for similar cases and if it is "feasible" or "plausible." It is not necessary to go through a "litmus" test as to whether the accommodation is reasonable unless the request is out of the mainstream needs of a typical employee doing the same job. In other words, if a simple change in the type of chair, monitor or keyboard is needed to improve the employees' work environment the supervisor should find this reasonable on its face value and provide the accommodation. However, if the accommodation being requested is extremely out of the norm for the function of the job, then the supervisor should consult with a human resources specialist to guide them in evaluating what should be provided within reason.

ASIAN AMERICAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER EMPHASIS PROGRAM

Irene Fang, Program Manager

In the fourth year of my AAPI SEPM duties, I have been involved in the following activities:

I put together packets about the FWP, the advisory committee, brochures, applications for STEP, and delivered them to Temple High School and the Belton field office with the FWP manager.

I sent out information on NRCS career and student trainee opportunities, the Bill Gates 2012 Scholarship Program, Texas NRCS job opportunity announcements and student trainee vacancy announcements to the career coordinator at Texas A&M University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences career center and to the Liberal Arts Career Services at the University of Texas-Austin.

I shared two links related to AAPI Heritage Month with all employees via e-mail.

I sent out the "Information of Recruitment Opportunity" sent by Mr. Ngowakl, the national AA/PIEP manager to the human resource officer.

I did Accessibility Compliance reviews for field offices in Groesbeck and Belton and Civil Rights reviews for Meridian, Hamilton, and Gatesville field offices with team members.

I had Tea Time to provide special Chinese food and tea at the state office to celebrate Asian Heritage Month.

I helped to correctly translate in Chinese the requested phrase and used it to make a post to celebrate the Asian Month.

I participated with public affairs in an interview and video of a STEP student intern.

I discussed bullying incident at state CRAC meeting. I attended and worked a NRCS exhibit booth at the College Career Fair at University of Texas-Austin, along with the FWP program manager on April 4.

I regularly attended the CRAC and AAPI annual meetings.

Helping People Help the Land

TEXAS NRCS TRIBAL LIAISON

Garry Stephens, American Indian Liaison

AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE EMPHASIS PROGRAM

Melony Sikes, Program Manager

FY 2012 has been a banner year for the AI/AN Special Emphasis Program and the Tribal Liaison for Texas. Melony Sikes was appointed to serve as the AI/AN Special Emphasis Program Manager for Texas after Jerry Pearce changed positions within the agency early this year.

As the Tribal Liaison for Texas, I was able to attend the national Indian Agriculture Symposium hosted by the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) and Indian Nations Conservation Alliance (INCA), along with representatives of two federally recognized Texas Tribes. I facilitated participation and travel to this meeting for three Tribal Earth Team volunteers in order to further outreach and information efforts to Texas' Tribes. I also attended a meeting of AIANEA employees gathered at the national meeting.

I worked with local, Zone and state staff to develop a booth highlighting the partnerships between NRCS and Texas Tribes during the tradeshow at the national symposium. Along with education and outreach materials at the NRCS booth, visitors were able to view a video which featured the longleaf pine restoration efforts of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas. It was at this national symposium that we were encouraged to submit a nomination for the Two Chiefs' Partnership Group Award from USDA NRCS Chief Dave White and Forest Service (FS) Chief Thomas Tidwell, which we were awarded this spring.



A symposium highlight was the presentation given by Kyle Williams, Council Chairman of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas and NRCS's Ronald Harris, a district conservationist in Livingston. They provided a presentation on the partnership efforts between the Tribe and the agency which is focused on longleaf pine restoration.

Thank you to Beverly Moseley, public affairs specialist in Zone 4 and Texas Civil Rights Advisory Committee member, for her efforts in making this national meeting a success and work on the Two Chiefs' Award nomination.

As a part of our continuing outreach efforts with the Tribes, a series of videos were created by Bob Stobaugh, NRCS videographer, that feature NRCS and Tribal efforts and practices in caring for Mother Earth. These videos have been shown across state and national NRCS and USDA outlets. I appreciate the assistance provided by the NRCS staffs which made these videos a successful outreach tool.

Melony and I have also worked with Bertha Venegas our State Outreach Coordinator to develop Texas AIAEN SEPM / Tribal Liaison 2013 Action Plans. We have also provided input on State Recruitment and Civil Rights Outreach Plans. Melony and I also serve on the Texas NRCS Civil Rights StrikeForce Initiative team.

We continue to work with the Tribal Council of the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas and local, Zone and state staff to evaluate and develop plans for the production of cattails for cultural

usage by the Kickapoo Tribe. Due to the cultural significance of this plant, the full Tribal Council has approved this project's development.

Currently, we are working with the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas with technical assistance and potential funding source information on hydroponic gardens for the production of lettuce and tomatoes. This is a very important project for Tribal Council leadership because it will provide economic and cultural value for the Tribe.

All three Texas Tribes are actively participating in Farm Bill programs that address natural resource concerns identified by both the NRCS and the Tribes. Future plans include developing conservation plans on all Tribal lands.

Melony and I participated in a Blessing Ceremony with a group from the Gulf Coast Confederation of American Indians, during the annual Hawk Watch event held in Corpus Christi in September. Additionally, we staffed a NRCS exhibit and provided technical information to several hundred participants.



Blessing Ceremony with a Gulf Coast Confederation of American Indian group.

I was extremely honored to have been selected as the 2011 Award of Excellence Conservation/Outreach/Education honoree by the AIANEA for NRCS. This award holds special significance for me because I was nominated by Ted Herrera, an AIANEA Tribal Elder.

Forty NRCS employees gathered to celebrate American Indian Heritage Month at the NRCS state office in Temple this past November. Sponsored by the AIANEA, the event featured displays of Native American clothing and samples of traditional foods. Jerry Pearce, past AIANEA program manager, was the emcee. John Mueller, acting NRCS state conservationist, greeted the group on behalf of Salvador Salinas, Texas state conservationist. Ted Herrera, AIANEA elder, opened the event with a traditional blessing. He also spoke to the group about the origin and history of the indigenous people of South Texas and their influence on language and culture in the area. The group enjoyed a meal of traditional foods including buffalo stew, corn cakes, bannock and dessert. Participants enjoyed the video - "Plants and the Cherokee" - which details how for centuries the Cherokee people have used plants for food, shelter and medicine.

This was the first cultural awareness event held in observance of American Indian Heritage Month in several years. USDA and NRCS observe American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month each November to celebrate the many contributions Native Americans have made to society.



Front row from left to right are: Sherry Cospers, Cindy Sultenfuss, JoAnn Herrera and Garry Stephens. Back row from left to right are: John Mueller, Jerry Pearce, and Ted Herrera.



A special display of Native American garments, dolls and accessories.

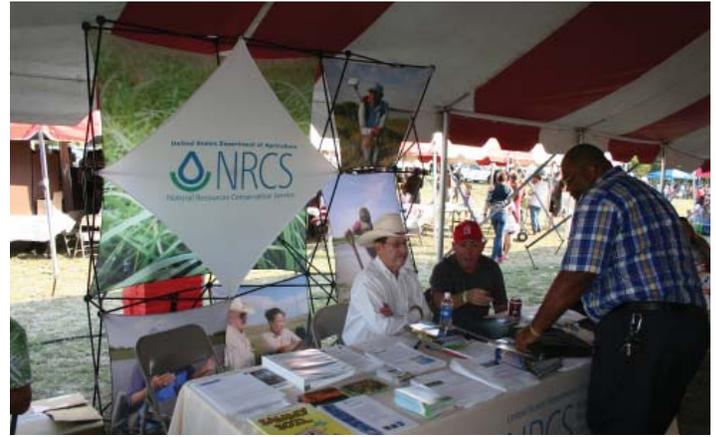
Kyle Williams, Tribal council chairman of the Alabama Coushatta Tribe of Texas, and Teodoso (Ted) Herrera, “Tlatoani,” principal speaker of the Venado Clan, Coahuilteco Nation, recently attended the Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (RTCAC) for the Central Region of the USDA-NRCS. Williams and Herrera are serving alongside 12 other tribal leaders on the regional advisory committee to assist the NRCS in areas such as identifying regional natural resource concerns or issues on Tribal lands. The RTCAC provides a platform and opportunity for dialogue and interaction by promoting strong partnerships and teamwork, providing quality technical and financial assistance, enhancing natural resources conservation, while providing an opportunity to offer feedback on agency programs, services and technologies.

“These men are both providing a very important service to the NRCS on a national basis that will result in enhancements to our operations within Indian Country,” states Salvador Salinas, NRCS Texas state conservationist. “Texas NRCS is proud to have both of them on this Council.”



Attendees of the Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Council held in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Back row (left to right): Nikkie Crowe, Fond Du Lac Tribe Minn.; Terence Clouthier THPO, N.D.; Daniel Cornelius, Regional Technical Assistance Specialist, Wis.; Jimmy Bramblett, Regional Conservationist, Washington D.C.; Pat Leavenworth Wisconsin State Conservationist; Tom Christensen Regional Conservationist, Washington D.C. and Eric Banks Kansas State Conservationist. Front row (left to right): Teodoso (Ted) Herrera AIANEA Elder; Dave Wise, NRCS Tribal Liaison, Minn.; Patrick Pelky Oneida Nation, Wis.; Kyle Williams Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas; Jack Dewayne Hicks Oklahoma Choctaw Tribe; Ronald Hilliard, NRCS Oklahoma State Conservationist and David Anthony, Hannahville Indian Community, Minn.

Texas NRCS has worked closely with the federally Recognized Tribes in Texas over the years providing quality technical assistance and funding opportunities through Farm Bill programs. This strengthens partnerships and teamwork focused on the natural resources on Tribal lands.



Rodney Hyatt and Doug Rose visit with a veteran about career opportunities with NRCS at the Fourth Annual Central Texas Veterans Health Care System (CTVHCS) Welcome Home Celebration on Sept. 25 at Carl Levin Park in Harker Heights.

VETERANS EMPHASIS PROGRAM

Doug Rose, Program Manager

NRCS helped welcome home veterans at the Fourth Annual Central Texas Veterans Health Care System (CTVHCS) Welcome Home Celebration on Sept. 25, 2012, at Carl Levin Park in Harker Heights. Community members, volunteers and businesses from all over Central Texas turned out to honor the military men and women and their families.

Human Resources Director, Rodney Hyatt; Human Resources Specialist and Veterans Special Emphasis Program Manager Doug Rose; and Zone 3 Public Affairs Specialist, Melissa Blair visited with veterans and their families about opportunities through NRCS to help them with their agricultural and urban land, along with providing information on career opportunities with NRCS.

“This event was a great opportunity for NRCS to share with the veterans about who we are and what we do, about our hiring process through USAJobs for career opportunities after they discharge and also the new Pathways Program for interns,” said Hyatt. “As Texas NRCS, we are grateful to these men and women who have sacrificed so much for our freedoms, we want to provide them with the resources and tools they may need to succeed when they return from war and also after they discharge from the military.”

Some of the veterans and active military had family farms or ranches in Texas or other states and have worked with NRCS, but others were not aware of the opportunities for free technical and financial assistance for conservation work on their agricultural lands.

“Many of the Texas NRCS field offices work with active military and veterans on implementing conservation practices on their farm or ranch,” said Rose. “Being away on active duty does not mean the work or conservation needs of their farm or ranch ceases and we want to make sure our NRCS team is here to assist them with their land concerns. Or if they want to start their own farm or ranch, how NRCS can provide technical assistance on looking at the natural resources, such as soils using the Web Soil Survey for what they want to accomplish.”

CIVIL RIGHTS LIAISON

Drenda Williams

I joined the Texas NRCS Principal Staff September 10, 2012 as the Assistant State Conservationist for Operations. In this role I also serve as the Civil Rights Liaison on the Texas Civil Rights Advisory Committee (TCRAC).

I have 19 years of service with NRCS and 12 years of experience serving on a state CRAC. Previous positions I've held include Black Emphasis Program Manager for five years, State Office CRAC Chair for two years and the Civil Rights liaison for two years. Additionally, I am the current President of the National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees.

I look forward to working with the employees and partners in Texas and continuing the great accomplishments in the area of Civil Rights.



USDA AGRICULTURAL LIAISON OFFICER

Horace Hodge, Liaison Officer

I met with Salvador Salinas, NRCS state conservationist and Paco Valentine, Rural Development state director, to inform them of the 1890 Partnership and the implementation of the 2501 Program. We also discussed recruitment activities along with the continued outreach efforts in rural communities.

I served on the USDA/1890 National Scholars Program Orientation and Leadership Development Training planning team. I gave a presentation on the roles and responsibilities of the Program Liaison relative to this program.

Outreach

I assisted the Cooperative Extension Program with conducting a risk management workshop in response to the Texas drought.

I served to recruit minority farmers to attend a Small Farmer Intensive workshop where 27 members of minority community based organizations were present to hear information on marketing opportunities.

Later on during a USDA meeting with Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson and Dr. Joe Leonard, I discussed the workshop, along with my outreach efforts to recruit and encourage minority students to attend college, major in the food and agricultural sciences, and consider becoming USDA employees.

I attended the 68th Professional Agricultural Workers Conference in which I served as a panelist during discussion. There were approximately 400 participants, including over 200 farmers participating in the 2012 pre-conference and conference.

I represented the Office of Advocacy and Outreach at the 6th National Small Farms Conference in Memphis, TN. I served on the evaluation committee for this event.

I participated in the annual meeting for the Texas Chapter of the National Organization of Professional Black National Resources Conservation Service (NOPBNRCSE).

I assisted with staffing the PVAMU exhibit at the Southern Sustainable Agricultural Working Group (SSAWG)-Little Rock, AR, where the objective was to provide a forum for small and limited resource farmers to network, along with learning ways to increase and sustain their profitability.

Encouraged participation in a Farm Bill Listening Session hosted by the San Antonio Food Bank (SAFB) which was organized to educate Congressman Henry Cuellar on the need for continuing

the Food and Nutrition Service Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

I participated in the GIS Day Radio Program on KPVC 91.3 FM to publicize the 3rd Annual National GIS Day.

Recruiting

I have an open door policy with students, faculty and administrators. I counseled 500 college students on academic programs and careers with USDA through direct contact. As a result, 26 students were placed with various USDA and state agencies.

On numerous occasions throughout the year, I represented USDA and PVAMU at Texas college career fairs held in Longview, Dekalb, Mt. Pleasant, Marshall, Jefferson, Texarkana and Paris. I also worked on high school recruitment at schools including Texarkana, Houston and Long View. During these events I provided handouts and discussed the USDA/1890 national Scholars Program, USDA careers and the academic programs offered by PVAMU. During these events, I distributed USDA/1890 National Program Scholarship applications.

Other recruitment events that I took part in were the 10th Annual Majors Fair in which the College of Agricultural and Human Sciences' display was setup for students to explore the exciting academic opportunities available at PVAMU. I organized 20 days of trade show exhibiting at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

As USDA/1890 Program Liaison, I have maintained a positive relationship with the Texas FFA Foundation. I represented USDA and PVAMU at the Texas FFA Convention in Corpus Christi, along with the National FFA Convention at Indianapolis, IN. I was responsible for setting up and staffing an educational exhibit.

Scholarships

I participated in the Fairview Reunion Cooperation Banquet and Inaugural College Fair, which was a scholarship program to award scholarships to local high school students. I was a feature presenter of the "Legacy Award" to a deserving citizen who impacted the community in which he lives.

Due to my outreach efforts with the San Antonio Livestock Exposition (SALE) and the working relationship between SALE and PVAMU's Cooperative Extension Program (CEP), they now provide two \$15,000 scholarships to CEP.

As a result of my relationship with the NOPBNRCSE, I submitted 16 applications to the scholarship chairperson for consideration. The Organization awards ten \$1,000 scholarships annually. Two PVAMU students received scholarships.

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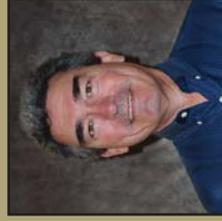
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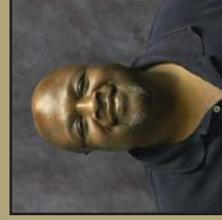
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