January 2013 - Louisiana NRCS Civil Rights Newsletter!

NRCS Civil Rights Committee Members:

Chairperson: Johanna Pate

Civil Rights Program Manager/Advisor: Nancy Vicknair

State Outreach Coordinator: Holly Martien

Federal Women's SEPM: Amanda York

Black SEPM: Danielle Mack

Disability Employment SEPM: Mitchell Mouton

Asian/Pacific Islander SEPM: Dawn Allen

Hispanic SEPM: Michaelene Buller

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender SEPM: Cheryl Turbeville

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How can the Louisiana Civil Rights Advisory Committee Help YOU?

By Johanna Pate, Chairperson, NRCS Louisiana

What is CRAC?

The Louisiana NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) is composed of field, area and state office employees and serves as an advisory role to the State Conservationist. The committee meets quarterly to discuss issues and review progress. The minutes of the meetings are posted on the Louisiana NRCS intranet site. If you have an issue to discuss or for more information on how to become involved, email Johanna Pate, Chairperson, at Johanna.pate@la.usda.gov.

The Civil Rights Advisory Committee Helps You By:

- Acting as a forum for exchange of ideas and action proposals on sensitive issues, matters, or concerns of a civil rights nature.
- Addressing issues critical to increasing the productivity of a diverse work force
- Assisting the leadership in identifying barriers or potential barriers to hiring, development, advancement, and retention of employees.
- Providing training resources for various civil rights workshops, seminars, and meetings

Suggested Activities to Increase Awareness of Civil Rights/EEO:

- **First and foremost**, conduct yourself in a manner that ensures fair, equitable, respectful treatment of co-workers and customers and become familiar with NRCS and USDA Civil Rights/EEO policy.
- **Develop a color poster** on a topic associated with CR and post it in local office.Make follow-up contacts with minority program participants to ensure customer satisfaction.
- **Participate in Civil Rights Outreach Activities**. Identify underserved

Native American SEPM:
Lee Cater

Veterans SEPM:
Corby Moore

Limited Resource & Small-Scale Farmers & Socially Disadvantaged Producers Coordinator:
Mike Turpin

Area Advisor:
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Sean Taylor
Cody Colvin
Matthew Moreau

Content Editor:
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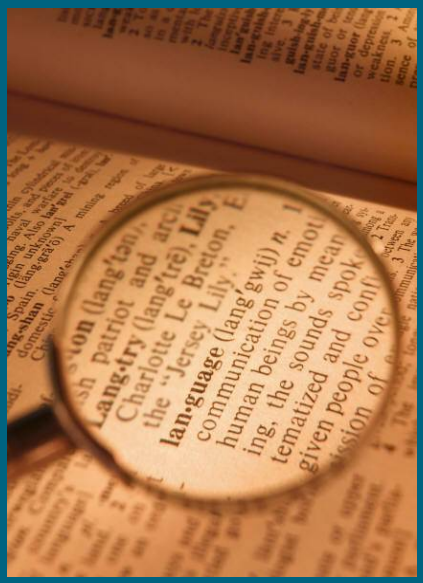
- **Review and update** materials as needed to insure that written and visual communications include the appropriate non-discrimination assurance statement in accordance with NRCS policy.
- **Write a Civil Rights article** for the Louisiana Civil Rights Newsletter.
- **Work alone or as a group** to make a 15-20 minute presentation on a CR related topic at the next staff meeting.
- **Conduct some demographic research** on a parish or parishes that reveals the most current information on who lives in the area and let that be used as a basis for future outreach efforts by the field office.
- **Become an active member** of the State or National CR committee and provide on-going reports of the committee to the people you represent.
- **Organize a "lunch & learn"** addressing a CR topic. Include a film, a speaker, or a facilitated group discussion.

groups and develop an outreach plan. Talk to these groups or individuals and find out what their conservation needs are and if changes are needed in our programs to meet those needs. Remember that an underserved group may not be an identified minority. They may be persons who raise specialty crops, have limited resources or just be a group or community that hasn't participated with NRCS in the past.

- **Participate** in, or distribute information about, cultural events and celebrations taking place in your local community.
- **Assist RC&D Councils and/or Districts** in achieving or improving diversity in their respective organizations.
- **Seek out and engage in self-development** activities, i.e. read books/articles about Civil Rights/EEO, take extra AgLearn modules, college courses, private sector classes etc., related to Civil Rights/EEO.
- **Stand up and voice your objections** when you are the target of inappropriate behavior or when you witness inappropriate behavior. People will continue to cross the line if they don't know where the line is drawn.

Respectful Language

By Johanna Pate, Chairperson, NRCS Louisiana



Mark Twain once said "The difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug." Imagine living your life always having to explain why the words that people use are hurtful and offensive to you. It is important that we are aware of the meaning behind the words we use when talking to or referring to our co-workers and/or customers. Inclusive language strives to promote all people-regardless of difference-as full and valued members of society by selecting vocabulary that avoids exclusion, the use of false stereotypes, and the use of descriptors that portray groups of people as less valued than others.

Descriptors that refer to personal attributes such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age, tend to over-emphasize and draw undue attention to the distinguishing attribute. Avoid the use of such descriptors. For

example:

- Most times, there is no need to refer to a person's disability, but when the need arises, choose acceptable terminology for the specific disability or use the term preferred by the individual.
- Avoid outdated and derogatory terms such as "the disabled," "handicapped," "retarded" or "physically challenged"
- Avoid generalizations based in race or ethnicity. Do not assume that a person's appearance defines their nationality or cultural background
- Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples, and race: Aboriginal Peoples, Arab, Caucasian, French-Canadian, etc. Black and white does not name races. If used to describe color, they are lowercase.
- Use gender neutral terms and phrasing. Don't use "Whoever gets the promotion will have his or her pay increased." Use instead, "Whoever is promoted will get a raise."
- Do not assume heterosexual orientation.
- "Sexual orientation" is a preferred term over "sexual preference."
- There is a difference between a person's gender and sexual orientation; the use of "gender" is preferred over "sex"
- Avoid terms like transvestite, hermaphrodite and metrosexual. They can be perceived as derogatory.

Disrespectful language can make people feel excluded and can be a barrier to full participation. As language is constantly evolving, be sure to seek advice or more information when you are unsure.

Disability.gov Launches "What's Your Connection?" Initiative

Submitted by Mitchell Mouton, Disability Employment SEPM, NRCS Louisiana

Online Movement Emphasizes How Disability Touches Lives

WASHINGTON - Disability.gov (www.disability.gov), the federal government website for comprehensive information on disability programs and services in communities nationwide, recently announced the launch of its *What's Your Connection?* initiative to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the site.

The *What's Your Connection?* initiative emphasizes the connections among all people, and reinforces the idea that people with disabilities, even those who don't identify as having a "disability," are not separate, but an integral part of American society.

People nationwide will be asked to share how disability touches their lives by submitting a photograph (less than 100KB in JPG format) with a 250-word maximum caption, or uploading a captioned, one-minute YouTube video that answers the question, "What's Your Connection?"

The initiative runs for nine months, beginning October 30, 2012 through July 31, 2013, and will use social media, traditional media and grassroots tactics to spark conversations and build support for inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

Participants should send their photograph and caption to disability@dol.gov. Video submissions should be uploaded on YouTube and include the hashtag, #myconnection2, in the title.*

For more information and details on the *What's Your Connection?* initiative, please visit Disability.gov at:

https://www.disability.gov/home/newsroom/what's_your_connection.

Disability.gov is managed by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy in collaboration with 21 federal agency partners.

**By submitting a photograph or uploading a YouTube video with the hashtag, #myconnection2, participants grant permission to the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy to display their work on Disability.gov; the site's Facebook, Twitter or YouTube page; and future print publications. All submissions will be reviewed and approved by the Disability.gov team prior to being posted on the website or its YouTube page.*

From:
United States. Disability.gov. *Disability.gov Launches "What's Your Connection?" Initiative* . Washington DC: , Print.
<https://www.disability.gov/home/newsroom/what's_your_connection/toolkit/sample_news_article>.

Louisiana NRCS Working with Coastal Indian Tribes

By: Lee Cater, Native American SEPM, and Adele Swearingen, Content Editor, NRCS Louisiana

This past fall, Randolph Joseph and Lee Cater attended a workgroup meeting for state recognized Indian tribes in coastal Louisiana, including Pointe-au-Chien, Grand Caillou/Dulac Biloxi-Chitimacha, Isle de Jean Charles, and Grand Bayou. The tribes have established a group called First Peoples Conservation Council. The group's main concern is to "Heal Mother Earth". Randolph and Lee listened to all of their resource concerns and explained who NRCS is and what services NRCS can provide to them. Strengthening the relationship between the agency and the tribes is also a priority for the council.

As a follow up to the meeting, Randolph Joseph, John Boatman, Ron Boustany, and Troy Mallach went to Grand Bayou to meet with the Grand Bayou Tribe. The Grand Bayou community is located south of West Pointe a la Hache in Plaquemines Parish and can only be accessed by boat. The group discussed the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA), which coastal restoration projects are planned in their vicinity, and to hear their concerns regarding restoration activities in the area. Following the meeting, the entire group went on a boat tour of the West Pointe a la Hache Siphon outfall area and the Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation Project area. NRCS is planning to continue working with the Grand Bayou Tribe on current and future coastal restoration efforts.

Quarterly Quote

"To cheapen the lives of any group of men, cheapens the lives of all men, even our own. This is a law of human psychology, or human nature. And it will not be repealed by our wishes, nor will it be merciful to our blindness."

-William Pickens; orator, educator, journalist, and essayist.

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).