



United States
Department of
Agriculture

NRCS California 2016 Outreach Report



Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Resources Conservation Service,
California



Since coming to California in 2013, State Conservationist Carlos Suarez has made Outreach to all customers a top priority. "We intend to reach out and support all customers equally," says Suarez.

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Outreach



In 2016, NRCS employees march for the first time in a gay pride parade in Fresno, California.

Veterans Outreach



Sacramento County farmer and veteran Martin Carrillo captivates, motivates and inspires the next generation of farmer veterans.



Latino Conference brings farmers together to learn and share.

Growing Together: Latino Farmer Conference Engages Spanish-speaking Farmers and Ranchers

There were more than 600 participants at the two *Growing Together* Latino Farmer Conferences in 2015 and in 2016. In addition partners and support staff have brought statewide attention to this California NRCS-originated event. Partner meetings have spanned the state with support from the cities of Bakersfield, Fresno, Santa Maria and Watsonville, helping to reach out to Spanish-speaking farmers and ranchers.

The event has grown in coverage with radio, press, television and social media spreading the opportunity for Spanish-speaking farmers to share, learn and grow in their native language. Both conferences hosted a day of conservation workshops, a farmer panel and networking opportunities. The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) teamed with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to host the *Growing Together* conference.

"This is the first time we have attempted anything like this and we are simply delighted by the response," said Carlos Suarez, following the first conference in November 2015. "I am impressed by the diverse cross section of California agriculture represented. People have come here from so many places, and they grow a rainbow of conventional and organic products from carrots to strawberries to grapes," he added.

The key note speakers (Fourth generation Napa grape farmer Vanessa Robledo in 2015, and Aromas organic specialty crop farmer Javier Zamora in 2016) shared their stories of overcoming obstacles to their farming dreams. Each motivated and inspired over 200 Latino farmers and dozens of other attendees.



Rural Pride Summit

As part of USDA's civil rights initiative, field-based agencies such as NRCS were asked to support a series of Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) outreach events to engage rural families and inform them of USDA programs and services. NRCS took the lead in California, hosting a full day Rural Pride Summit in Visalia on Thursday, July 21st. The NRCS-California Rural Pride Summit, with approximately 250 people in attendance, was the most successful of the twelve events held across the nation. The Summit featured a day of workshops, open question and answer sessions with several USDA agencies, and over two dozen resource booths.

The NRCS outreach team worked closely with the USDA Civil Rights office to achieve several positive outcomes. In summary the outreach:

- 1) Reinforced the work of California- NRCS and its special emphasis program efforts;
- 2) Expanded outreach beyond the traditional partners to promote NRCS programs;
- 3) Highlighted media coverage about NRCS and equal employment opportunities;
- and 4) Met Departmental and Agency goals.

Veteran & Farmer Resources Workshops

Four NRCS district offices worked together in California to create a four-workshop series with state-wide coverage titled Farmer & Veteran Resources Workshops. The goal was to educate and create awareness of USDA NRCS resources and career opportunities for those transitioning out of active duty.

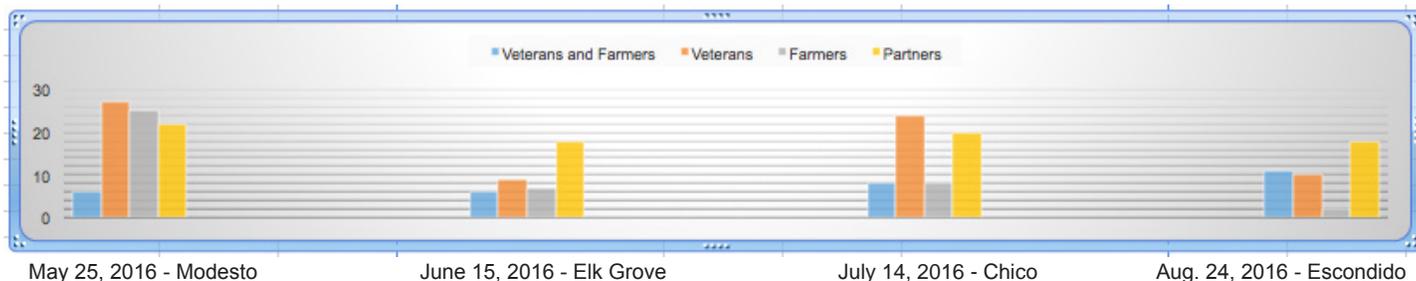
The veteran workshops quickly caught state-wide attention and attracted partners such as Small Business Administration, Department of Defense, and Veteran Affairs. The partnership goal was to bring together community based and government organizations to reach out to transitioning and active duty service members and veterans. The workshops created a one-stop-shop for veterans, farmers and ranchers and small-scale business owners to share ideas and learn about local resources.



"Veterans are among the most successful entrepreneurs and have an important role to play in the next generation of farmers and ranchers," said State Conservationist Carlos Suarez.

NRCS also partnered with NCAT and the Farmer Veteran Coalition to bring the Armed to Farm workshop series to California. The workshops are intended to help small-scale farmers learn about sustainable farming. Home Grown by Heroes, a National veteran brand, was highlighted at the workshops. Also, Assembly District 76 furthered NRCS outreach to veterans with an assembly bill proposal (AB 2574) that would authorize California organizations to aid USDA NRCS in extending outreach to veterans. The bill effort will continue in 2017.

Veteran & Farmer Resources Workshops



Outreach Coordinators



Outreach Specialists

Christine Chavez & Victor M. Hernandez

are partnering with all of the NRCS California Civil Rights team to enhance cultural awareness and to educate farmers and ranchers on USDA NRCS opportunities and resources. Together the Outreach and Civil Rights teams are creating a more focused and coordinated effort to accomplish these dual goals. The Civil Rights Committee exists to provide counsel and recommendations on civil rights for all clients and employees to the State Conservationist. Special Employment Program Managers (SEPMs) are members of the civil rights advisory

committee who assist management with issues concerning employment and advancement of the group they represent.



Civil Rights Program Managers to Extend Reach with Outreach Team



Asian

Farmers & Ranchers

Pa Kou Yang, Soil Conservationist, cultivated a network of Hmong, Mien and Lao farmers with a boots-on-the-ground approach to outreach in Sacramento, Sutter and Yuba counties. Her active engagement helped farmers bridge possible cultural and communication barriers to accessing NRCS programs. Specialty crop farmers from her network were highlighted to help promote NRCS High Tunnel incentive programs and further the reach to Asian American farmers.



Veteran

Farmers & Ranchers

Carmen Johnson, Farm Bill Assistant, partnered on many events throughout the year extending the reach to veterans. Her partnerships helped grow NRCS Veteran and Farmers Resources workshops that took place in Chico, Elk Grove, Escondido and Modesto. The workshops included panel discussions and resources for veterans, farmers and business owners. Together, the events attracted more than 140 veterans and farmers and reached 78 new NRCS resource partners.



Black

Farmers & Ranchers

Erika Boyland, District Conservationist Hollister and the public affairs team worked very closely together in 2016 on outreach to African American farmers. Workshops were held in Bakersfield, Elk Grove, Fresno and Oakland. "The workshops were a great way for farmers to come together to discuss ways to grow their business and learn how to access USDA programs," Boyland said. The workshops brought together over 150 farmers.



LGBT

Farmers & Ranchers

Elise Miller, Area 4 Engineer, partnered with Christine Chavez and others on many outreach events to the LGBT community in 2016. These included the Cultivating Change Conference, Rural Pride Summit, Fresno Gay Pride Parade and Festival and a pride celebration at the NRCS state office. A concerted effort was also made to reach out to pride clubs on college campuses to discuss internship opportunities with NRCS.

Outreach & Civil Rights Working Together in 2017

In 2017, the Outreach and Public Affairs team will coordinate even more closely with the Civil Rights Committee. "Together we can use our perspectives and skills so that employees and customers alike are aware of our appreciation for California's rich cultural diversity and our commitment to bring quality conservation assistance to all our farmers and ranchers," said Christine Chavez, outreach specialist. Outreach specialists plan to provide training to SEPMs to be even more effective in reaching historically underserved customers. "We look forward to making a concerted effort to highlight Asian American, Black, Urban and Women farmers across California," said Outreach Specialist Victor Hernandez. District Conservationists are encouraged to engage the Civil Rights Committee and Outreach team for assistance in conducting local workshops, trainings and outreach activities.

Highlighting Outreach in the News

NRCS outreach messages were amplified to a broad audience with the help of print, broadcast and social media. Here are a few examples:



Comunidad del Valle, Damian Trujillo at NBC-Telemundo hosts USDA, NCAT, and Aromas farmer Javier Zamora to inform Latino farmers about the upcoming conference.



Acta Non Verba Urban Farm Project Kelly Carlisle breaking ground in Inner City for brighter futures.



Pa Yang extends NRCS reach to historically underserved communities with boots on the ground outreach at Lu-Mien Community Center.

Carlos Suarez' Interview with Univision

- Announcing Four Veteran and Farmer Resources Workshops - <http://bit.ly/2iQIQ6h>

2015 Latino Farmer Conference

- Fresno Hosts First-ever Conference for Latino Growers - <http://bit.ly/2j9FjRs>
- 2015 Latino Farmer Conference - <http://bit.ly/2iRviXX>

Rural Pride

- Rural Pride Summit' Brings Out Central Valley LGBT Community – <http://bit.ly/2j6eFvt>
- Rural Pride Summit Biggest Yet, Says USD – <http://vtd-tar.co/2hOY4fw>

African American Farmer Outreach

- USDA Encourages African Americans to Take Up Farming, Ranching - <http://bit.ly/2imokxY>



USDA hosts booth at Gay Pride Fresno, engaging LGBT farmers and ranchers about NRCS and other agencies' resources.



Visalia Parents Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, engages NRCS effort to reach LGBT farmers and ranchers in rural areas.



Erika Boyland presenting on 1890 schools and NRCS resource opportunities at African American farmers workshop.

2016 PSA's

- 2016 Latino Farmers Conference - 30 sec. - for TV (Spanish version) - <https://youtu.be/fjPaxoE0n6k>
- 2016 Latino Farmers Conference - 30 sec (Spanish version) - https://youtu.be/WNLJ_DrMT2M
- 2016 Latino Farmers Conference - 90 sec. (Spanish version) - <https://youtu.be/g0vlz8vOj3Y>

2016 Latino Farmer Conference

- Help Offered to Spanish-speaking Farmers - <http://bit.ly/2iu1ByB>
- Latino Farmer Conference in Monterey Attracts Hundreds - <http://bit.ly/2jheFJ3>
- Growing Together: Latino Farmers Conference an Opportunity to Learn - <http://bit.ly/2iq0TiK>

