

**OUTREACH ENGAGES COMMUNITIES IN 2018**

From the Imperial Valley to Oakland the outreach team worked with many California NRCS staff to provide resources to underserved communities throughout the state.



Outreach Coordinator Christine Chavez meets with faculty and a student from the Freedom School in Fresno.



Outreach Coordinator Victor Hernandez engages partners and farmers in the Imperial Valley about the Latino Farmer Conference.



Salinas District Conservationist Erika Boyland facilitates farmer panel discussion at the Black Farmers Conference in Fresno.



Soil Conservationist Sam Vang brought together dozens of Punjabi farmers to learn about soil health in Fresno.



Solano Irrigation District and NRCS team up to work with Hispanic farmers on efficient irrigation methods.



Soil Conservationist Ricardo Ortiz and Engineer Elise Miller host a booth at Coachella Pride.



Hmong farmers learn technical aspects of hoop house construction and soil health in Fresno.



Sara Bernal of Center for Land Based Learning works on her urban farm in West Sacramento.



Acta Non Verba Oakland Urban Youth Project engage the local youth in inner city Oakland.



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Carlos Suarez  
State Conservationist, USDA Natural 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



On a beautiful Saturday morning in late June, California NRCS participated in Sacramento's annual Pride Festival.

Veterans Outreach



Cal Poly Army ROTC Honor Guard post the colors at Cal Poly Pomona Veterans Farmer Outreach Day.

# NRCS California 2018 Outreach Report



July 2018



Farmers Answer Audience Questions

## Growing Together: Third Annual CA Latino Farmer Conference

The Natural Resources Conservation Service along with the National Center for Appropriate Technology planned, organized, and executed a one-day conference titled "Juntos Creciendo: 3rd Annual Latino Farmer Conference." The conference took place at the UC Riverside Palm Desert Center, in Palm Desert Calif., on November 7, 2017.

The conference attracted 290 participants, 200 of whom were agricultural producers. These producers were from all regions of California. There were also five producers from Mexico. Nearly 100 percent of the farmers who attended the conference were Latino. Many of the same farmers have attended the conference for the past three years, along with our "on the ground advocates" within the Hispanic farming community. Each year they attend and bring other farmers to the conference.

The Coachella RCD and SA Recycling sponsored the registration costs for all local farmers in the Palm Desert region to attend. Additionally, a hotel room for farmers traveling more than four hours to attend the conference was made available.

The Bautista Family, of 7HotDates Farm gave the keynote speech in the morning. Short presentations from NCAT and NRCS were also given during the morning hour. Following that, there was a farmer panel discussion with farmers from different types of farms and from different regions of California. There were two workshop breakout sessions, with lunch served in between those sessions. The 2018 Latino Farmer Conference will be held in Santa Maria on Thursday November 8th.



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### LGBT Outreach



Outreach at Pride events was robust with a USDA Pride Booth at the First Annual East Coachella Valley Latino Pride Festival, held May 6, 2017 in the City of Coachella. Ricardo Ortiz-Rios, Hispanic SEPM, staffed the booth with Elise Miller, Area 4 engineer, providing information on USDA programs available to the Latino LGBT communities of Riverside and Imperial counties.

In June, California NRCS participated in Sacramento's annual Pride Festival. Many people stopped by the booth to discuss issues related to conservation, including backyard conservation. Staffing the booth was Miller, Pam Hertzler, district conservationist from Grass Valley, Sharon Nance, assistant state conservationist for management and strategy in Davis, and Valvina Miranda, office automation clerk in Davis.

NRCS California was discussed at the USDA Pride Celebration, held June 8, in Washington, D.C. Jeremy Wood, NRCS national LGBT SEPM, spoke to the audience, while a photo of Christine Chavez (left), outreach coordinator in Davis, and Miller, is shown in the background.

### Veteran Farmer Outreach Day

NRCS teamed up with Cal Poly Pomona in 2017 and 2018 for what is now an annual Veterans Agriculture Day at Cal Poly Pomona. The one-day workshop consists of three panel sessions, networking and resource partner booths. The goal is to educate and create awareness of USDA programs, local veteran entrepreneurial support and educational career opportunities with Cal Poly Pomona, aimed at those transitioning out of active military service.

A four-workshop series of regional NRCS-led Veteran Farmer Outreach Days, developed over the past three years, have caught state-wide attention from partners such as Small Business Administration, SCORE Mentors, and California Veteran Affairs. The regional collaborative set the stage for Cal Poly Pomona to host the annual day-long workshop as their own, with local USDA support.

"The workshop is a one-stop-shop platform for veterans, farmers and small-scale business entrepreneurs to share ideas, and learn of the support resources for those looking to enter the professional agricultural fields," said Veteran Special Emphasis Program Manager and Engineer Ernesto De La Riva of Victorville.

Since 2016 USDA NRCS has partnered to enact Assembly Bill (AB 376) streamlining USDA assistance for veterans, which went into effect on July 1, 2018. Other partnered events include National Center for Appropriate Technology's Armed to Farm, a five day workshop series; Farmer Veteran Coalition's Home Grown by Heroes, National Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hire our Heroes conference and Hire a Hero, Hire a Vet career fair with Employment Development Department.



### 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 provides counsel and recommendations on civil rights for all clients and employees, to the State Conservationist. Special Emphasis 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.

### First Annual Black Farmers with Urban Farmers Conference



The first ever Black Farmers with Urban Farmers Conference was held in February in Fresno. The conference was hosted by the West Fresno Family Resource Center and NRCS. Over 150 people attended the conference, including 25 partners who provided services through booths.

The one-day statewide conference was a great opportunity for farmers and ranchers to network and learn about resources available to them. Workshops that were held included topics on: 1) access to capital and business resources; 2) youth in agriculture; 3) resources from agencies; and 4) an urban leadership roundtable.

The day started with remarks by Dr. Joseph Castro, the president of California State University at Fresno. Following Dr. Castro was Ray Dotson, acting California state conservationist for NRCS, and Aubrey Bettencourt, the state executive director for the Farm Service Agency.

A farmer panel made up of four traditional farmers and two urban farmers provided great conversation and engagement with the audience.

The keynote address was given by Nate Looney, who is an urban farmer in south Los Angeles. Nate talked about his service in the military and coming home to find his passion in farming.

During the lunch hour, Curtis Tarver, assistant state conservationist for Area 3, presented a plaque to the African American Farmers of California. The group was recognized for their years of advocacy on behalf of black farmers in the state of California.