

# National Hispanic Environmental Council



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**“Building A Better Future”  
Facility Management Diversity Hiring Initiative  
(Coordinated by the National Hispanic Environmental Council for the  
Intermountain Region of the National Park Service)**

## FACT SHEET

### **What Is The NPS-NHEC “Building a Better Future” Facility Management Diversity Hiring Initiative?**

#### **Overview**

The “Building a Better Future” Initiative is an undergraduate/trade school internship program developed by the National Park Service (NPS), in partnership with the National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC), the only national Hispanic environmental and natural resource organization in the country. It is designed to identify, recruit, and train diverse students for future entry-level professional employment in facility management and natural resources careers, especially at federal agencies like NPS.

Historically, diverse populations, especially minorities, have been severely under-represented in the environmental and natural resource fields, especially within federal agencies. This Initiative seeks to address that under-representation, in particular by working with students – the next generation of natural resource professionals. Thus, qualified students from colleges, universities, junior colleges, and trade schools are eligible to apply.

Participants in the Initiative must meet the following criteria:

- U.S. Citizenship
- 18 years of age or older
- Student in good standing at your school
- Enrolled for school in the fall
- Students must complete and submit all required forms and certifications

**The Initiative is a paid, 10 to 12 week internship** held during the summer in the NPS Intermountain Region. The NPS Intermountain Region consists of the states of AZ, MT, WY, UT, CO, OK, NM and Texas.

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The Initiative provides qualified students with an exciting opportunity to work in one of our wonderful national parks in the facility management field, while learning more about the NPS and natural resources. Based on job availability, students can request the park they would prefer to work among the participating parks in the Region, although the final selections will be made by the National Park Service. To the greatest extent possible, students will be placed at parks in pairs, so they will have another Initiative intern with them as a companion, and for support. This is a key goal of the program, as we believe it will greatly help the students enjoy and succeed in their internship. Please note that students will NOT automatically be assigned to the park nearest to where they live. Rather, they can request to work at a park near them, OR they can ask to be assigned to a park far away. In this way, students can choose a seasonal experience that opens their horizons, and perhaps fulfills their dreams. Park housing will be made available to student interns. Cost of the housing will be deducted from their pay.

Regarding the application and selection process, students must submit a complete application packet (described below) that will be evaluated by NHEC and NPS staff. Semi-finalists will then be chosen, and final interviews will be conducted at a mandatory 3 day “Orientation and Training Session” to be held May 5–7, in Albuquerque, NM. NHEC will pay expenses for the semi-finalists chosen to attend this “Orientation and Training Session.” Final selections and notification to students will be made shortly after the session ends.

For those students selected, the Initiative also includes close and regular follow-up during the summer (by NHEC staff) to assist the student and the student’s supervisor in the park to ensure that a productive, enjoyable learning experience is achieved.

The goal of the Initiative is to:

1. Give students an enriching, educational experience;
2. Provide training that will give students the skills to apply the following summer to work again in national parks; and
3. By doing the above, strongly encourage students to consider a career in Facility Management or Natural Resources, and especially with the NPS.

### **What Is This Intern Program All About?**

“Building A Better Future” field internships place students in real jobs in real parks doing real work — and making real money. They help participants get a solid understanding of the responsibilities of the NPS, and an appreciation for the reasons why the agency is the nation’s premier natural, historical, and cultural preservation organization.

Field internships are one of the most critical — and exciting — parts of a student’s learning experience. The student is assigned to a park in the NPS Intermountain Region in order to practice, refine, and integrate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential to becoming a facility manager, natural resource specialist, maintenance staff, or employed in many other NPS jobs. Students in field internships work directly at a national park under the supervision of professional NPS staff, and with input from NHEC Program Manager Rich Niemeyer.

Students will be hired through the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) or the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). Both programs require that candidates be students in good standing based on the requirements of the school. Candidates will need to be enrolled for the Fall semester and complete the Student Eligibility Statement Form.

Internships generally consist of up to 480 **paid** work hours performed as a seasonal employee during the summer. Generally, this means 40 hours a week for as many as 12 weeks. Some

students may be able to complete fewer hours weekly and extend their internship for more weeks, depending on the student's needs and the park's capability to adjust. Parks make the final decision regarding the exact hours a student will work in a field internship, as well as the extent to which individual student scheduling requests can be accommodated. This internship is designed to help participants to better understand the operation of national parks while being directly connected with Facility Management.

“Facility Management” is a broad area that includes park operations; park maintenance and upkeep; trail, road, habitat and wildlife maintenance and contact; visitor contact, including helping visitors understand the park and what they are seeing, and much more. Interns in the Initiative will work in this broad arena, and will receive a thorough, hands-on experience in many of the operational aspects of running a national park. Thus, this program includes substantial work performed outdoors, and will certainly include a variety of manual labor activities. However, no janitorial positions are included under this Initiative.

Facility management is the “meat and potatoes” of national park operations, and this is a great opportunity to learn — first-hand — how these operations occur. Students should know that many current NPS employees, including senior NPS staff such as Superintendents, started or continue to work in the Facilities Management field. In short, this is an excellent entry-level opportunity to see into the world of natural resources, park management, and the National Park Service.

### **How Are Students Assigned to Parks?**

Once a student has applied, been evaluated, and admitted into the Initiative, NHEC Program Manager Rich Niemeyer, in close consultation with the student and parks, will work with all parties concerned regarding placement.

Students should remember that they can request the park where they want to work — either close to where they live, or at a participating park in another area of the Intermountain Region. Final selections will be made by the National Park Service, but every attempt will be made to honor student requests. Following discussions with students, Rich Niemeyer will contact parks to discuss the student's availability, including their park preferences, geographic mobility, educational and experience background, types of jobs available at the parks, and other factors. Students may also be contacted directly by parks, to enable park staff to seek further information about them. All these discussions will ultimately enable students, together with NHEC, to make an informed, thoughtful decision about which park to work in. NPS summer internships normally run from about the 4th week in May through the middle of August.

### **What Kinds of Work Would I Do?**

The following information was taken from a standard job description from actual summer facility management positions. Understand that this is only a sample and does not necessarily represent the job that you may be assigned to. Janitorial duties have been excluded from this Initiative, but there is a wide array of other duties that typically fall within the area of Facility Management.

These include:

Performing non-supervisory work involved in the maintenance and repair of grounds, exterior structures, buildings, and related utilities, requiring the use of a variety of trade practices associated with occupations such as carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical, cement work, painting, and other related trades.

Assisting higher graded maintenance mechanics or tradesmen in the performance of their work. Performing minor carpentry repairs using simple measures and hand tool. Performing minor painting using brush and roller, minor plumbing repairs, pulling wire, performing routine mainte-

nance on campground sites and trails using hand tools and restoring areas to their original appearance.

### **What Else Am I Expected To Do?**

Initiative interns are expected to keep a weekly journal reflecting their field experiences and turn these in to the Program Manager during summer meetings and at the end of the session. Journals will be shared with the park supervisor, and students are encouraged to share their insights and questions with their park supervisor through weekly discussions, and with periodic visits or telephone calls with the NPS-NHEC Program Manager.

Interns are expected to act professionally and courteously at their assigned park and in the surrounding communities. This includes honoring all legal, ethical, or policy requirements of the park and the National Park Service.

You need to understand that once you are hired as an intern in this NPS program, **you are a seasonal federal employee, and you must act accordingly**. The Federal Government has rules and regulations governing many things, including strict policies regarding appropriate behavior and sexual harassment, as well as the use of government equipment including computers, telephones, and vehicles. Interns must be responsible in terms of keeping appointments, scheduled assignments, starting and completing work, and adherence to NPS policy and procedures in the performance of their work duties.

### **How Much, and When Will I Be Paid?**

Positions under this program will be paid at pay rates equivalent to GS-3, GS-4, or GS-5 depending on qualifications and education.

GS-3 employees make approximately \$10 per hour.

GS-4 employees make approximately \$11 per hour.

GS-5 employees make approximately \$12 per hour.

Parks arrange for staff members to be paid every two weeks. There is often a two or three week period before employees receive their first paycheck, so plan your finances accordingly. Park lodging costs are deducted from your paycheck.

### **Where Will I Live And Housing Arrangements?**

As stated, you will live on the park where you work, and reasonable housing expenses will be deducted from your pay. This means you will live on federal government property. Parks will provide housing to all Initiative interns. Park housing generally falls into two categories. The first is a normal residential house. These usually have two or three bedrooms, each occupied by another intern or seasonal employee. This means you will have your own room. However, you will share the house with the other interns, including the kitchen and bathroom. Most houses have a washer/dryer, or they are located nearby, in another building. When you share a house, obviously everyone is expected to share responsibilities, such as clean-up. Housing is assigned by gender – meaning men with men, and women with women.

The second most common type of housing is a dormitory, again shared by other interns or seasonal employees. You will share bath and kitchen facilities, and you typically will have your own room, although sometimes you may be assigned one roommate to your bedroom. Again, your roommate will be the same gender as you.

Depending on the park, most housing has TV and radio available, and/or TV hookups, meaning you can get reception, but you may have to bring your own television. You should ask before you

arrive at the park. Regarding phones, phones are either in the rooms or nearby, but you must pay for your own personal calls. You cannot use your government phone for personal calls. Bring your cell phone if you have one, but depending on the park, it may or may not get a signal. In general, your privacy will be assured, although many activities — eating, housekeeping, socializing — are necessarily shared with others. Think of your stay at the park as “summer camp”.

### **How Do I Apply?**

Students must apply by:

1. Reading the Fact Sheet and other materials thoroughly
2. Submitting a Student Application Form
3. Submitting a current Resume with GPA and Major listed
4. Submitting the Statement of Student Eligibility Form
5. Writing a one-page essay telling us about themselves, including their future career goals, and why they want to participate in the Initiative.

Applicants will apply to the NHEC by mail, to the address below.

Students can obtain the Forms cited above through the NPS-NHEC Program Manager Rich Niemeyer. He can email all Forms to Applicants, if necessary. Forms can also be obtained by going to the NHEC webpage, at [www.nheec.org](http://www.nheec.org)

As discussed earlier, NPS and NHEC will carefully review the applications, and those students who are selected for further consideration will be notified and instructed to attend the “Orientation and Training Session” to be held in Albuquerque, NM on **May 5 to 7, 2005**, that will also include a series of face-to-face interviews to select the final candidates.

**NHEC will cover the students’ travel and related costs if they are selected to attend the training/orientation session in Albuquerque.**

**All students must submit their applications by May 1, 2005.**

**Applications should be mailed to:**

**Richard Niemeyer  
NHEC Program Manager  
P.O. Box 2362  
Taos, NM 87571**

***For further information, contact  
Mr. Niemeyer at (505) 758-1036 or (505) 660-6125 or  
by email at [niemeyer@laplaza.org](mailto:niemeyer@laplaza.org).***

### **About the National Park Service**

Most people do not know this, but America created the concept of “national parks”. No such parks existed anywhere in the world prior to the United States inventing them. In fact, national parks have been called “the best idea America ever had.”

The idea of preserving special natural, historical, and cultural places for public ownership ran contrary to the prevailing national mood during the 19th century. However, beginning in 1872, with the creation of Yellowstone National Park, America has been committed to preserving and protecting some of our greatest national treasures like the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, the Everglades, the Petrified Forest, and the Smoky Mountains. Other parks soon followed.

By 1916, the Department of Interior was supervising over 30 national parks and monuments. However, it was clear that there was a growing need to administer these special places properly, so in 1916 Congress created the National Park Service. Since then, NPS has been the premier federal agency safeguarding our national heritage. The NPS mission is to protect these places “in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

Today, there are 389 parks and monuments in our national Park system, spread all across the country, and cared for by over 16,000 NPS employees. Further, the national park system goes beyond natural treasures like the Grand Canyon. It also includes important places to America that commemorate our history, culture, and major events. Some of these famous sites include the Statue of Liberty; Gettysburg National Battlefield; Independence National Historical Park; the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthplace; the birthplaces or homes of many U.S. Presidents; the Women’s Rights National Historical Site; and many, many more.

In a very real way, **NPS is the official keeper of our nation’s history, culture, and natural heritage.** By applying to the Diversity Initiative internship program, you too can join the proud ranks of the thousands of NPS staff who strive every day to protect these treasures. It is important, much needed work. We hope to see you there.

### **About the National Hispanic Environmental Council**

The National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC) is a national, non-profit, membership based organization founded in 1996, and located in the Washington, D.C. area. With almost 5,000 members nationwide, **NHEC is the only national Hispanic environmental and natural resource organization in the country.**

NHEC seeks to educate, unite, and engage the Latino and minority community on environmental and sustainable development issues; encourage Hispanics and others to actively work to preserve and protect our environment; provide a national voice for Latinos before federal and other key environmental decision-makers; and actively assist our community to pursue the many career, educational, business, and policy opportunities in the environmental and natural resource field. Our guiding credo is: “**because it’s our environment too**”.

In addition, NHEC strives to dispel the myth that Hispanics do not care about or are involved in the environment, and that our community does not care about America’s natural resources and heritage.

NHEC operates a number of programs that educate and empower our community, especially our youth. This Diversity Initiative, in partnership with NPS, is just one such effort.

**For more information on NHEC, call or write:**

**NHEC**  
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**[www.nheec.org](http://www.nheec.org)**