

## National Hispanic Environmental Council



### SUMMARY OVERVIEW

Founded in 1997, the National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC) is a national, non-profit organization with over 5,000 professional and student members. Based in Alexandria, VA, **NHEC is the only national Latino environmental and natural resource organization in the country.** NHEC is an advocacy, policy, and programmatic group, and works to represent the interests of Latinos before federal, state, and green group decision-makers. NHEC is committed to ensuring our community has a seat and a voice at the national environmental decision-making table, and we seek to educate and engage Latinos on a range of environmental and natural resource issues. **Our credo is: “....because it’s our environment too”.**

NHEC is actively engaged with national policy makers on a range of key environmental policy issues, including **global warming, environmental justice, green jobs, renewable energy, and diversity issues within federal environmental agencies.** Regarding climate change, NHEC has held national **“Latino Leadership Briefings on Global Warming”** in 2007, 2008 and 2009 in Washington, D.C. And we have held other regional briefings on global warming throughout 2008--2010, and we continue our policy and advocacy work in this area. In addition, in 2008 **NHEC helped create a new entity, the “National Latino Coalition on Climate Change”** (NLCCC). The NLCCC is composed of 12 national Latino organizations, including LULAC and MALDEF, and Roger Rivera served as the founding NLCCC Chairman.

NHEC also runs a number of programs. One successful activity is our **Annual Conference and Career Fair.** Our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference/Career Fair will be October 2011 in Washington, DC. The NHEC Conference has become the premier networking, recruiting, and educational event to reach Latinos in the environmental arena. And because a major mission of NHEC is to help build the next generation of environmental leaders and professionals, we offer a **“Travel Scholarship”** to Latino/minority college students, from every environmental and natural resource discipline. Students apply and if accepted, NHEC **covers all costs** to attend our 4 day Conference/Career Fair. At each conference NHEC funds over 200 environmental college students, both graduate and undergrads from across the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

NHEC also periodically runs issue conferences and briefings on key environmental topics and their implications/impacts on Latinos. For example, in March 2008 NHEC, in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) planned and coordinated the first ever *“Climate Change and Communities of Color: Assessing and Addressing Vulnerabilities”* This 2 day conference held in Atlanta was designed to examine the nexus between global warming and the public and environmental health impacts on Latinos and other minority populations. NHEC held follow-up briefings on this issue in Atlanta in May 2009 and 2010.

Throughout 2010 and beyond, NHEC is working to open the doors of opportunity for Latinos at federal environmental and natural resource agencies.

In February 2010, **NHEC co-convened, together with the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, the first ever “National Roundtable on Opportunities for Latinos in Natural Resources at USDA”**. Held at USDA headquarters, this highly successful event brought together 30 national and regional Latino organizations with top officials from all of USDA’s natural resource agencies for briefings on and discussions about opening the doors of opportunity for Hispanics in employment, education, and minority business. As a result of this success national event, **NHEC and U.S. EPA partnered to co-convene a “National Latino Roundtable—A Conversation with Lisa Jackson” on Nov. 10** at U.S. EPA headquarters, with over 40 Latino leaders. The second annual NHEC—USDA Latino Roundtable will be held in July 2011, and the second annual EPA Latino Roundtable in Sept. 2011.

NHEC is also committed to environmental education and youth programs. Towards this, we run programs such as our national **“Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute”** each year in New Mexico. Our 9<sup>th</sup> annual Institute was held August 13--22, 2010, again at Glorieta, NM. The Institute is an intensive, science-based, residential, 10 day long environmental education and environmental career awareness program for top teens aged 16-19. Students apply for a competitive scholarship to attend and if accepted, **NHEC covers all costs for students,** with funding provided by a range of public and private sector sponsors. Students learn at different sites in NM, such as national parks, forests, and laboratories.

On average NHEC funds 34--40 students from across the U.S. to the NM Institute, but we have trained as many as 120 students per summer. This number depends on the level of sponsorship funds we receive. Accepted students all have GPA’s of 3.0 and higher, with most having GPA’s of 3.5—4.0, and all have substantial environmental experience.

In 2006 we **expanded to create 2 regional versions** of our national Environmental Youth Institute. In late June 2010 NHEC held its 5th annual “NYC Environmental Youth Institute”, funded by the National Park Service; and in late July NHEC held its 3rd annual “California Environmental Youth Institute”, in the Santa Monica Mountains area.

Like the NM Institute, these regionals are rigorous, science-based, 7 day long residential programs that offer competitive scholarships to high GPA teens aged 16-18, again with substantial environmental experience. All our Institutes are designed to build the next generation of minority environmental leaders/professionals. **The NYC Institute also includes a “green jobs” component** – each year after the Institute students are hired full time by the National Park Service to work in parks in the NYC area for that summer. 22 students were hired this summer.

NHEC also runs our **“High School Environmental Career Awareness Program”**. Here, we hold “Environmental Career/College Days” at selected high schools across the U.S. Given NHEC’s mission to help build the next generation of minority environmental professionals, we are partnering with high schools with a major environmental track within their curriculum, and there are over 25 such schools across the U.S., including in CA, TX, NM, FL, IL, NY, and PR.

NHEC is also engaging Latinos on natural resource issues, and the duty we all have to serve as good stewards of the earth. Towards this, we have 2 full time staff in California who work to engage our community on such issues as environmental justice and the need to preserve wilderness and other habitats. To further this, we run initiatives such as our **“Latino Hiking Program”** and help run **“Latino Earth Day”** in Los Angeles and elsewhere.