

# National Hispanic Environmental Council



## FACT SHEET

### THE 11th ANNUAL

### NHEC

## MINORITY YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

### An Environmental STEM Initiative

“11 Days of Learning, A Lifetime of Experience”

July 20–30, 2011 • Las Vegas, New Mexico

## SUMMARY

The **National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC)** is **accepting applications** from top students, aged 16–19 from across the country, to attend its upcoming 11th annual “Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute”. The Institute is an intensive, science-based, residential, and substantive 11 day environmental education and environmental career program to be held July 20—30 at a variety of national wildlife refuges, parks, forests and other sites in Northern New Mexico.

Using classroom and outdoor settings, the Institute is designed to help create the environmental professionals and leaders of tomorrow by educating, engaging, and inspiring students, especially Latinos and other minorities, on a range of environmental, natural resource and energy topics. The Institute is also designed to provide information on the many college and career opportunities in the environment, and to assist student to pursue these careers in the future – and especially with our federal agency sponsors. The NM Institute is a national program, although NHEC runs two similar regional Institutes as well, in New York City and in S. California.

**For those students selected, NHEC will provide a full scholarship that covers all your major costs to attend the 11 day program, including airfare, housing, meals, science equipment, and more.** There is no fee to apply, and only a \$25 registration fee if you are selected. Remember that both high school and college students aged 16–19 are eligible to apply.

The Institute will be held at the New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) in Las Vegas, New Mexico, located 67 miles east of Santa Fe, NM. All students will be housed at NMHU. NMSU is in a beautiful area, with mountains, trails, and streams nearby, and close to national parks, wildlife refuges, and forests where much of the Institute’s coursework will be taught. NHEC instructors will teach the Institute, with active assistance from our sponsors, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Forest Service, who are funding the Institute and whose staff will play a key role. Also present at the Institute will be Latino/minority “role models”, who are environmental/natural resource professionals from every

discipline, volunteering their time, technical knowledge, and heritage to help students learn the curriculum.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS, SELECTION, AND THE INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIP**

The Institute is open to all students aged 16—19 (in both high school and college) and as a national program students from all 50 states and Puerto Rico are eligible to apply. Latino youth are especially urged to apply, given the severe under-representation of Latinos in environmental fields. Applications will be evaluated as they are received, **so applying as soon as possible is strongly encouraged**. See the attached “Application Form” and other materials on how to apply. Students can also go to our web page at: [www.nheec.org](http://www.nheec.org). However, while students can obtain application forms from our web page, you cannot apply on-line, since students must include documents like school transcripts, etc as part of your application package. Completed applications must be mailed to NHEC.

**Please note: as the Institute is entirely federally funded, only students who are U.S. Citizens or Permanent Legal Residents are eligible to apply and be selected.**

Applicants from across the nation will be competitively selected for the Institute scholarship, based on a variety of criteria. Selection criteria includes (but is not limited to): 1. students’ maturity and seriousness of intentions; 2. an academic background containing environmental-related coursework; 3. a minimum 3.0 GPA; 4. proven experience in some environmental activity or job; 5. ability to show a strong and genuine interest in the environment or related field as a future career – but especially if with one of our federal agency sponsors; 6. extracurricular and/or community activities; and 7. Diversity – by age, gender, race, ethnicity, geography, environmental experience, and other factors.

**An essay is also required**, where applicants describe their qualifications, their interest/activities in the environment, their future career goals, and how they can make a difference to our environment now and in the future. **This essay will be especially important in selecting students for the Institute.**

If selected, students will have all major Institute costs covered by NHEC, through a full scholarship. **NHEC will pay for students’ round-trip airfare, housing, all meals, educational materials, local transportation in New Mexico, related on-site equipment, and most other costs during the 11 day Institute.** There are some minor costs NHEC will not cover, and these are described in other materials. NHEC will also waive the \$25 registration fee for any student who is accepted into the Institute but is unable to pay the fee due to proven financial hardship.

## **CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION**

The Institute will begin on Friday, July 20 and end on Monday, July 30. There will be approximately 34–36 students in the Institute. Once accepted, students will receive materials before they arrive at NMHU to help them better prepare for the Institute. The curriculum, taught by NHEC’s Instructors, who are themselves skilled environmental professionals and educators, will begin by covering principles in environmental and conservation topics, and then progress to more advanced concepts, as each day builds on the day before. **NHEC utilizes an Environmental STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) curriculum.** There is classroom instruction every morning and night, coupled with science-based field studies (such as water and soil testing) that complement the

class work. Supervised by instructors and role models, students will also use a variety of professional-grade, high tech environmental science equipment to conduct their field studies.

Since a major Institute goal is to introduce Latino/other minority students to nature, students will spend much of their time outdoors, in closely supervised field activities at NMHU and in nearby wetlands, forests, streams, ponds and more. Students will also camp overnight for one night at beautiful Abiquiu Lake, north of Santa Fe. Students will also visit amazing federal public lands, including Pecos National Historical Park, Bandelier National Monument, Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge, Santa Fe National Forest, and Abiquiu Lake and Hydroelectric Dam.

**The Institute will also include sessions on the many different careers in the environment**, and provide students with opportunities to see up-close—through interaction with role models from the U.S. EPA, FWS, NRCS, FS and others—how these jobs are performed in the real world.

Students will also explore the many environmental programs that exist at colleges across America, plus learn where these schools are, how to apply, and most importantly, what you need to know to gain admittance to these colleges. And, since students will be taught to learn and work in teams, leadership skills will also be developed during the Institute.

Helping NHEC Instructors teach the curriculum **will be many minority “role models”, and their participation is a key element of the Institute**. These “role models” are working environmental professionals from many different fields—park rangers, wildlife biologists, foresters, environmental lawyers, environmental engineers, geologists, hydrologists, scientists, administrators, and more—who are each volunteering to spend several days at the Institute to share their technical knowledge, life experiences, and heritage with students. Several role models a day, each day, will participate in the Institute and help teach the students.

NHEC believes – and has practiced this core belief in every one of our Institutes over the last 10 years -- that it is vital that Latino and other minority youth have role models to whom they can relate. Through the participation of our instructors and role models, students will have their “own” to interact with, to be inspired by, to learn from, and who have a success story to tell. In this way, the message to students seeking to enter the non-traditional world of the environment will not only be clear, but believable – “I made it in this field and so can you”.

The coursework is rigorous, hands-on and science-based, as well as multicultural. It will emphasize team building and leadership skills, through group challenges and individual responsibility. Students will visit some amazing and beautiful places. see It will also be fun.

We do wish to be clear with students—this is not summer camp. **The Institute is an academically challenging, intellectually serious, Environmental STEM program for mature students** with a deep and genuine interest in the environment. You will definitely enjoy yourselves, but you will have work to do too.

But if you are sincerely interested in learning more about the environment, and especially in learning about working for a federal environmental agency, then we promise you will have one of the best experiences of your life. **All of our students in past Institutes will tell you that it is truly “11 Days of Learning, A Lifetime of Experience”.**

Through closely supervised field trips to places like Santa Fe and Los Alamos, as well as hikes to streams, trails, canyons, lakes, forests, and more, students will experience the grandeur and excitement of the “great outdoors”. In Northern New Mexico students will see first-hand the amazing natural beauty of America. The curriculum is also designed to explore environmental issues specifically affecting Latinos and other minorities, and to examine the often unique environmental perspectives of minority Americans. **Fundamentally however, the Institute is designed to foster in students the belief that our natural heritage belongs to all Americans—including minorities—and therefore we all share a duty to help protect our environment.**

During the Institute, students will encounter a diversity of views and experiences. This diversity will ensure—especially since students come from all across the nation—that they learn as much from each other as from the coursework.

### **You Can Get a Job or Internship with our Sponsors!**

Students should be aware that our federal sponsors are actively and seriously looking to hire students who successfully complete the NM Institute.

These agencies are sending staff to the Institute who are participating to evaluate your qualifications, interact with you to gauge your interest and potential, and if they feel you “have what it takes”, determine how, where, and when to offer you an internship and/or a paid job this fall or next summer (i.e. summer 2013).

Remember these agencies have offices all over the country, so you can work near where you live or, if you desire, somewhere else in the country. The NM Institute is a very real opportunity for accepted students to land a great, paid, internship or job doing substantive and needed environmental work! We hope you will take advantage of this rare opportunity.

### **POST INSTITUTE CONTACT AND FOLLOW-UP WITH STUDENTS**

NHEC, and our Institutes, are about building the next generation of people of color environmental leaders and professionals. To do this, NHEC must contact students after the Institute. Thus, there is a post-Institute component to the Institute, **and you need to know—and agree to—this component, before you apply.**

Post Institute follow-up will take the form of occasional emails (or, if necessary, a phone call) from NHEC that will ask you to fill out a short questionnaire that relates to issues such as your progress in school, recent environmental activities, your environmental career path, and more. We ask for your cooperation in this tracking process. It will help us help you, and assist students that follow you in future Institutes.

NHEC will also keep you informed, by email, of other opportunities for Institute graduates. This includes information on a variety of federal and other environmental programs, as well as scholarships to such NHEC programs as our annual Conference and Career Fair, our High School Environmental Career Awareness Program, and our other Regional Institutes. We hope information on all these opportunities will help you with your future education and career.

## **SAFETY FIRST – ALWAYS**

The Institute is designed to not only be highly educational and enjoyable, but also safe. NHEC has a “safety first” ethic, and safety considerations are paramount throughout the Institute. And, because the Institute is being co-sponsored by federal agencies and has their full support, parents and students can be assured that NHEC has and will take every precaution to protect the health and safety of students.

While housed at NMHU, campus security personnel are present 24 hours a day. Regarding medical services, the Alta Vista Regional Hospital is located minutes away from NMHU, and this hospital offers ambulance service, a fully staffed medical team, and complete primary and emergency care facilities. Because NMHU is located just off a major interstate highway (I-25), any emergency can be handled swiftly and safely.

When students are on federal land (such as national parks, forests and wildlife refuges) they will also have access to these agencies’ medical and safety system available to all visitors. Staff from these agencies will also accompany students when students visit their sites.

## **NEW MEXICO HIGHLANDS UNIVERSITY**

The university was first established in 1893, with the prominent archaeologist Edgar Lee Hewett serving as its first president. The institution became New Mexico University in 1902, and then New Mexico Highlands University in 1941, as it expanded its role beyond teacher education. Today, NMHU offers graduate and undergraduate programs in arts and sciences, business, education, natural resources, and social work.

Located in Las Vegas, a city with a population of about 16,000, Highlands’ main campus is close to recreational and wilderness areas, and within an hour's drive of Santa Fe and 2 hours from Albuquerque.

The majority of the school's approximately 2,800 students are from New Mexico and are Latino. Highlands’ programs focus on its multi-ethnic student body, especially the Latino and American Indian cultures distinctive of New Mexico.

NMHU offers a full range of sleeping accommodations and conference services, including meeting rooms, audiovisual, and more. All sleeping rooms (which can be either single or double) are modern and comfortable, and have a clean private bath.

All meals are served buffet-style in the central Dining Hall, and there is ample quantity and variety at each meal. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served at pre-set times during the day. NHEC will provide sack lunches, through NMSU, to students and role models on those days when students are off-site.

Other amenities at NMHU include a book store/gift shop, where students can purchase books, magazines, stamps, film, toiletries, beverages, candy, clothing, local crafts, and more; a church; a coin-operated laundromat; postal services; public phones; fax and xerox machines; and an ATM machine. Absolutely no alcohol is sold or available anywhere at NMHU and smoking is not permitted

inside buildings. NMHU staff are on-site 24 hours a day, and they monitor all areas of the campus regularly.

All students will be housed two to a room, with all students in one dormitory. Room assignments are made by NHEC and cannot be changed by students. Adults—role models, instructors, NHEC staff-- will be housed in separate floors apart from students. However, there will be several NHEC adult staff in the building where students are housed to ensure students' overnight compliance with the Institute's Code of Conduct. NHEC staff will check on students periodically through the night to ensure that students are safe and in their rooms after "lights out".

You can obtain more information on NMHU by calling them toll free at 505-425-7511. Or you can go to their web page at: [www.nmhu.edu](http://www.nmhu.edu).

### **WEATHER CONDITIONS AT NMHU IN JULY/CONTACT WITH BUGS, ANIMALS, ETC.**

Northern New Mexico has fine weather during the summer and early fall. The days are warm, typically in the 80's, with lots of sunshine under very bright blue skies. However, the mornings and evenings can be cool, especially since Las Vegas, NM is at 6,400 feet elevation. Typically, evenings are in the 60's. Sometimes there are rain showers or thunderstorms in the afternoon, especially during the late summer. NHEC will plan rain activities for students on the days this may occur.

Because Las Vegas, NM is in a natural setting, and a goal of the Institute is to introduce students to the outdoors, students will inevitably encounter a variety of flying, swimming, and crawling creatures, such as mosquitoes, bees, insects, fish, reptiles, plus animals such as deer, cattle, birds and more. There is also the possibility of encountering poison ivy, poison oak, or other irritating plants. Students and parents should understand that these plants, insects and wildlife are inevitable in the outdoors, and, while NHEC will take all reasonable measures to protect students, contact with nature, in all its forms, is a key element of the Institute.

### **WHAT TO WEAR AND WHAT TO PACK**

Because of the range of temperatures (warm days, cool nights), students should bring clothing that can be layered. This means shorts, jeans, tee shirts, and especially sweat shirts and light jackets for the mornings and evenings. Students should bring sneakers at a minimum and sturdier footwear than that if you have them. While NHEC does not require students to buy hiking boots for the Institute, if you have them you should definitely bring them, or if can afford to purchase them in advance then this is also recommended. NHEC will provide detailed information regarding clothing once a student is accepted into the Institute.

### **INSTITUTE CODE OF CONDUCT**

Once accepted into the Institute, all students must follow the Institute "Code of Conduct". This code will describe, in detail, the Institute's rules and regulations, including those governing student behavior with Instructors, Role Models and with fellow students. NHEC requires appropriate behavior at all times, and the Code of Conduct is strictly enforced. All accepted students (and their parents) must read and sign the Code prior to the Institute, and agree in writing to abide by its terms. Failure of a student to follow the Code can result in a number of penalties, including ultimately, being dismissed from the Institute and sent home. Should a student be dismissed from the Institute, they (or their

parents) must pay for that student to return home. NHEC will not pay any extra costs for airfare should a student be dismissed. Students and parents should also know that when on federal land (such as national parks, refuges, forests), students are governed by federal law and can also be prosecuted for any violations of civil and/or criminal law, should that agency choose to do so.

We wish to be clear—NHEC has created the Code of Conduct because it is necessary to have this when working with teens in a residential program. We absolutely use it, enforce it, and require students to follow it. If you have a problem following reasonable rules, then the Institute is not for you and you should not apply.

## **NHEC IN BRIEF**

The National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC) is a national, non-profit, membership-based organization founded in 1997, and headquartered in Alexandria, VA (just outside Washington, D.C.). NHEC is the only national Latino environmental and natural resource organization in the country, and runs several programs, like the Institute, that furthers its mission.

NHEC seeks to educate, unite, and engage our community on environmental and sustainable development issues; provide a national voice for Hispanics before federal, state, and non-profit environmental decision-makers; and actively assist Latinos and other minorities to pursue the many career, business, educational, and policy opportunities in the environmental and natural resources field. We develop and run programs—in partnership with the environmental movement—that accomplish this mission, and furthers our guiding credo: “**because it’s our environment too.**”

**To learn more about NHEC or our Institutes, call or write us at:**

National Hispanic Environmental Council  
Attention: NM Institute  
106 N. Fayette Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone: 703-683-3956 Fax: 703-256-8288

**For more questions, contact the NHEC Programs Coordinator, Juan Rodriguez, at [jrodriguez@nheec.org](mailto:jrodriguez@nheec.org)**

**To view great photos of past Institutes and learn more about our program, go to our website at <http://www.nheec.org>**