

## National Hispanic Environmental Council



### **SOME KEY NHEC RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE U.S. DEPT. OF INTERIOR ON SPECIFIC ACTIONS TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY AND LATINO/MINORITY OUTREACH and RECRUITMENT**

**(submitted to Sect. Salazar and the Office of the Secretary, June 2011)**

#### **MORE, NOT LESS OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY (OSEC) CONTROL:**

1. NHEC fully understands that DOI is decentralized, and the work of the Department is primarily carried out by the Bureau's and Services. Nevertheless the history is clear. More centralization – not less --of minority outreach and recruitment efforts is absolutely essential if success in diversity is to be achieved. This means that Office of the Secretary leadership, involvement – and especially supervision – is necessary.

OSEC **must** exercise more direct coordination and control over the offices in the bureaus that run diversity and youth programs. Left to devise their own plans, history has repeatedly shown the bureaus will simply recycle failed policies and initiatives that do not significantly improve the diversity numbers. If OSEC employs a hands off approach, then diversity success at DOI is doomed to fail, as it has in the past.

2. NHEC believes one office capable of undertaking this more centralized supervisory role is the OSEC Office of Youth Programs. Hiring more diverse youth – whether in YCC, YIP, STEP, SCEP, or other programs -- is a vital step in increasing diversity and filling the DOI pipeline for future permanent hires. This Office should work closely with the new DOI Chief Diversity Officer.

3. NHEC strongly recommends that the Office of Youth Programs be given a robust budget, which it would control, that will allow it to fund as soon as possible a series of new **“Diversity Innovation Projects”**.

Still working with each bureau, these OSEC innovation projects would do two things. 1. replicate or expand existing “best practices” diversity initiatives

identified by each bureau proven to be successful in increasing actual hires; and  
2. fund new innovative diversity programs using fresh ideas and new partners -- partners who come directly from minority/diversity communities. After one year the result would be a menu of successful models that can then be replicated within the bureaus.

## **CREATE AND FUND NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH REAL MINORITY ORGANIZATIONS:**

One fundamental, systemic failure on DOI's part has been its long-standing inability to adequately partner with entities beyond the mainstream conservation movement. DOI will never be successful in its diversity efforts -- nor will it help create the next generation of conservation and public lands stewards -- if it does not also dramatically increase the diversity of its partners.

Today, two and a half years into the Obama Administration, the overwhelmingly majority of DOI's partnerships overall are with non-minority organizations. Moreover, when it comes to diversity/minority recruitment efforts, the overwhelmingly majority of DOI's partners are non-minority organizations. This status quo cannot remain unchanged.

1. NHEC strongly recommends that the Chief Diversity Officer and the Office of Youth Programs, together with the bureaus, promptly conduct a targeted, effective outreach initiative that will identify new diverse partners who are able and willing to work with DOI. These groups do exist -- NHEC and other organizations knows who they are and can help identify them if requested.
2. Especially target national, regional, and community based minority organizations -- groups who by definition know their communities best. For too long, DOI has utilized non-minority organizations like SCA and others to do the vast majority of its minority recruitment. While NHEC does not advocate that DOI drop its partnerships with these organizations, the record is quite clear regarding their diversity success record -- it has been inadequate. Thus, NHEC strongly urges DOI to **employ a simple, common sense approach --use more authentic minority organizations to do minority outreach and hiring.**
3. Dramatically increase DOI recruitment efforts and results at HBCU's, HSI's, and Tribal College and universities. DOI needs to do substantially better in "fishing where the fish are".
4. Provide equitable funding levels to these new partners to help DOI do its work. Currently, the few minority organizations who are DOI partners get a

fraction of the dollars that non-minority organizations receive, often to do the same minority recruiting work. This sharp disparity in funding is not only unfair and inequitable, it is clearly ineffective.

5. In the early months of the Obama Administration (May 12, 2009), NHEC, working with the Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, planned, implemented, and co-convened a “DOI Meeting/Briefing on Green Jobs, Youth Programs, and Stimulus Funding”.

28 national minority organizations from across the country – many with decades of experience in workforce development and recruitment in minority communities – participated in this meeting. (see attached list). The meeting was successful and there was—and remains – a strong desire by these organizations to meet with DOI again to continue the dialogue and establish recruiting partnerships. To date this follow-up meeting has not occurred. **We strongly urge OSEC to again work with NHEC to co-convene such a meeting as soon as possible.**

### **UTILIZE NEW MINORITY PARTNERS TO HELP DOI REVIEW AND/OR HELP DRAFT ITS NEW DIVERSITY STRATEGIES – BEFORE THESE ARE IMPLEMENTED**

In addition to naming a new Chief Diversity Officer, last year Sect. Salazar announced in his new “DOI Inclusive Workplace Strategy” that he was asking each DOI bureau/service to develop their own inclusivity and diversity implementation plan by Sept. 30, 2010. NHEC applauded this effort at that time.

However, NHEC also strongly believes that without substantive comment and input from the minority/diversity communities who are in fact the target of these plans, these efforts will not be complete or fully effective. In short, **we ask DOI to engage key minority organizations in a dialogue and a partnership regarding the most effective methods to do minority outreach and minority hiring.** Towards this, NHEC recommends that DOI:

1. engage a select group of qualified national minority organizations, with experience in workforce, outreach, as well as environmental issues, in discussions about the DOI Workplace Strategy, and request their confidential assistance in reviewing DOI’s plans and proposed solutions, with the goal of providing constructive, substantive input and recommendations.
2. by engaging key minority leaders/organizations to help DOI plan its new diversity strategy, DOI will be receiving timely, effective, proven advice from those in position to know best how to successfully engage and hire minority Americans. NHEC believes that if followed, this common sense approach will reap huge dividends in making Sect. Salazar’s diversity strategy a success.