

An NHEC Internship Program

“Building A Better Future” – The Facility Management Diversity Hiring Initiative

Coordinated by NHEC for the Intermountain Region of the National Park Service

In May 2005, NHEC launched a paid internship program, funded by and jointly managed with the Intermountain Region of the National Park Service. This “Building A Better Future” (BABF) initiative is an undergraduate/trade school internship program designed to identify, recruit, and train diverse students for future entry-level professional employment in facility management and natural resource careers, especially at federal agencies like NPS.

Minorities, especially Latinos, remain 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 were eligible to apply.

Through BABF, last summer 14 minority students participated in a full time, paid, 12 week field internship in national parks throughout the NPS Intermountain Region, which includes states such as Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Arizona. Students worked in teams of two in their parks, in a variety of NPS positions. Students applied for the competitive program,

semi-finalists candidates were selected, and then these were asked to attend an intensive 3 day orientation, training, and final interview session in Albuquerque, in early May. Following this session, NHEC and NPS made the final selections, and placed students in parks throughout the region.

BABF placed students in real jobs doing real work—and making real money. The internship program helped students get a solid understanding of the responsibilities of the NPS, and an appreciation for the reason why the agency is one of the nation’s premier natural, historical, and cultural preservation organizations. Specifically, BABF is designed to give students an in-depth look into “facility management”—a broad area that includes park operations; park maintenance; road, trail, and habitat upkeep; visitor contact and liaison; and wildlife management. Facility management is the “meat and potatoes” of national park operations, and through BABF, students had a great opportunity to spend 10–12 weeks in this on-the-ground internship.

NHEC is delighted to be working with NPS Intermountain region on this needed internship effort. Other NPS regions, as well as other federal agencies, are now looking into replicating BABF in their areas as well.



Bill Gwaltney, NPS Intermountain Region Diversity Director, speaks to students at the May 3–5, 2005 training session in Albuquerque, about the BABF program and career opportunities in NPS.



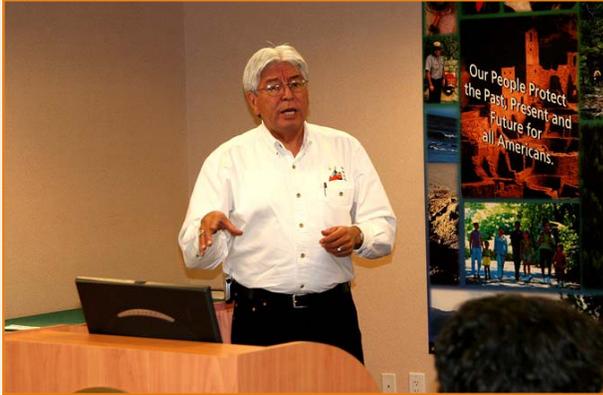
NPS staff at Petroglyphs National Monument, in New Mexico, talk to students.



Juan Rodriguez, NHEC Programs Coordinator, discusses NHEC mission and programs with students at the May 5 training session



BABF student participants at the May 3–5 training session.



Ernest Ortega, active NHEC member in New Mexico (and former NPS superintendent) discusses both NHEC and NPS with student participants.



BABF students in the field at a national park



Students in the BABF internship program work both indoors and outdoors; at computers, with visitors, and performing facility operations work.



Students work in all aspects of facility maintenance and management while in the field at parks throughout the Intermountain region.



Students in the field.