

An NHEC Outreach Project

The NHEC – California Wild Heritage Campaign

California is renowned for its natural beauty, scenic wonders, and wilderness areas. However, each year, thousands of acres of these special places are lost to development, sprawl, or inappropriate use. In particular, many thousands of acres of public land, including federal lands, remain unprotected from logging, road building, drilling, dams, and more.

Latinos care about California's environment. We do so because we must. Too often, our communities have been victimized by environmental injustice, including the unfair and disproportionate siting of hazardous facilities in or near our communities. To not care means we risk the health and safety of our families and neighborhoods.

However, we also care about our natural heritage and natural resources. For example, a statewide poll in 2002 showed that 85% of California Latinos support permanent government protection for wilderness and wild rivers. This is striking, when compared to 72% of Californians overall.

Latinos understand why natural resource and wilderness protection is important to our community. Some of the major reasons include the fact that federal lands provide a major source of recreational opportunities for our families. The Angeles National Forest, adjacent to the City of Los Angeles, has the highest percentage of utilization by Latinos of any federal public lands in the U.S. **We understand that wilderness areas contain 60% of California's watersheds, vital to ensure clean, safe drinking water for all.** And we understand that wilderness areas can help enormously in mitigating air pollution, which is the worst in the nation in California. And finally, we have an

obligation, as stewards of the environment, to protect these remaining special places for our children and their children.

For all these reasons, **Latinos—and NHEC—understand and value the need to preserve wilderness.** That is why NHEC is actively partnering with the California Wild Heritage Campaign (CWHC), a coalition of more than 300 community, civic, and environmental organizations in seeking to preserve California's natural heritage. **For the last three years NHEC has been helping to coordinate outreach to Latinos statewide,** to build awareness and support within our community so as to permanently protect these wondrous places. Toward this, we now have two full-time staff persons in California working hard on the Campaign.

Ultimately, NHEC and the CWHC believe that the best—and often only—way to permanently protect these last, special, pristine places is through federal wilderness designation.

Having completed an inventory of the remaining wild lands and rivers in California, NHEC and CWHC are now focused on informing, educating, and engaging the public, especially Latinos, about these issues. **We invite you to join us in our effort. To do so, please contact Oscar Gonzales, NHEC California State Director, at 323-945-6484, or at ogonzales@nheec.org or contact Sal Ramirez, our Los Angeles/Santa Clarita Organizer, at: sramirez@nheec.org or at 626-627-1138.**

The following photos show some of these treasured places we believe should be protected, and some of the volunteers working on behalf of this goal.

Oscar Gonzales, NHEC. California Outreach Director, with a group of volunteers working to preserve wilderness in CA. Also shown is Kristina Ortez, NHEC Central Valley Outreach Director.



The beautiful Castaic Mountains, potential wilderness in S. California. The view from south of Sawtooth Mountain.



A 55 foot waterfall in Elsmere Canyon, Southern California.



Sunset in Placerita Canyon, near Santa Clarita, in S. California.



Congresswoman Hilda Solis has been a strong supporter of the environment, and of Latino participation in the environmental movement. She is also the co-sponsor of the "California Wilderness Act", introduced this year in Congress, which seeks to permanently protect some of California's remaining pristine rivers and wild places as federal wilderness. Here, with Roger Rivera.



Oscar Gonzales, NHEC CA State Director (left), who works with NHEC members, supporters, and many others seeking to protect these special places in CA as federal wilderness. At far right is Mike Grenetz, the CWHC Santa Clarita area organizer.



The Amargosa River in the Eastern Sierra mountains in CA is the only river that flows into Death Valley, and is a bird lovers paradise. NHEC and CWHC are working to protect 24 miles of the pristine Amargosa River as federal wilderness.



The King Range in Northern CA is the longest stretch of undeveloped coastline in the continental United States. NHEC and CWHC seek to protect 42,585 acres of the King Range as wilderness, plus 21 miles of wild rivers.



Stemming in part from our CWHC efforts, NHEC has created a "Latino Nature Hike Program", operating in a number of states, including CA. Here, Latinos, including NHEC members and supporters, can go on a hike to see the wondrous nature that surrounds us, and how it should be protected. Here, some NHEC members and others on a hike in Placerita Canyon.



Here, NHEC members and others with CWHC supporters on a Nature Hike near Santa Clarita, CA.

NHEC Invites you to a Nature Hike!

National Hispanic
Environmental Council



When: Saturday, May 6, 2006; 9:00 a.m. – Noon

Where: Placerita Canyon Nature Center
19152 Placerita Canyon Road,
Santa Clarita 661.259.7721

Why: Learn about the environment. Be informed about volunteer and career opportunities in the environment. Have fun with your friends. Help protect California's natural beauty.

Who: Golden Valley HS Students, Teachers and Parents, Placerita Canyon Community Hike Club, the National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC) and other supporters of wild spaces.

*Contact: Oscar Gonzales (NHEC) at 323-945-6484 or ogonzales@nheec.org *Directions from GV HS to Placerita Canyon Nature Center: Travel south on Sierra Hwy toward Mad Rd. Turn left onto Placerita Canyon Rd. Travel 1.5 miles to entrance. Be sure to bring: Water bottle and snacks.

NHEC and CWHC hold hikes and other activities so that Latinos and others can see and learn about these special, beautiful places that should be protected. Join us and help protect these treasured places, and ensure clear air and clean water for Latinos and all in CA.



Congresswoman Hilda Solis (D-CA), a Los Angeles native and staunch environmental advocate, speaks to the audience about the need for Latinos to continue to be involved in preserving and protecting our environment.



Latino Earth Day was created and organized by a group of Latino organizations, (including NHEC), but led primarily by the William C. Velasquez Institute and Mujeres de la Tierra, both Latino organizations based in Los Angeles. Kudos to these and the other organizations for their leadership and hard work on Latino Earth Day.



A tree planting about to begin, sponsored by Mujeres de la Tierra, a local Latino environmental organization. Led by Irma Munoz, this fine organization is one of the Latino Earth Day founders and organizers in Los Angeles.



Latinos and others from all across Los Angeles came to Latino Earth Day to celebrate the environment, show that Latinos do care, and to learn more about how to be good stewards of the earth.



NHEC was one of a number of exhibitors with booths doing outreach, including on our CWHC efforts, at Latino Earth Day.



Some of NHEC's members in Los Angeles who helped staff the booth at Latino Earth Day.



Latino Earth Day participants stop by the NHEC booth to talk. Like the other exhibitors, NHEC was present to talk to our community about the environment, natural resource protection, how Latinos can and should be involved, and more.



NHEC members and staff with Cong. Hilda Solis, a staunch environmental advocate and strong NHEC supporter. To her left is Sal Ramirez, NHEC's Los Angeles/Santa Clarita Organizer, and to her right is Oscar Gonzales, NHEC's CA State Director.



One of the sites where Latino Earth Day was celebrated was the South Central Farmers Community Garden, in Los Angeles, the largest urban community farm in the U.S, and operated primarily by Latinos.



Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-CA), another Los Angeles area representative, speaks to participants, the media, and more at the South Central Community Garden.



Over the last three years, as part of our on-going outreach to Latinos on the value of protecting wilderness, NHEC has participated in a range of community events. Shown here is the recent Hispanic Business Expo in Santa Clarita, CA, where our staff talked with a variety of business and community leaders.



Some of the exhibitors at the Hispanic Business Expo. Together with CWHC, NHEC seeks to inform and engage Latinos on environmental and related issues. Our outreach has also focused on those, like the business community, who often have been “non-traditional” environmental supporters.



Sal Ramirez, the NHEC Outreach Coordinator for the Los Angeles/Santa Clarita area, with one of the Latina business owners in Santa Clarita.