

# National Hispanic Environmental Council



## FACT SHEET

### THE 8th ANNUAL

## NEW YORK CITY MINORITY YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

### An Environmental STEM Initiative

**“7 Days of Learning, A Lifetime of Experience”**

**August 14 – 20, 2013 • New York City**

### SUMMARY

The National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC) is accepting applications from New York area students, aged 16–19, to attend its upcoming 8th annual “New York City Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute”. The Institute is an intensive, science-based, residential, and highly educational 7 day environmental education and environmental career program to be held August 14 – 20, 2013 at a variety of parks, wildlife refuges, and other sites in the New York city area.

Using classroom and outdoor settings, **the Institute is designed to help build the environmental leaders and professionals of tomorrow** by educating, engaging, and inspiring youth, especially Latinos/other minorities, on a range of environmental and natural resource issues. The Institute is also designed to give information on the **many different college and career opportunities in the environment**, and to assist students to pursue these careers in the future, especially at the U.S. Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Institute sponsors.

The NYC Institute is being funded by the U.S. Forest Service, Eastern Region; and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, both federal agencies within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). NHEC and our sponsors are working closely together on the planning and implementation of the Institute. Further -- **the U.S. Forest Service is seeking students deeply interested in the environment to work for them next summer**. The Institute is designed to introduce students to the U.S. Forest Service and NRCS, intensively train them on a range of environmental issues, and then offer students job/internship opportunities at two of the premier federal natural resources agencies in the country.

Students should note that **if selected, NHEC will provide a scholarship that will cover all your major costs to attend** the 7 day Institute, including housing, 3 meals a day, academic materials, science and camping equipment, and more. There is no fee to apply and only a \$25 registration fee if accepted.

## DAY-BY-DAY INSTITUTE OVERVIEW

The Institute will be held at a number of sites in the New York City area, including Gateway National Park on Staten Island; Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge; Fire Island National Seashore on Long Island; Fort Totten Park/Urban Forest Research Station, and others.

**Students will be housed at the Navy Lodge, a hotel in Gateway National Park.**

**The Institute will begin on Wednesday, August 14** at the Education Center of Fort Wadsworth in Staten Island, the headquarters of Gateway. As a federal facility, access to Gateway is monitored and controlled with guard security at the front gate. Day One, Two, and Three will be held at Gateway, with classroom presentations and field studies there, but then students will go on field trips to different environmental sites in New York. While on site visits students will conduct a variety of field studies, including air, water, and soil testing, biological assessments, vegetation inventories, birding, tree measurements and more.

Regarding site visits, for example on Day Three students will go to FreshKills Park and Wolfe Pond Park in Staten Island for field studies. On Day Four students will go to Clove Lakes Park and Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in Queens for more field studies, including on boats offshore of Jamaica Bay. On Day Five students will travel to Long Island to visit several national wildlife refuges, and then on to beautiful Fire Island National Seashore, located on the beaches of eastern Long Island where students will camp overnight! (NHEC will provide the sleeping bags, tents, etc. for the camping trip). On Day 6 students will continue their field studies at Fire Island. On Day 7, students will board a chartered boat for a half day trip exploring marine biology issues in the Hudson and East Rivers, plus in NY Harbor. Students will return to Gateway for class work and final presentations that evening, where the Institute will end.

Students will be transported by bus to the site of each day's activities, including to and from Fire Island National Seashore. Students will be accompanied each day by NHEC's trained instructors, as well as U.S. Forest Service, NRCS, and other agency staff. NHEC Instructors will teach the curriculum, with active assistance from FS and NRCS staff. Also present and participating will be "role models", who are environmental professionals (often minority) from every discipline, and are volunteering their time, scientific knowledge, and heritage to help students learn the curriculum, as well as environmental career, scholarship, and internship opportunities.

## APPLICATION PROCESS, SELECTION, AND THE INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIP

**The Institute is open to all students aged 16–19**, and all are welcome to apply, although Latino youth are especially urged to do so, 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 documents for how to apply. Students can also call or write NHEC for application materials, or go to our web page at [www.nheec1.org](http://www.nheec1.org). However, while students can obtain application forms from our web site, you **cannot apply on-line** because you must include documents like your school transcripts. Completed applications must be mailed to NHEC.

**Applicants from across the New York area will be competitively selected** for the Institute scholarship, based on a variety of criteria.

Selection criteria includes: 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 the U.S. Forest Service or Natural Resource Conservation Service; 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 (no more than 2 pages max)**, where applicants describe their qualifications, their interest 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 to the Institute.** Once again, selected students will have all major costs covered by NHEC through the Institute scholarship. 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.

During the Institute students will encounter a diversity of views and experiences, especially from fellow students. This diversity will ensure that they learn as much from each other as from the coursework.

## **CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION**

The Institute will begin on Wednesday, August 14 and end at 8 pm on Tuesday, August 20. There will be approximately 24 students in the NYC Institute. **Following breakfast the Institute will begin at 8:30 am each morning and will continue throughout the day, with breaks for lunch and dinner.** The Institute will operate like school: students must arrive on time; be prepared to participate fully in the classroom and outdoor field activities; be respectful of the Instructors, role models, and fellow students; and follow instructions, especially regarding safety. **There is also coursework and activities in the classroom every evening after dinner until at least 8:30 pm.**

The Institute uses an Environmental STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) curriculum taught by NHEC's skilled Instructors (all are environmental educators). It begins by covering principles in environmental and conservation topics, and then progresses to more advanced concepts as each day builds on the day before. The Institute combines daily classroom instruction with science-based field studies (such as air, water and soil testing) that complements the classroom lessons. Supervised by instructors, **students will also use a variety of professional-grade environmental science equipment** to conduct their field studies. Since a major Institute goal is to expose students to nature, students spend much of their time outdoors in closely supervised field studies in wetlands, forests, streams, forests, beaches, and more.

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 Forest Service, NRCS, as well as from other environmental agencies, organizations, companies, and more—how these jobs are performed in the real world. Students will also explore the many **environmental related majors and programs at colleges/universities** across the U.S., plus learn where these schools are, how to apply, and what you need to know to be admitted. In addition to NHEC's paid Instructors, helping teach the curriculum will be **a variety of Latino/minority "role models"**, and their participation is a vital element of the Institute.

These “role models” are working environmental/natural resource professionals from many different fields— forest rangers, wildlife biologists, foresters, soil scientists, environmental engineers, environmental attorneys, administrators, geologists, archeologists, law enforcement officers, and many more. There will be a minimum of several role models each day at the Institute. Thus, 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 will not only be clear, but believable—“**I made it in this field and so can you**”.

**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 interest in the environment. All our students from past Institutes will tell you that it is truly “7 Days of Learning, A Lifetime of Experience”**

## **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 be occasional emails or phone calls from NHEC that asks you about your progress in school, your GPA, what environmental courses or activities you are pursuing, and more. In return, NHEC will keep you informed of other opportunities for our Institute graduates. This includes information on our annual Student Environmental Conference and Career Fair; our High School Environmental Career Awareness Program; our other national and regional Institutes; and more. We will also keep you posted about environmental jobs, internships, and scholarship opportunities with FS, NRCS, and other environmental employers who partner with NHEC.

## **SAFETY FIRST – ALWAYS**

The Institute is designed to not only be highly educational and fun, but also safe. NHEC has a “safety first” ethic, and safety considerations are paramount for NHEC’s Instructors during the Institute. And, because the Institute is being sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service and NRCS and has their support and involvement, students and parents can be assured NHEC has and will take every precaution to protect the health and safety of students. When students are at national parks we will have full access to NPS’s medical/safety system, and park and law enforcement rangers are nearby whenever students are doing field work.

## **INSTITUTE CODE OF CONDUCT**

**All students must follow the Institute “Code of Conduct”.** This Code is a set of reasonable rules that govern student behavior at the Institute, including with Instructors, role models, and fellow students. NHEC requires appropriate behavior at all times during the Institute and **the Code is definitely enforced**, especially since this is a residential program. All students and their parents must read and sign the Code prior to the Institute, and agree in writing to abide by its terms. Failure to follow the Code can result in a number of penalties, including being dismissed from the Institute and sent home.

Students and parents should also know that when on federal land (such as national parks) students are governed by federal law, and can be prosecuted for any violations of civil and/or criminal violations, should that agency choose to do so.

As you can imagine the Code of Conduct is a vital tool for a group of teens in a residential program. Thus, NHEC—like your school—definitely uses and enforces its Code and students must follow it. **If you have a problem following reasonable rules, then the Institute is not for you and you should not apply.**

## ABOUT THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

One of the key sponsors of the NYC Institute is the Eastern Region of the U.S. Forest Service. The Forest Service is a major, multi-billion agency in the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture tasked with managing America's national forests in a sustainable, multiple-use way. There are 155 forests in our national forest system, plus 20 national grasslands, as well as scientific facilities such as research labs and centers.

The Forest Service's Eastern Region is the most geographically, ecologically, and socially diverse area in the country. It is comprised of 20 states – from Minnesota in the west to Maine in the east, from Michigan, New Hampshire and New York in the north then south to Missouri, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. There are 18 national forests in the Eastern Region.

Unlike Western forests that were carved from virgin territory, Eastern forests were salvaged from overdeveloped lands that were badly damaged due excessive farming, logging, and mining. Once called “the lands nobody wanted”, they are now “the lands everyone wants”; there is high demand for its recreation and natural resource uses. **These 18 national forests have truly become "islands of green in a sea of people."**

With major cities like New York, Boston, Chicago, Milwaukee and others within it, the Eastern Region must serve millions, but especially people of color. As urban interest, influence, and impact grows, the Region is truly the gateway to the Forest Service, and thus to a wide range of opportunities. These include recreation, tourism, hiking, fishing, biking, hunting, and more, plus offering employment, education, internships, and more.

With over 33,000 full and part-time employees (including students) hired each summer, the Forest Service is a great path to a great environmental career, especially if you like being outdoors. **The Forest Service is proud to partner with NHEC, welcomes participants to the NYC Institute, and is eager to hire students from this program.**

## ABOUT THE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is another key sponsor of the NYC Institute. Like the U.S. Forest Service it is a large, multi-billion dollar agency in the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

When people are asked about federal conservation agencies, often mentioned is the National Park Service or Forest Service, and especially their national parks and forests. However – **the reality is that 70% of all the land in the U. S. is privately owned, not public**; everything from the huge farms and ranches out West to the suburban backyards of Long Island. Thus observation stewardship by private landowners is absolutely critical to the environmental health of America.

NRCS is the only federal agency whose environmental mission is to work on private lands. Created by Congress in 1935 to address soil erosion, NRCS has evolved to become a conservation leader for all natural resources, ensuring that private lands are conserved, restored, and made resilient to a range of environmental challenges. NRCS not only tackles familiar challenges like clean water and healthy soil, but works on air pollution, clean energy, climate change, and new science technology. NRCS works with landowners through conservation planning and technical assistance to benefit soil, water, air, plants, and animals, and to help ecosystems remain or become healthy. **NRCS experts help landowners make the best science-based decisions for every natural resource.**

NRCS's 12,000 employees work at field offices in nearly every county in the nation, assisting farmers, ranchers, conservation districts, government agencies, Tribes, environmental non-profits, and many others. NRCS hires students every summer to work at their field offices, helping staff help the environment on private lands across America. **NRCS is proud to partner with NHEC, welcomes applicants to the NYC Institute, and looks forward to hiring students from this program.**

### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL HISPANIC ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL**

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.). With over 5,000 members, **NHEC is the only national Latino environmental and natural resource organization in the country**, and runs programs, like our NYC, CA, and NM Institutes, that furthers our mission.

NHEC seeks to educate and engage the Latino and minority community on environmental and sustainable development issues; encourage Latinos and others to actively work to preserve and protect our environment; provide a national voice for Latinos before federal and other key environmental decision-makers; and assist our community to pursue the many career, educational, program, and policy opportunities in the environment. **Our guiding credo is: "because it's our environment too".**

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION ON NHEC**

Call or write us at:

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P.O. Box 1003  
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Attention: NYC Institute

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

Or visit our website at [www.nheec1.org](http://www.nheec1.org) , especially to see great photos of past Institutes.

For questions, contact the NHEC Programs Coordinator, Juan Rodriguez, at: [jrodriguez@nheec1.org](mailto:jrodriguez@nheec1.org)