

National Hispanic Environmental Council



FACT SHEET

THE 1st ANNUAL WASHINGTON, D.C. MINORITY YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING INSTITUTE “5 Days of Learning, A Lifetime of Experience”

**A Joint Project of the National Park Service, National Capital Region and
the National Hispanic Environmental Council**

August 4–8, 2008 • Washington, D.C.

SUMMARY

The National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC) is accepting applications from Washington area teens, aged 16–18, to attend its upcoming 1st annual “Washington, D.C. Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute”.

The Institute is an intensive, science-based, residential, and highly educational five day environmental program to be held August 4–8, 2008, at several National parks in the Washington, D.C. area operated by the National Park Service.

Using classroom and outdoor settings, **the Institute is designed to help create the environmental leaders and professionals of tomorrow** by educating, engaging, and inspiring youth, especially Latinos/other minorities, on a range of environmental, natural resource, cultural, and historical topics. All of these issue areas are key parts of the mission of the National Park Service. NPS operates 391 parks across the United States and Puerto Rico, including such famous ones as Yellowstone, Everglades, the Grand Canyon, the Statue of Liberty, Gettysburg, the Washington Monument, Martin Luther King Birthplace, El Morro, and more.

The Institute is also designed to give information on the **many different college and career opportunities in the environment**—and to strongly urge students to pursue these careers in the future—especially at the National Park Service. Further, **NPS is seeking talented teens to come work for them, including this summer** and beyond. The Institute is designed to introduce teens to NPS and their great mission, and to identify and begin training those students that may want to work at one of the premier federal environmental agencies in the country.

The Washington Institute is being funded by the National Capital Region of the National Park Service, in conjunction with NHEC, which is the only national Latino environmental and natural resource organization in the country. NPS and NHEC are working closely together on the planning and implementation of this program in Washington, D.C. However, NPS and NHEC are not new to each other—each year, NPS supports NHEC’s

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national “Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute”, held every August in northern New Mexico, as well as our New York City and California Institutes. **The upcoming Washington Institute is a regional version of NHEC’s national Institute in New Mexico.**

Students should note that **if selected, NHEC will provide a scholarship that will cover your major costs** to attend the 5 day Institute, including housing, 3 meals a day, materials, a textbook, science and camping equipment, and more. There is no fee to apply, and only a \$15 registration fee if you are accepted.

DAY – BY – DAY INSTITUTE OVERVIEW

The Institute will be held at several national parks in the Washington, D.C. area, including Rock Creek Park; Anacostia Park—National Capital Parks East; monuments on the Mall, including the Lincoln Memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; Great Falls at George Washington Memorial Parkway; Prince William Forest Park; and Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens.

The Institute is a mix of indoor classroom work coupled with outdoor activities, including supervised trips to the parks listed above as well as field work, including water and soil testing; examining and learning about local plants and animals; exploring the local ecology and natural resources and related issues; and learning about the history and culture of the parks. Students spend a portion of each day both inside and outside.

Day One, Two, and Three will start at the Anacostia Operations Facility, located in Anacostia Park, and accessible by Metro on the Green Line. Students will start each day at 8:30 am at Anacostia with classroom learning and lectures, and then proceed by chartered bus to field trips to the parks, escorted by NHEC’s instructors and NPS staff. Thus, the first three days are like school—students report by 8:30 am, and end the day at 5 pm. Students will visit a different park each day.

On Day Three, students will go to Rock Creek Park and then Great Falls, and that evening continue on to beautiful Prince William Forest Park, south of Washington, where students will stay overnight at the Camp Cabins located there. The cabins are rustic, but have beds and running water, with shower and bathroom facilities close by. Thus, students will go “camping” and be outdoors but will not be in tents.

Students will spend Day Four at Prince William Forest Park, where they will hike and see the park, and continue their ecological field work. Students will stay overnight again at the Camp Cabins at Prince William. On Day Five, the last day of the Institute, students will continue their activities at Prince William, then go by bus to Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, in Washington, D.C.. Students will tour that park and wrap up their classroom and field work, as well as prepare and then give their final presentations. The Institute will end at Kenilworth at 5 pm, and students can either depart for home from Kenilworth, or travel by chartered bus back to the Anacostia Operations Facility and go home from there.

Please note that students will be transported by bus to the site of each day’s activities, always accompanied by NPS staff plus NHEC’s skilled instructors, all of whom have experience with NHEC other Institutes, held in New Mexico, New York City, and in Southern California. NHEC Instructors will teach the curriculum, with active assistance from NPS staff. Also present at the Institute will be “role models”, who are environmental professionals (often minority) from every discipline, and who are volunteering their time, knowledge, and heritage to help students learn the curriculum, as well as about environmental careers, scholarships, and internship opportunities.

APPLICATION PROCESS, SELECTION, AND THE INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIP

The Institute is open to all students aged 16–18, 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 more information on how to apply. Students can also call or write NHEC for application materials, or go to our web page at www.nheec.org. However, while students can obtain application forms from our web site, **you cannot apply on-line**. Completed applications must be mailed to NHEC.

Applicants from across the Washington area 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. students’ academic background, including GPA; 3. ability to show a strong and genuine interest in the environment or related field, especially as a future career—and especially with the National Park Service; 4. proven experience in some environmental activity or job (especially if with NPS); 5. extracurricular and/or community activities; and 6. diversity by age, gender, race, ethnicity; geography, environmental experience, and other factors.

A one page essay is also required, where applicants in their own words describe their qualifications, their interest in the environment, their future career goals (especially if with the National Park Service), 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.**

If selected, students will have all major Institute costs covered by NHEC through a scholarship. NHEC will also waive the \$15 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 Monday, August 4 and end at 5 pm on Friday, August 8. There will be approximately 25 – 30 students in the Institute. Once accepted, students will be mailed materials before the start of the Institute.

The Institute will begin at 8:30 am each morning, and will continue throughout the day, with breaks for lunch. The Institute will operate like school. Students will be expected to arrive on time; to be prepared; to participate fully in the classroom and outdoor field activities; to be respectful of the Instructors, role models, and fellow students; and to follow instructions, especially regarding safety.

The curriculum, to be taught by NHEC’s Instructors (who are skilled environmental educators) will begin by covering basic principles in environmental/conservation topics, and then progress to more advanced concepts, as each day builds on the day before. The Institute combines classroom instruction with science-based field work (such as water and soil testing) that complements the classroom lessons. **Since a major Institute goal is to introduce teens to the National Park Service,** students will spend much of their time outdoors, in closely supervised field activities at the several NPS parks to be visited during the Institute. Students will also be taught in teams—the Institute emphasizes team building and leadership skills, through group challenges and individual responsibility.

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 the NPS staff and other role models, how these jobs are performed in the real world.

Students will also explore the many **environmental and other programs at colleges and universities** across America, plus learn where these schools are, how to apply, and most importantly, what teens need to know to gain admittance to these colleges.

Helping to teach the curriculum **will be many Latino/minority “role models”**, and their participation is a key element of the Institute. These “role models” are working environmental and other types of professionals from many different fields—park rangers, wildlife biologists, environmental engineers, foresters, plant scientists, lawyers, administrators, geologists, firefighters, law enforcement officers, historians, archeologists, and many more. These role models are volunteering to spend time at the Institute to help teach the students. **There will be a variety of 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 the 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 program for mature students** with a deep and genuine interest in the environment. You will have definitely have fun, 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 the National Park Service, 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 “Days of Learning, A Lifetime of Experience”.**

Through supervised field trips to several of NPS’s beautiful national parks, as well as walks through streams, trails, forests, and more, students will experience the excitement of the outdoors. 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.

POST INSTITUTE CONTACT AND FOLLOW-UP WITH STUDENTS

NHEC and our Institute are about building the next generation of 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, such as your progress in school, your GPA, and what you may be doing as to environmental activities or an environmental career. We ask for your cooperation in this process. It will help us, help you, and help 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 our annual environmental Conference and Career Fair; our High School Environmental Career Awareness Program; our Minority Hiking Program; and our other National and Regional Institutes. We will also keep you posted on environmental jobs, internships, and scholarship opportunities, with NPS and other agencies.

SAFETY FIRST – ALWAYS

The Institute is designed to not only be high educational and enjoyable, but also safe. NHEC has a “safety first” ethic, and safety considerations are paramount for NHEC’s Instructors throughout the Institute. And, because the Institute is being co-sponsored by the National Park Service, and has their full support and involvement, students and parents can be assured that NHEC has and will take every precaution to protect the health and safety of students. When students are at national parks, they will have full access to NPS’s medical and safety system, and park and law enforcement rangers and staff will be present whenever students are at the park or doing field work.

INSTITUTE CODE OF CONDUCT

Once accepted into the Institute, **all students must follow the Institute “Code of Conduct”**. This Code is a set of reasonable rules and procedures 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 also be prosecuted for any violations of civil and/or criminal violations, should NPS choose to do so.

The Code of Conduct is a necessary tool for a group of teens in a program like the Institute, especially one that includes students staying overnight and away from home. Thus, NHEC—like your high school—definitely uses and enforces a Code of Conduct, 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 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Most people do not know this, but America created the concept of “national parks”. No national, public parks existed anywhere in the world prior to the United States inventing them. In fact, **national parks have often been called “the best idea America ever had”**.

The idea of preserving intact special national places for public ownership and enjoyment started in 1872, with the creation of Yellowstone National Park. Since then, America—and many countries after us—has been committed to protecting some of our greatest national treasures like the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Redwoods National Park, the Everglades, the Petrified Forest, and the Great Smoky Mountains. Other parks soon followed. Since then, NPS has been one of the premier federal agencies safeguarding our environment and national heritage.

Today, **there are 391 national parks and monuments in our national Park system**, spread all across America, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and out into the Pacific and up to Alaska. They are cared for by nearly 20,000 NPS employees. And the national park system goes beyond natural treasures like the Grand Canyon. It also includes important places to America that celebrate our history, culture, and major events. Some of these famous

sites include the Statue of Liberty; Gettysburg National Battlefield; Independence National Historical Park (the “Liberty Bell”); the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthplace; the birthplaces or homes of many U.S. Presidents; and many more. Regarding NPS’s National Capital Region, there are over 50 national parks, natural areas, historical sites, monuments, and more in the Washington, Maryland and Virginia area. The national parks are as diverse as our nation, and reflect our multicultural heritage.

By attending the Washington, D.C. Institute, you too can help protect our national parks, and maybe even join the proud ranks of the thousands of NPS staff who strive every day to fulfill their extremely valuable mission. It is important, much needed work, and NHEC is pleased to be a part of it as well. We believe that national parks are relevant to us all, belong to us all, and are available to us all. We hope you will join us and NPS in this effort.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL HISPANIC ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

The National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC) is a national, non-profit membership-based organization founded in 1996 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 the Institute, that furthers our mission.

NHEC seeks to educate, unite, 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 actively assist our community to pursue the many career, educational, 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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Or visit our website at www.nheec.org

For more Institute information, contact the NHEC Programs Coordinator, Juan Rodriguez, at:
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