

# National Hispanic Environmental Council



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## FACT SHEET

### THE 1<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MINORITY YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING INSTITUTE “6 Days of Learning, A Lifetime of Experience” July 13–18, 2007

#### In and Around the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

#### SUMMARY

**The National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC) is accepting applications from California teens, aged 16–18, to attend its upcoming 1<sup>st</sup> annual “Southern California Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute”.**

The Institute is an intensive, science-based, residential, and highly educational six day environmental program to be held July 13–18, 2007, at several parks in the Southern California area operated by the National Park Service. These parks include Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and Channel Islands National Park.

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.

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.

**The S. CA Institute is being funded by the California Coastal Conservancy and the Pacific West Region of the National Park Service (NPS)**, in conjunction with NHEC. NHEC 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 new program in S. CA. However, NPS and NHEC are not new to each other—each year, NPS supports NHEC’s national “Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute”, held every August in northern New Mexico, as well as our NYC Institute. **The upcoming S. CA 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 6 day Institute, including transportation, housing, 3 meals a day, materials, a textbook, science equipment, and more. There is no fee to apply, and only a \$15 registration fee if you are accepted.

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## DAY-BY-DAY INSTITUTE OVERVIEW

The Institute is 6 days long, and will be held at several national parks and forests, and state parks, in the Southern California area. In particular, students will be going to sites in and around the Santa Monica National Recreation Area, which is near Camarillo, and to Channel Islands National Park, near Ventura. The majority of the CA Institute training will take place in and around these parks.

Students will be housed and fed at California State University, Channel Islands (CSUCI). This college is the newest addition to the California state university system, and has been in operation as a university for the last 4 years. Students will eat in the school cafeteria, and will reside in the college dormitory buildings, in a “suite” room. A suite has two bedrooms, a bathroom and a living room. There will be two students to each of the bedrooms, for a total of 4 Institute students per suite. Naturally, boys are housed with boys and girls with girls. NHEC Instructors are also housed in the same building, and will be providing constant supervision/monitoring of students while they are in the suites, and to ensure that students follow the Institute’s “Code of Conduct”.

CSUCI is located in a scenic area, near Camarillo, and is just a few miles from the ocean. The campus itself is lovely, with green open spaces, gardens, and old Spanish colonial tile buildings. Just behind the university are scenic hills, with hiking trails and paths that students will also visit.

Day One, Two, and Three of the CA Institute will be held at CSU Channel Islands, with students engaged in a variety of classroom and outdoor learning activities. While students will start each of these days at CSUCI, students will travel by bus on field trips to several nearby sites, including a corporate laboratory, to continue their learning. Day 4 will be spent at Santa Monica National Mountains Recreation Area, on a hike and to a number of locations.

Day 5 will be spent on a field trip to Anacapa Island (a part of Channel Islands National Park), a rocky island 12 miles off the coast that is the habitat of seals, sea lions, dolphins, birds, and many other amazing marine creatures. Students will travel by special chartered ferry to Anacapa, accompanied by NHEC instructors and NPS staff. Day 6 will be spent back at CSUCI, in a variety of classroom and outdoor environmental activities. Students will finish the Institute at CSUCI that day, and will return to their homes that evening, with arrangements for their departure travel overseen by NHEC staff and instructors.

When off-site from CSUCI, students will always be accompanied by NHEC staff and trained Instructors, as well as NPS rangers and role models. Students will be transported by comfortable bus to the site of each day’s activities, including to and from Santa Monica and Channel Islands National Parks. All of NHEC’s instructors have taught at either NHEC’s national Institute in New Mexico, or at our regional NYC Institute. All are skilled environmental educators and environmental professionals.

Also present at the Institute will be “role models” who are environmental professionals (often minority) from every discipline, and who are volunteering their time, technical knowledge, and heritage to help students learn the curriculum, as well as about environmental/natural resource career, scholarship, and internship opportunities.

During the Institute, students will perform a variety of educational activities related to the environment and natural resources. Students will do water and soil testing, biological assessments, and field monitoring. Students will learn about a wide variety of college majors and programs in the environmental/natural resource fields, and the Instructors and role models will be talking/working with students throughout the Institute to help them better determine their future college majors and careers. Students will also hike trails, wade streams, see animals, and experience the beauty of the outdoors. Students will even participate in an environmental justice “mock trial” during the Institute. In summary, the Institute is an intensive but highly educational—and fun-program for students seriously interested in the environment.

## APPLICATION PROCESS, SELECTION, AND THE INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIP

**The Institute is open to all students** aged 16–18, **and who are residents of California**. 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](http://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 California 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 inten-

tions; 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; 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, 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 July 13 and end at 5 pm on July 18. There will be approximately 30 students in the Institute. Once accepted, students will be mailed materials before the start of the 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 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. **There is also coursework and activities in the classroom every evening after dinner till at least 8:30 pm.**

The curriculum, to be taught by NHEC's Instructors 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 that complements the classroom lessons. Students will spend much of their time outdoors, in closely supervised field activities at the several NPS parks and other public lands 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 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, soil 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 and other CA state environmental agencies, 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 beautiful national parks, as well as walks through streams, trails, forests, beaches, 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 390 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. The national parks are as diverse as our nation, and reflect our multicultural heritage.

## **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](http://www.nheec.org)

**For more Institute information, contact the NHEC Programs Coordinator, Juan Rodriguez, at: [jrodriguez@nheec.org](mailto:jrodriguez@nheec.org)**