



March 2011



From the President
Drenda Williams

Spring is in the air and I hope that everyone is doing well and is looking forward to warmer weather. As you are aware, our conference has been postponed to a later date. We have included an article with an update from our planning chair to provide more information on our annual NOPBNRCSE Training Conference.

We are well under way with Organization activities. Since the last eLink we have continued to obtain new members. Even though there is a \$10 late fee, I encourage former and potential members to join at www.nopbnrcse.memberlodge.org The Employee Career Development Committee will soon be assigning mentors for the mentoring program and you don't want to miss out on the opportunity to develop professionally. The Minority Landowner 5th Anniversary Conference allowed for excellent participation in our historically underserved survey. I would like to thank the North Carolina chapter for assisting with this effort. Lastly the Organization in the process of working with the USDA 1890 Liaisons to establish a job shadowing program that will require the assistance of all chapters.

As the year progresses, we will continue to implement programs that address four focus areas: Professional Development, Outreach, Recruitment, and Partnerships. The Executive Board is developing a strategic plan for the next two years and we want your voice to be heard. A member survey will be conducted to collect ideas regarding these four focus areas or any additional suggestions you would like to be considered. Your participation is critical to the success of The Organization and its mission, including the successful implementation of our two-year plan.

We have implemented various communication tools to keep everyone informed; however, there are some Life members who have inactive e-mail addresses. The Membership Committee will compile a list of those individuals so that chapters can help identify a correct e-mail address.

If you ever need to reach me, I am a member of the National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees [Facebook page](#) or you can email me at drenda@yahoo.com. I look forward to hearing from everyone as I always have an open door policy.

Sincerely,

Drenda Williams
President NOPBNRCSE



Update: NOPBNRCSE Conference Postponed

Vivian Dickson

The National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees' annual conference has been postponed due to budget considerations. Chief Dave White has requested that employee organizations postpone their annual conferences until later this fiscal year because NRCS has yet to receive its fiscal year 2011 budget. In addition, the federal government is operating under a continued resolution as Congress wrestles with passing budgets for federal departments, including USDA.

After several discussions with NRCS leadership, The Organization's Executive Board felt it was in the best interest of our members to postpone the conference until the agency obtains its budget for the remainder of fiscal year 2011.

This was not an easy decision for the Executive Board. Members of the Executive Board and the Conference Planning Committee have expressed their regrets for any inconvenience a postponement may have caused our members, supporters, speakers and conference participants. We have been proactive and diligent in ensuring that the next planned conference will stay on track. We have contacted speakers and presenters regarding the next steps. We also have made every effort to contact Organization members to inform them of our progress regarding our upcoming conference.

The Executive Board will keep all members informed as we work toward establishing a new date for this year's conference. We will work proactively and professionally with agency leadership as we wait for a budget resolution.

Chief Dave White said in a letter to all the employee organizations that he supports professional development and training. He said he is looking forward to participating in all planned training conferences once Congress has passed USDA's budget for fiscal year 2011.

The President and Executive Board appreciate your patience and understanding in this unfortunate situation. Please visit our Web site at www.nopbnrcse.org and look out for our E-Link for the latest information.

The ORG needs your help!

In order for The Organization to be successful, we need your support. We are asking for members to donate their time and expertise and join one of our many committees. All paid members who wish to serve on a committee can submit their contact information and special interest to Katura Wright, Correspondence Secretary. She can be reached at Katura.wright@vt.usda.gov.

Website Accessible to All!

The newly designed Organization website is available to **everyone** to get the latest updates on the training conference, news, events/activities and more. In addition, it features an exclusive "members only" page for access to bylaws and insider information specific to The Organization. All persons who have paid their 2011 membership dues will be able to access the members only page. Go online and visit www.nopbnrcse.org to learn more!

Coming Soon: NOPBNRCSE Mentoring Program

The Organization will be launching a mentoring program for members to provide and receive professional and personal guidance. In order to ensure success of the program, we need everyone to update their profile information to include Years of Service and GS level. This will allow the Employee Career and Development Committee to match each protégée with an experienced member effectively. Please update your profile with this information no later than April 8, 2011.

Texas Families Fund Scholarships for Prairie View A&M University Students

By Tom Jackson, President, Minnesota Chapter

Three Texas families of deceased Life Member Greg Payne are making a difference in the lives of students as they pursue their goals at Prairie View A&M University in Texas.

The Payne, Woodard, and Green families of Brazoria, Texas will award \$1,000 scholarships to the following six freshmen and sophomores at Prairie View for the 2010-11 school year: Jordan S. Maclin, Freshman, Wichita Falls, TX; Jarrett O. Jenkins, Freshman, Houston, TX; Daina C. Pelham, Sophomore, Humble, TX; Conlee P.H. Fry, Freshman, Hockley, TX; Robert W. McClennon, Jr., Freshman, Prairie View, TX and Theo L. Reed, Freshman, Montgomery, TX

The three families have funded scholarships for more than 29 students majoring in agriculture and natural resources over the past six years. These competitive scholarships were awarded to students in the name and memory of the Greg Payne family's deceased brother, nephew, and cousin. The scholarship is named for Payne, a Prairie View A&M University graduate. He was an active member of the Minnesota Chapter at the time of his death.

The Greg Payne Agriculture and Natural Resources scholarships are available to students of all races and gender attending Prairie View. The scholarships are a continuing memorial on behalf of his surviving family members and a constant reminder of the value they and Greg placed on helping young people with limited resources acquire a much-needed college education.

Greg, a Brazoria native, worked for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Illinois and Minnesota, as well as NRCS' National Headquarters in Washington, DC. At the time of his untimely death at age of 33, Greg was employed as an agricultural economist with NRCS's state office in St. Paul, Minnesota. He was also actively working on his PhD in Human Resource Development from the University of Illinois.

Scholarship applications are coordinated and handled on behalf of the families through a partnership arrangement with the Minnesota Chapter.

For more information on these annually awarded Greg Payne scholarships, please contact the MN Chapter at mn.nopbnrcse@gmail.com.



Understanding Your Past to Shape Your Future

Organization Historian Keith Williams is working with Past Presidents to get their collective thoughts on The Organization. Past Presidents will be asked to give their perspective on NOPBNRCSE under their leadership and thoughts on the state of The Organization today. They will also provide their feedback on actions necessary to continue to make the Organization successful.

Once completed, all stories will be posted on the Organization's website and ultimately compiled into a brochure for multiple uses.

Organization Hopes to Document All Black SCS/NRCS "Firsts"

To celebrate Black History Month, the Minnesota Chapter of The Organization took on an ambitious and meaningful project to document the historical accomplishments of Black employees within the Soil Conservation Service/Natural Resource Conservation Service. The chapter is working with the NOPBNRCSE Executive Board and sister chapters to document the "first" Black male and female SCS/NRCS employees to hold key technical and leadership positions in every state, Region, Technical Center, Soils Lab, and National Headquarters.

MN chapter members agree that there are many recently retired and present NRCS employees who should be recognized as pioneers; their work is too important to go unnoticed. Without their pioneering efforts and sacrifices, many of the opportunities Black employees are afforded today would not be available.

Many names and positions of pioneering SCS employees have already been documented. This list contains employees who have served in remote locations far from their hometowns, including the following: Jim Tatum who traveled from Mississippi to serve as Work Unit Conservationist (now DC) and later as Area Conservationist (AC) in New Mexico; Jackie Thibodeaux-Horne who served as a Soil Conservationist (SC) trainee in Thief River Falls, MN; Garland Lipscomb who left Virginia to take his first federal job offer as a Soil Scientist in Montana; and Kasey Taylor who served as a SC trainee in Nebraska.

Findings show that many current employees are the first Blacks to serve SCS/NRCS in a key technical or managerial position. The Organization wants to highlight, document, and celebrate **you** and the excellent job you are doing and the contribution you are making to USDA and our nation's soil, water, air, plant, and animal natural resources.

The objective, consistent with that of Dr. Carter G. Woodson's dream, is to simply raise the awareness to ALL of the significant historical and present accomplishments Black USDA employees have and are making to our country's world-class natural resources conservation program. We were then and are still working side-by-side with employees of all races, creeds, and colors!

The chapter would like to thank those who have already provided much valuable information; however, it is asking that everyone continue contributing as much historical information as possible. If you know of recently retired employees, please contact them and ask for additional Black employee historical information. This is a chance for us to write our own role in history within SCS/NRCS.

Please send any historical information you have to william61hunt@aol.com or snail mail it to:

MN Chapter NOPBNRCSE, P.O. Box 251216, Woodbury, MN 55125-6216

