

Newsletter for the San Luis Obispo / Central Coast Branch • March 2008

MARCH 2008 MEETING:

Water Banking Feasibility in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin

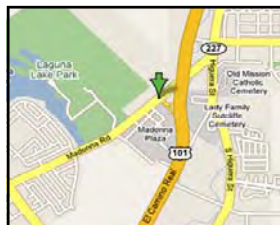
At our March meeting you will have an opportunity to learn about San Luis Obispo County's efforts to investigate water banking in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin as an option for improving the reliability of water resources on a local and regional basis.

Courtney Howard, Water Resources Engineer for the SLO County Public Works Department, will be discussing the process of assessing the groundwater basin as a candidate for water banking, challenges associated with the potential implementation of a water banking project, and how water banking could fit into the future water resources picture for the Central Coast. Please join us on March 20th at the Madonna Inn in San Luis Obispo for this informative presentation.

MARCH 2008 MEETING

LOCATION:

Madonna Inn
100 Madonna Road
San Luis Obispo, CA



DATE & TIME:

Thursday, March 20st
12:00 pm (Noon)

MENU:

Food will be your choice of fresh roasted, center cut loin of pork (served with traditional herb dressing, whipped potatoes, vegetables, and old fashioned pork gravy), a generous portion of fresh boneless chicken breast (stuffed with our special wild rice dressing, served with whipped potatoes, vegetables, and presented with a light Vermouth sauce), or vegetarian pasta with meatless marinara sauce. Entrees are served with green salad, homemade dinner rolls, along with coffee, iced tea, or milk. All choices come with carrot cake for dessert.

RESERVATIONS:

Please sign up by 1:00 pm Friday, March 14th, at the Branch web site www.ASCESLO.org. For questions, contact Erin Westmoreland at (805)544-7407 or by email at erinw@cannonassoc.com. The cost is \$20 for members or guests and \$10 for student members.

PRESIDENTS PERSPECTIVE:

Is Engineering a Commodity Profession?

In January, we held the CEO Forum to discuss the current conditions of the engineering profession from the viewpoint of the private sector. Several key discussions were brought forth during this meeting and unfortunately we did not have enough time to really expand on the ideas. I did want to expand on one of the discussion items, that is commoditization of the engineering profession. Is the Engineering Profession becoming a commodity profession?

First, what does commoditization really mean? It means to render (a good or service) widely available and interchangeable with one provided by another company. We can look at this definition through two viewpoints. First, can other non-engineering professions or individuals do the work that engineers do? The quick answer to this is sure. I'm sure there are unlicensed companies/individuals that can "do engineering". However, the ethical answer is no. Engineers subscribe to an ethical responsibility to protect the health and welfare of the public at large. We need to remember this important factor. All of us as Engineers have this obligation and we must not take it lightly.

The second viewpoint relates back to what I feel is the heart of why, as engineers, we feel our profession is becoming more of a commodity item than a profession. Good engineers are truly hard to come by. Ethically responsible, hard working, technically sound engineering firms are also very hard to come by. As a profession as a whole, we need to emphasize the importance of choosing firms for the work that we do based on our qualifications to perform the work in a responsible and technically sound manner. This includes understanding the scope of work, past experience, and ability to provide a quality and sound product. More often than not, unfortunately the award of these projects is based solely on the absolute lowest price that an engineering firm will throw at the job. This makes our profession a commodity.

In the consulting profession, we are all trying to position ourselves to look the best. Showing a low dollar figure, typically overshadows the rest of the information provided in a proposal regardless if the proposal meets the needs of the project or not. On the public side, the engineering profession has to meet the objectives of the elected officials that represent the public at large. The engineers are being told to keep the costs down so in-turn the monthly rates to the customers stay low. So where does the engineering profession step in and say, enough is enough? The work that we do is not a commodity. If we don't stand up for the profession as a whole now, we will continue to move down

MEET THE MEMBER - CHRISTOPHER FUGITT



It is a pleasure to introduce this month's featured ASCE Member, Christopher Fugitt PE. Christopher currently lives in Arroyo Grande and works as a project engineer for Tetra Tech. He is married to his wife Joanie and they have two daughters, Sedona (3) and Marissa (1). He enjoys watching Angels baseball, but his true passion lies with Computer Aided Drafting (CAD).

Christopher has truly embraced the technological aspects of the civil engineering field. Only two years after being introduced to the CAD program

Civil 3D, he has already become a leading expert. If you have any interest in learning more about Civil 3D, it's worth checking out his website "Civil 3D Reminders" at <http://civil-3d.blogspot.com/>. Along with running his own website you can find Christopher's posts across the internet as he increases the spread of CAD knowledge by selflessly helping complete strangers with their problems.

Christopher was born in Fontana but spent the majority of his childhood in Irvine. At the age of 18 he headed to San Luis Obispo to a little technical college known as Cal Poly. After graduating in '96 he began work at C.A. Rasmussen, a General Engineering Contractor. During this time his work rotated between Bakersfield, Boron and Lancaster. While in Boron, he worked with a crew moving dirt from a landslide in a mine. Amazingly enough, while working 10hrs a day Christopher and his crew ended up moving more dirt (over 500,000 tons per week) than the actual

mine which was in operation 24hrs a day.

The attraction back to SLO was too great and after 4.5 years with C.A. Rasmussen, Christopher found a job with the County of SLO, Design Division. In the Design Division he mainly oversaw bridge construction consultants, for projects such as the Las Palitas Bridge outside Santa Margarita. He also designed the Turri Rd Bridge off of Los Osos Valley Road. During his four and a half years of work with the County he took his PE and became one of the elite few to pass it completely on his first attempt.

Now in Arroyo Grande, Christopher has been working as a project engineer for Tetra Tech for 4+ years. The Tetra Tech office that Christopher works in primarily focuses on military, subdivisions, and municipalities. For the last four years he has been working on C-17 Globemaster related infrastructure projects at Travis Air Force Base. The projects include parking lots, taxiways, roads, and general buildings. While at Tetra Tech he was introduced to the new Civil Engineering CAD software known as "Civil 3-D"

"Bad engineering work has been going on with or without a computer. Computers just allow you to make mistakes faster." This is why Christopher believes it is important for engineers to know what the software is doing. "Learn what it can do, its limitations, and its benefits." Christopher hopes to continue helping out his fellow CAD'ers in the future by teaching at an AUGI CAD Camp.

When asked his feelings on outsourcing and its effect on those that draft in the U.S. he responded, "Civil 3D will dwarf the issue of outsourcing. Civil 3D allows engineers to do the design work, and then annotates it." He believes this will drastically reduce CAD work.

~ Daniel Parker-King

PRESIDENTS PERSPECTIVE (CONT)

this path and it will become harder and harder to recover from the public persona that anyone can be an engineer, that we are not professionals, and engineers are a commodity.

What steps can we make to ensure that this does not happen? We must hit this from two angles. The first is from the private side. Private consultants must stand together and continue to provide quality products, stay technically qualified to perform the work and not undercut our services. Yes, from time to time, we need to "sharpen our pencils" and make sure that we are working efficiently, however, this does not mean give our services away. The second angle is from the public side. We need to educate those making the political decisions that the recommendations to

award contracts should be based on the engineering's firm to perform the services that will provide the agency with a sound project. And based on this understanding of the scope of work, a reasonable fee was negotiated. This means, moving towards basing all proposals solely on qualifications first, then negotiate a price to complete the work.

We work hard to obtain a professional engineering license and we don't take our ethical responsibilities lightly. We need to continue to work hard to stay technically sound and we need to work even harder at ensuring that our profession is just that, professional. As engineers, we need to stand together to ensure that we do not become a commodity service.

~ Kari Wagner

REQUEST FOR ASCE SAN LUIS OBISPO BRANCH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM DONATION

Dear Civil Engineering Professional:

The civil engineering students who attend California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo are some the brightest students across the nation. They are the future of our profession and the American Society of Civil Engineers. They are also the number one recruiting resource for all local engineering firms. ASCE-San Luis Obispo Chapter is dedicated to assisting those students who have joined the student Cal Poly chapter of ASCE, the Society of Civil Engineers (SCE). Our mentoring and support is valuable to each student's success in their journey through school and their venture into the working world. Therefore, ASCE-SLO is pleased to continue our Annual Scholarship Program, which was initiated in 2006, to recognize outstanding, accomplished SCE students.

Last spring, ASCE-SLO awarded \$1,500 scholarships to two SCE students who portrayed excellent leadership qualities and other desired attributes in various aspects of school and the community. ASCE-SLO has dedicated funds to continue this scholarship program this year. However, we need the support of our local engineering community to help this program grow. Your donation would be greatly appreciated by our local ASCE and SCE chapters.

Our chapter is dedicated to helping our local students become successful in the civil engineering field. Please assist ASCE-SLO by making a tax-deductible donation to our scholarship fund by March 9, 2008. Please make your check payable to ASCE-SLO and send your donation to:

San Luis Obispo County Public Works
c/o Courtney Howard
County Government Center, Room 207
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

Again, your donation is greatly appreciated and will be recognized by our local ASCE and SCE chapters. If you have any questions, please contact me at (805) 781-1016.

Sincerely,

Courtney Howard, P.E.
2007-08 President-Elect
American Society of Civil Engineers
San Luis Obispo Chapter

MEMBER CORNER

Do you know of a Branch member's recent accomplishments worthy of mentioning in next month's newsletter? If so, contact Syllas Cranor at (805) 781-5260 or e-mail at scrantor@co.slo.ca.us.

OTHER LOCAL EVENTS

If you have an event you would like posted at no cost, contact Syllas Cranor at 781-5260 or at scrantor@co.slo.ca.us.

The local chapter of the **American Public Works Association** meets on the second Wednesday of the month, every other month. For details, contact Jay Walter at jwalter@slocity.org.

The Central Coast Branch of the **Institute of Transportation Engineers** holds monthly meetings throughout the tri-county area. Contact Richard Marshall at 781-5252 or rmarshall@co.slo.ca.us for details.

The Central Coast Branch of the **California Land Surveyors Association** usually meets the second Thursday of each month. Contact Rochelle Vierra at 549-3461 or Rochelle_Vierra@dot.ca.gov for more information.

Cal Poly's **Society of Civil Engineers (SCE)** welcomes local professionals to its regular meetings held alternate Wednesdays at 7:00 pm in Room 13-118. For further information, contact Kari Wagner (kariw@WallaceGroup.us) or Jeff Spannbaauer (jeffs@cannonassoc.com).

The Central Coast Chapter of the **International Code Council** meets the first Thursday of the month at Margie's Dinner. Contact Sylvia Aldana at 781-4671 or saldana@co.slo.ca.us for information.

The **American Institute of Architects** meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month at Vista Grande Restaurant (Cal Poly). For information, call Jeff Emrick at 549-8658.

Engineers Without Borders meets on the second Wednesday of each month at Noon. For further information, contact Natalie Ergish at 547-5605 or Secretary@ewb-slo.org.

The **Central Coast Geological Society** meets every second Tuesday. For information, contact Lou Blanck at 542-4626.

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