

Newsletter for the San Luis Obispo / Central Coast Branch • August 2009

AUGUST 2009 MEETING:
*Current Issues with the California
 Department of Public Health*

TOPIC:

This month, Mr. Kurt Souza from the California Department of Public Health will be here to discuss the current issues his Department faces, including how the reduced State budget impacts his Department's ability to support water purveyors' efforts to deliver safe drinking water to consumers.

LOCATION:

Madonna Inn
 100 Madonna Road
 San Luis Obispo, CA



DATE & TIME:

Thursday, August 20th
 12:00 pm (Noon)

MENU:

Food will be your choice of tender slices of roast sirloin of beef (served with whipped potatoes and vegetables, served au jus), 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 a dessert from the bakery.

RESERVATIONS:

Please sign up by 1:00 p.m. Friday, May 14th, at the Branch web site (www.ASCESLO.org). Please attend the luncheon if you sign-up – some restaurants will charge the Branch for every seat we reserve, regardless of the actual attendance. If you have specific dietary restrictions or have questions, please contact Tom Zehnder at (805) 544-4011 or by email at TomZ@wallacegroup.us. The cost is \$25 for members or guests and \$10 for student members.

2009 - 2010 ASCE SLO OFFICER ELECTIONS

It's time to vote for next year's ASCE Branch officers. All members on the Branch roster are eligible to vote and should soon receive an electronic ballot via email. If you do not receive your ballot, please contact the Branch Webmaster. Alternatively, you may clip the adjacent ballot and mail your vote to the current Secretary, Valerie Dawe.

Use this insert if you prefer to vote by mail, rather than electronically.

Your Name: _____

President Rob Down

Elect Write-in _____

Vice Andrew Descary

President Write-in _____

Secretary Tom Zehnder

Write-in _____

Treasurer Liz Moody

Write-in _____

Newsletter Sylas Cranor

Editor Write-in _____

Assistant Editor Write-in _____

Historian Valerie Dawe

Write-in _____

Membership Steve Tanaka

Chair Write-in _____

Public Relations Carolyn Berg

Coordinator Write-in _____

Webmaster: Dan Parker-King

Write-in _____

Clip the ballot and mail to Valerie Dawe, 612 Clarion Court, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401. Include your name on the ballot. Your ballot must be received by September 16, 2009.

PRESIDENTS PERSPECTIVE: *Definitely French Toast*

When I go out for breakfast, I am always torn between hash browns and French Toast. It's either eggs, bacon and French Toast or eggs, bacon and hash browns. And what kind of pig orders the second choice as a side, right? Thankfully, my husband is usually kind enough to offer me a bite of his hash browns, and this is satisfactory, so I go for the French Toast. I do have to ask quickly though, before they are smothered in ketchup. In Civil Engineering, we are constantly faced with much more complex trade-offs and competing interests. Take

the three E's of sustainability - Economic Vitality, Equal Opportunity, and Environmental Quality – many of our challenges are related to balancing these three E's, the first and last in particular.

With the projects/policies that are typically challenged, I tend to think there are two political parties in our area – the Environmental Party and the Private Property Rights Party

(Continued on page 3)

MEET THE MEMBER - KENT OLSEN

This month we have an opportunity to meet Kent Olsen, who was recently elected a Life Member of ASCE. Kent and I sat down to discuss his career and perspective on the civil engineering industry.

Kent was born and raised in Modesto. He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1967 with a BS in Civil Engineering. It was at Berkeley that Kent first became involved with ASCE as a student chapter member. He recalls meeting practicing engineers in industry as a nice way to focus his area of interest. His involvement with ASCE continued and included membership on transportation committee meetings. Kent recognizes the quality contacts with both clients and employers that were made during committee assignments.

Kent's first career position was with the Southern Pacific Railroad in their executive training program. Kent was in charge of construction projects in Utah, Southern California, Oregon and Texas. During this period, Kent attended Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and received a MS in Civil Engineering specializing in transportation planning. Kent continued working in the railroad industry for both Bechtel (where he worked on a high speed rail project between Washington, D.C. and Boston) and Conrail (a quasi-government start-up organization formed to take over six bankrupt East Coast Railroads).

In light of his extensive railroad industry experience, I asked Kent about the prospect of high-speed rail in California. In short, Kent is enthusiastic, observing that planes and cars simply won't suffice in connecting California's major cities in a sustainable manner. He sees high-speed rail as the future of California. Kent and I discussed personal experiences over-



seas with advanced rail systems in France and Japan and Kent recalls a "beautiful system" in France with train service that is on time to the nearest minute.

Kent joined Fluor Corporation and spent 3 years in the Outback of Australia on an extended assignment – he was able to move there with his family. Upon return to the U.S., Kent headed up several rail and transit projects in Southern California, Detroit, Cleveland and New York. He eventually became general manager of the transportation division at Fluor. Kent worked on a project related to private development of State Route 125 in San Diego for nearly a decade. Through this project, Kent transferred to Parsons Brinckerhoff and became president of the company set to develop the toll road. It took eight years to overcome local opposition and get environmental approval for the project. The toll road was finally opened in 2007.

Since leaving the toll road development company, Kent has continued to work for Parsons Brinckerhoff in charge of several consulting assignments related to public private partnerships and development of toll roads and tolled express lanes. These assignments have been in Texas, Hawaii, Utah, Dubai, Mumbai, and Johannesburg, as well as California.

I asked Kent if he has any advice for young engineers just entering the profession. He focused on developing written and oral communication skills. He personally improved his own writing skills while preparing his master's thesis. In addition, he joined Toastmasters, which has contributed to developing his oral communication skills. Kent remarked at the importance of both written and oral communication for winning work and presenting work.

Kent recently moved to Nipomo with his wife, Jill. In their 45 years of marriage, they have moved 36 times. Kent has previous experience on the Central Coast including annual training at Camp Roberts for his six years with the Army Reserve and supervising a work crew repairing storm damage to the Southern Pacific tracks some years later. Kent has family in the area, including grandchildren, and is excited to settle into the Central Coast.

Kent looks forward to meeting with the local chapter members; he is just waiting for the month that he is in town on the same day of your meeting. Keep an eye for Kent at one of the upcoming Chapter meetings.

~ Jim Hanson

YOUNGER MEMBER FORUM CORNER

Would you like a chance to network with our southern California colleagues, eat delicious food, and play craps at the Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch Younger Member Forum's general meeting and casino night?

Where? Bonaventure Brewing Company
404 S. Figueroa, Ste. 418A, Los Angeles

When? Friday, August 21, 2009, 6 p.m. - 12 p.m.

Contact? Carolyn Berg
(949) 422-3616 or ckberg2@gmail.com

MEMBERS CORNER

Congratulations to ASCE SLO Branch Members **Dan Parker-King & Sean Brown** for recently achieving their professional engineering licenses. Both Dan and Sean are civil engineers at RRM Design Group in the San Luis Obispo office.

PRESIDENT PERSPECTIVE (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

rather than the democrat and republican parties. But as we continue to enhance our quality of life and our population grows, how do we accommodate ourselves without negatively impacting the environment and while still maintaining economic vitality? Admittedly, I am not a fan of conflict. I think those that are involved with the implementation of a particular project or policy, and represent the Environmental and Private Property Rights parties should be required to spend a day or two in Los Angeles before engaging in their debates. And they should all drive separate.

Successful management of trade-offs and competing interests can mean the difference between being a good engineer and a great one – but that management involves willingness from other project participants as well. One outstanding example of a balanced project developed with willing participants is the retrofit and development plan for the historic Wineman building in downtown San Luis Obispo. “The refurbished Wineman will have 48 apartments on the second and third floors. Each of the 230-square-foot efficiency units will have a kitchenette and a small bathroom. Twenty-two of the units are low-income and available for those earning a maximum annual income of \$39,650. Eight will be very-low-income, or affordable to those earning a maximum annual income of \$24,800. The rest will be available at market rate, which is expected to be affordable to moderate-income tenants, or those who have a maximum annual income of \$59,450. The building also features more than 8,500 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor.” (San Luis Obispo Tribune, August 4, 2009) This project provides affordable housing close to employment and shopping centers, a key principle of strategic growth, and provides commercial use for economic vitality. The range of income criteria also allows for some equal opportunity for the disadvantaged, although an unfortunate trade-off comes with the economic vitality for the owner in implementing the project and the size of the homes.

A recent Christian Science Monitor article put our utilization of the earth’s resources this way: “We must live off the interest without digging in to its principle.” The challenge lies in agreeing on the quantity of principle versus the quantity of interest. How much water can we use year to year with a finite quantity available that fluctuates year to year? How much pollution can we generate and still rely on the atmosphere to handle it? How much can we manufacture and create and still have room to store? How do we encourage society to embrace “green” when green costs more? This really starts to bring the breakfast decision into perspective, doesn’t it? If only all our decisions were so inconsequential.

~ Courtney Howard

LEGISLATIVE TRAINING

Our nation, our state, and, subsequently, our local governments are facing budgetary issues on top of the many other challenges they face on a daily basis. Unfortunately, there are few engineers in politics and as such, the importance on reasonable regulations, infrastructure funding, and so many other aspects that ultimately affect our profession gets lost in the woodwork. You might be thinking, “What can I do? I’m only one person and I don’t even know that much about politics.” Or you might consider leaving the political issues to others. Well don’t.

ASCE needs **YOU**. Our profession needs **YOU**. Each of us must voice our opinions in order to stress the importance on engineering issues and ways to resolve them. The Los Angeles ASCE Section offers a legislative training, “Workshop Empowering Engineering Advocates”, to help you better understand the legislative process, current civil engineering issues, and how **YOU**, as an individual, can ensure that our profession is heard. Contact Jeff Girard at (818) 808-7326 to reserve a seat at the training.

What? Workshop Empowering Engineering Advocates
Where? Omni Los Angeles Hotel at California Plaza
251 Olive St., Los Angeles (carpooling is an option!)
When? Saturday, August 29, 2009, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

For more information on this workshop or legislative activities in general, please contact Carolyn Berg at (949) 422-3616 or ckberg2@gmail.com.

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED FOR MANUAL 45!

www.ASCE.org/m45

ASCE is improving Manual No. 45, How to Work Effectively With Consulting Engineers, which provides guidance on procuring engineering services for a quality project. We need your help to obtain the most accurate information on compensation for engineering services to make this next edition of Manual 45 more valuable than ever. It is critical that we obtain a broad response of actual project data. We are asking principals and project managers to submit one survey per office. The survey is available at www.asce.org/m45. We request that you pass this announcement on to your colleagues for their use as well. The survey is completely confidential and only ASCE staff will have access to individual survey responses and contact information. Each respondent will be entered into a drawing for an iPod nano. If you have any questions or want information on alternate submission methods, you may call Becky Waldrup, Manager, Professional Practice at 800-548-2723, ext. 6281 or send an email to rwaldrup@asce.org.

Thanks for your help! Every response helps make this publication better.

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