

State News for NSPE Members

Member Spotlight: Zia Yasrobi, P.E.

Owner, Y2 Consultants, Jackson



Zia Yasrobi, P.E., came to Jackson in 1978 and decided to call it home. After working for 20 years at another area engineering firm, he and his wife, Brenda Younkin, started Y2 Consultants. The certified woman-owned small business specializes in engineering, natural resources management, GIS, landscape architecture, land surveying, and land planning.

Between two offices in Jackson and Cheyenne, Y2 has 42 full-time staff. That includes nine PEs, two dual-licensed PE/LSs, one LS, one RLA, several planners, eight EITs, several natural resource management professionals, and a few engineering and survey technicians.

At any given time, Y2 has over 100 active projects. Among the firm's current projects are an IDIQ contract with Wyoming State Parks, intersection design projects with City of Cheyenne, a fire station in Teton County, a major addition to Teton Pines Country Club, land use plans for 11 counties in Wyoming and Colorado, and development planning, platting, design, and construction management work for Jackson's exclusive residences at Riva Ridge. There's also a study of the Middle Big Horn Watershed that's being finalized and a planning study for bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the Cokeville area, about 120 miles south of Jackson.

You're celebrating the 10th anniversary of Y2 Consultants this year. How did it all get started?

After being in engineering field in Wyoming and being a partner in another engineering firm for a good share of that, my wife and I started Y2 Consultants about 11 years ago. It started as me full time and my wife one-quarter time, as she had a high-level job at Teton Science School. It was really a no brainer for me. I have really never been very good at being a mere employee because it is very limiting and does not allow you to pursue new ideas because there is always risk involved. If we are the owners, it is our risk or our reward.

You recently acquired a Cheyenne-based firm that specializes in LiDAR data collection, digital imaging, and other services, and over the years Y2 Consultants has grown to 42 full-time staff. To what do you attribute that growth and success?

I have always wanted to be able to deliver "The Whole Package of Goods" under one roof. For the first five years, we were an engineering and natural resources firm. Then we acquired Pierson Land Works and added surveying, planning, GIS, and landscape architecture. Then we wanted to have a strong presence in Cheyenne, so we acquired Western Research and Development, which has always been a well-respected firm, to add to our locations and bolster our Microstation capabilities.

How has the pandemic affected your business?

It took a while to get used to the new norm but all in all, we have seen an uptick in business if anything. We started with a social distancing regiment that included limited number of staff in the same room with minimum six-foot separation, and we made all client meetings virtual. After COVID-19 started to spread faster, we required *all* staff to work remotely and closed our offices for two weeks. Then we opened the offices with a social distancing protocol and, in addition, we require everyone to wear a mask.

Y2 Consultants takes an active role not only in the Jackson community, but also the region. Why is that participation important to you and the firm?

We feel like we have to be an active part of the communities that we work in. We not only gain clients, but we also create partnerships, which is very important to both Brenda and me. We are a big supporter of the 4H program. We support Habitat for Humanity by providing engineering services at no charge, and we also participate in the work details. We belong to Cattleman's Associations in several states and support our local Lions Club and Elks club by donations and participation. We sponsor scholarships at our high school and at the University of Wyoming. The list is long, but these are some examples.

You're also active in WySPE and NSPE as a member of the NSPE Board of Directors and the House of Delegates, representing the Southwest Region.

Why have you decided to put this high priority on your membership and involvement in the Society?

One has to be in charge of his own destiny. If I don't get involved and help make changes for the better, I have to be willing to accept whatever is being handed to me.

Agreement Reached on Uranium Regulation

Gov. Mark Gordon praised a memorandum of understanding between the Environmental Protection Agency and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that clarifies what each agency is responsible for in overseeing the restoration and maintenance of uranium mine sites, according to the [Casper Star Tribune](#). Sen. John Barrasso called the agreement “a major win for uranium production in Wyoming.” Others say the agreement will put scarce groundwater resources at risk.

Wyoming leads the country in uranium production, the *Star Tribune* reports, but that production has hit a low point because nuclear power companies have turned to cheaper international markets.

Report: Job Opportunities in Mine Clean Ups

Wyoming and other western states that are economically struggling due to the declining coal industry, may find some help in reclamation projects, according to the Western Organization of Resource Councils. A WORC [report](#) estimates that the workforce needed to complete surface mine reclamation is between 4,893 and 9,786 job-years in Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming. Much of this work could be completed within a relatively quick timeframe, both during mining and after closure. Thus, each year of reclamation will require thousands of workers.

“There is no one simple answer to these myriad impacts but reclamation provides one of the few, immediately available job opportunities for local workers,” the report says, “and should be seen as one part of a proactive response to changing conditions in coal country.”

Reclamation, whether of surface or underground mines, comes with risks, of course. Five years ago, a mine cleanup project in Colorado [went wrong](#), resulting in a spill of more than three million gallons of untreated wastewater and toxins into the Animas River. The incident sparked NSPE to push for more safeguards and greater attention to the [importance of licensure](#). Immediately following news of the spill, NSPE urged the EPA and all federal agencies to review their existing requirements and practices pertaining to the practice of engineering.

Collaboration Aims for Energy Solutions

Representatives from the governor's Office, the University of Wyoming School of Energy Resources, and the Wyoming Energy Authority are working with MIT faculty and researchers to find ways of boosting Wyoming's energy economy while lowering carbon dioxide emissions, reports the [Cowboy State Daily](#). Two dozen participants from Wyoming and MIT discussed the potential of carbon capture technology, hydrogen, and renewable energy; using coal for materials and advanced manufacturing; climate policy; and community adaptation to a changing energy marketplace, according to the article. The event was convened by the [MIT Environmental Solutions Initiative](#) as part of a program that works with US regions to help further initiatives that are both climate-friendly and economically just.

At Virtual PECon, NTSB Chair Discusses Florida Bridge Collapse

In a session on August 5, National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Robert Sumwalt III explained the role of the NTSB and the agency's investigation and [report](#) on the deadly pedestrian bridge collapse at Florida International University in Miami.



In March 2018, a pedestrian bridge under construction at FIU collapsed—claiming six lives. Despite evidence of severe cracking, the engineer of record insisted that the cracking did not pose a safety problem, according to the NTSB report. The university wanted to enhance pedestrian safety by constructing the bridge over a multilane highway that had been the scene of a pedestrian fatality. It would also serve as a unique gathering place for students, faculty, and university visitors.

“We all know that cracking in concrete is going to happen. That’s acceptable. But in this case, we saw structural cracks that were 40 times larger than is typically acceptable,” Sumwalt stated. The bridge was designed using an “accelerated bridge construction” design method.

The NTSB identified three critical errors: 1) The bridge was under-designed. 2) The peer review was insufficient; and 3) There was a failure to close the bridge to traffic and workers.

During the session, Sumwalt outlined how failures at all levels to stop work on the project or to close the highway to vehicle traffic and pedestrians played a significant role in the tragedy. He emphasized the responsibility to speak out for public safety no matter what.

“I saw those crushed cars. Six people lost their lives because of what I will call hubris and professional arrogance,” he stated. “I don’t care where you fit on the totem pole, if something doesn’t look right, you have an ethical and moral obligation to wave the flag.”

Access Virtual PECon Webinars

NSPE members who registered for an all-access pass and individual sessions can access webinar recordings at their convenience. Members who were unable to attend **PECon** can [purchase and access](#) some individual sessions at a discounted member price.

Coming Soon: ‘Fireside Chat’ Series

NSPE is hosting a set of fireside chat style webinars on legislative issues affecting the future of the engineering profession, as well as the here and now.

Monday, August 31 (TBD)

Diversity is the Future of Engineering: Opportunities in STEM Education

Monday, September 14 (3 p.m. ET)

Building for the Future, with US Rep. Bruce Westerman, P.E. (R-AR)

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