Vermont Landfill Faces PFAS Concerns

As public concern about PFAS has grown, the solid waste industry is “growing more alarmed about financial implications, including the potential for dramatic changes to leachate costs and a wave of state and federal regulation,” reports Waste Drive. The article highlights Coventry Landfill, the only active landfill in Vermont. Casella, which owns and operates the landfill, is planning a 51-acre expansion but faces obstacles like state drinking water standards and local opposition. Casella’s vice president of engineering and compliance says the industry can address PFAS just as it would any other serious concern. “These waste materials do exist and are going to be handled over coming decades, so it’s very important that we handle them properly,” he said. “That needs to be part of our sustainable waste management practice.”

Federal Funds Designated for Water Infrastructure Improvements

Vermont has been awarded over $19 million by the US EPA to help improve the state’s water infrastructure, reports Water World. The funding includes $7,780,000 for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and $11,011,000 for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. EPA has also awarded $295,000 over three fiscal years (2018 through 2020) to the Department of Environmental Conservation to improve lead in drinking water testing in schools and childcare facilities.

Earlier this year, Vermont designated $11 million in SRF money to Bennington to replace about 1,575 lead pipes that carry drinking water, at no cost to residents, according to VT Digger. The funding came as the result of federal legislation enacted in the wake of the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. The law gave states a limited one-year opportunity to transfer money from their Clean Water SRF to the Drinking Water SRF. Construction in Bennington was expected to begin this fall and take several years.
Stay up to date on legislative issues through the NSPE Advocacy Center.

PEs, Technicians, and Teamwork

Construction projects come with numerous roles and responsibilities that must be carried out with skill and efficiency to achieve success. For professional engineers, perhaps the most critical relationship is with the project’s engineering technicians.

In a recent NSPE webinar on PEs, technicians, and the engineering team, Shannon Looney, P.E., F.NSPE, called the contributions of skilled technicians “invaluable.” As the senior project manager for the Glenn E. Mitchell and Company Inc. in Knoxville, Tennessee, Looney specializes in concrete construction. He relies heavily on the data collected by technicians—“the technicians with their hands on the ground that work directly with the labor force and is able to tell us the data we need…to make real-time decisions on important aspects of production.”

The webinar covers many aspects of the PE-technician dynamic and the factors that make a strong team. In addition to Looney, the webinar panel included Kent Dvorak, P.E., of Terracon’s Salt Lake City office; John Quidley, SET, president and senior quality consultant with Caliber Consulting Services LLC; and Kenny Johnson Jr., P.G., with expertise in the geotechnical and materials testing industry.

The webinar, “Put Me in, Coach! The Engineering Team from Concept to Completion,” can be accessed online for free.

Georgia Adopts Structural PE Requirement

Beginning January 1, a professional engineer who designs, signs, and seals plans for “designated structures” in Georgia must be licensed as a structural engineer. Legislation signed into law in August, creates a professional structural engineer licensing process, which includes a requirement that a licensure applicant take the 16-hour PE Structural exam.

The process establishes several paths for current licensees to be grandfathered into obtaining an SE license, which is supplemental to the PE license. An individual licensed in Georgia will have to submit an affidavit form and pay fees to the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors from November 1 to December 31, 2020 to participate in this grandfather process.

In June, NSPE and the Georgia Society of Professional Engineers expressed concerns that a SE license requirement would create an additional layer of bureaucracy, requiring an engineer who is qualified to practice in more than one area to obtain multiple licenses.
NSPE believes that fragmenting the professional engineering license into discipline-specific title or practice acts weakens rather than strengthens the integrity of the license. The Society advocates for an alternative structural engineering certification that could be obtained after earning a PE license to offer more flexibility and without drawing a hard line between structural and other engineering disciplines.

**Officer Nominations Open**

Nominations are now open for the positions of NSPE 2021–22 vice president and 2021–23 treasurer. The individual nominated for vice president will advance to president-elect in 2022–23 and president in 2023–24. The deadline for submitting nomination packages for either position is **January 11, 2021**.

Please share this information with those you believe should be considered for the next leaders in our Society. Additional details can be found in the Leadership Toolbox. If you have any questions, email the NSPE Executive Office at executive@nspe.org.