PE MATTERS STATE NEWS

NSPE-MT

>>>> OCTOBER 2023

State News for NSPE Members

Dillon Solar Energy Farm Ushers in Clean Energy in Montana

In a field just outside of Dillon, there are nearly 200,000 solar panels that are collecting energy from the sun. Founders of this project say this is the seed to Montana's clean, renewable energy future, KXLF reports. "That is what we're hearing celebrating: energy independence, low-cost energy, clean energy," said Clenera CEO Jason Ellsworth.

Governor Greg Gianforte helped cut the ribbon on Clenera's Apex Solar Project off 10 Mile Road near Dillon. The 80-megawatt solar farm is a 600-acre facility that could generate enough energy to power about 13,500 homes. The project cost just over $100,000 million and is estimated to bring $15 million in tax revenue to Beaverhead County over the next 10 years.

Critics of solar farms often object to the large amount of land they require and see them as an eyesore. Mark Harrington owns land adjacent to the solar farm but says he still supports this project. "There's mostly rattlesnakes out here and a few antelope, so it's not like it was prime grazing ground. It's not that big an eyesore. I mean, if we're going to become energy smart, maybe it's one of the things we need to do," said Harrington. Read more.

Montana Tech Students Begin Collaborative Work with US Navy

Collaborative research between Montana Technological University and the Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division, Keyport officially kicked off this fall, bringing expanded opportunities for talented student researchers to participate in projects for the US Navy, NBC Montana reports.

"The Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division, Keyport team is thrilled about this new Naval Engineering and Education Consortium award to Dr. [Peter] Lucon and his students. This is exactly the type of research we hoped to accomplish in

establishing the Cooperative Research and Development Agreement with Montana Tech last year," said Craig Bleile, a US Navy engineer and scientist.

Bleile visited campus at the beginning of September to celebrate the start of research in Dr. Peter Lucon's lab. Dr. Lucon, an associate mechanical engineering professor, who leads the Montana Tech Advanced Materials (MTAM) research group at Montana Tech says, "This and future research through the Naval Engineering Education Consortium will help cultivate the Naval Engineering workforce while building collaboration between Montana Tech and the US Navy. The undergraduate and graduate students performing the research in a multi-disciplinary team across materials engineering, mechanical engineering, computer science, and chemistry will gain competitive experience for their future careers." Read more.

Stay up to date on legislative issues through the ***NSPE Advocacy Center*** .

Looking Toward a Promising Future

By Bill Atkinson, P.E., F.NSPE, President 2023–24

As I continue on my professional journey as the NSPE president, I often reflect on what our organization has done since its founding in 1934 and what NSPE needs to do going forward. The next stage of NSPE's future begins with our vision to ensure that the public lives in a world where engineering decisions are made by qualified and ethically accountable professionals. This will require that a unified engineering community step up to protect licensure laws across the nation and maintain high standards for professional practice. It will require that we embrace innovation and emerging technologies. This future will be bolstered by a new generation of engineers that we must encourage to understand that they can truly make a difference in the world. I look forward to playing my part and supporting others in these efforts.

Licensure and Emerging Technologies

Protection of the public health, safety, and welfare is at our core as professional

engineers. Licensure is key to ensuring consistent standards of practice and professional competencies. We must make sure that these standards and competencies remain relevant to how we do things today, while looking toward the future.

We must continually question ourselves and the regulations that are in place. Are state licensing laws adequately regulating the profession of engineering without precluding otherwise qualified individuals from practicing? Is our current licensure model adequately serving its purpose? Are engineering licensure exemptions creating gaps where the public could be harmed? The answers to these questions can help drive us to better ways of safeguarding the public.

I believe that most individuals that become engineers do so because they are good at making things better. They are not tied to the world they are in today and are always pursuing excellence and improvement. I believe that by pooling our experiences as engineers, we can bring the best and brightest together to tackle any challenge that we may face as we seek to evolve. This evolution will involve the development and use of emerging technologies to spur innovative solutions. NSPE is supporting members by providing professional development that showcases the use of these technologies in a manner that is ethical and will benefit the public. Read more.

NSPECon24 – Call for Presentation Proposals

Prepare to share your expertise during NSPECon24 in Raleigh, North Carolina, August 7-9, 2024. Review the topics NSPE seeks in the areas of career development, leadership, and issues and trends, and think about how you can contribute. The submission site will open on November 1 and the proposal deadline is **January 10, 2024**.

The NSPECon23 program is still available online and may give potential presenters some ideas about the caliber of sessions needed for next year.

Volunteers are the Heart of NSPE: Get Involved and Share Your Voice

Volunteers are essential to advancing NSPE's vision to ensure a world where the public can be confident that engineering decisions affecting their lives are made by qualified and ethically accountable professionals. Volunteering is also a great opportunity for members to grow their professional network and connect with other leaders in the field.

There are several ways to get involved…here a few opportunities to consider

Serve as a mentor for an engineering student. If interested, send an email to education@nspe.org.

NSPE online community champion. Virtual opportunity to promote community and sharing of ideas through NSPE's online channels. If interested, send an email to membership@nspe.org.

Write an article for *PE* magazine. Share your expertise and insights on professional practice, education, ethics, leadership, licensure, public policy, DEI, emerging technologies, and sustainability and resilience by serving as a guest writer for *PE* magazine. If interested, email pemagazine@nspe.org for submission guidelines.

Collaborate with staff to draft/supply input on federal legislation, regulations or public comments to federal Congressional staff and committees (Identify your area(s) of vocational expertise.) If interested, send an email to governmentrelations@nspe.org.