

State News for NSPE Members

Montana Society Meeting Recap

The Montana Society of Engineers held their annual General Membership and Board Meeting on Wednesday, November 4, 2020. President Jean Riley, P.E., directed the Zoom meeting. It was noted that the annual [Joint Engineers Conference](#) in November had been cancelled and that all speaker proposals have been moved to the 2021 JEC.

MATHCOUNTS 2020–21

MATHCOUNTS Chairman Cory Haisak, P.E., reported that all chapter and state competitions have been moved online for the 2020–21 season. The [MATHCOUNTS](#) national competition is still scheduled to be held as a live event next year.

Currently, we have about two-thirds of the registrations we had last year, but registration deadlines have all been extended. We may see an additional increase, even though school registrations are down. The number of participating students is slightly higher because of the distance learning student registration option. Fundraising efforts will continue this year, but due to the online format there should be a decrease in expenses.

PE Hall of Fame Induction—William Wenzel

Dan McCauley, P.E., Chairman of the [PE Hall of Fame](#) Committee, reported that there was a small gathering planned for November 30 to present the award to William Wenzel's family, however due to the spike in virus cases, this may be postponed until the 2021 JEC. If that's the case the plaque will be hung at Montana State University-Bozeman and given to the family with a presentation at the 2021 JEC.

NSPE Regional and National Report

Georgia Brensdaal, P.E., reported on Western Pacific Region personnel changes at the regional level. WPR meetings have continued in a virtual format.

Mike Keene, P.E., the NSPE House of Delegates representative for Montana,

reported that because of the many challenges we have faced as a nation and the impact of those challenges, NSPE leadership and staff have been revisiting the strategic plan. The NSPE mission remains the same: “To foster licensed professional engineers in service to society.” An ongoing priority is the search for NSPE’s new Executive director and CEO. The goal is to identify someone by mid-to late-November with a possible start date in the beginning of the new year.

NSPE’s [newest staff member](#) is Rebecca Bowman, Esq., P.E. She began serving as Senior Director, Ethics and Professional Practice on November 2. Bowman replaces Arthur Schwartz, Esq., who recently retired after 38 years.

In preparation for the 117th US Congress, NSPE is planning an outreach effort to introduce or reintroduce the Society to all 535 members of Congress. The message will be simple: “This is who we are, these are the issues we care about, and we look forward to working with you.” The outreach is a joint effort of some of NSPE’s full-service state societies and NSPE headquarters.

Please visit the [NSPE website](#) for other industry and society news, and educational opportunities. Also, more details relating to this HOD report will be provided in the next issue of the MSE newsletter.

Legislative Update

MSE Executive Director Michele Munson reached out to Daryl and Jennifer James, our lobbyists, for a legislative update. President Jean Riley reported that she is watching some of the proposed bills slated for the 2021 Legislature. One bill to especially keep an eye on involves proposed dissolution of licensing boards. The next MSE board meeting is scheduled for January 6, 2021 at 12 p.m. via a conference call.

Special Montana Note: Mike Keene, P.E., has one year left on his term as HOD representative. Anyone interested in being considered for the HOD seat can contact the Montana Society of Engineers Board, or you are welcome to contact Mike Keene directly (mikekeenpe@gmail.com).

In Response to Pandemic, NCEES Schedules Regional Testing for PE Civil Exam

To accommodate as many pencil-and-paper examinees as safely as possible, NCEES has added a regional exam administration on January 26, 2021, for PE Civil examinees only.

Registration for the regional PE Civil exam administration opened on **November 1, 2020**, and closes on **December 14, 2020**, at 3:00 p.m. EST. The exam will be administered in the following cities: Phoenix, AZ; Pomona, CA; Denver, CO; Groton, CT; Orlando, FL; Topeka, KS; Louisville, KY; Minneapolis, MN; Raleigh,

NC; Las Vegas, NV; Cleveland, OH; Salem, OR; Houston, TX; Salt Lake City, UT; and Seattle, WA.

Additional cities may be added. Visit the [NCEES website](#) for details.

Passenger Rail Grows to 10 Counties

The Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority grew to 10 Montana counties in a growing effort to restore Amtrak service to the state's southern tier, according to a *Missoula Current* report.

While passenger rail service has contracted nationally during the pandemic, Sen. Jon Tester said it enjoys bipartisan support in the US Senate and could be eyed for investment down the road with the aid of an infrastructure bill.

“We do have some bipartisan support for rail in the Senate to continue to put pressure on Amtrak after the election, regardless of the outcome, to make sure we maintain rail service,” Tester told Missoula County commissioners. “We’ve got to get it to a point to get a commitment after the pandemic.”

Missoula County adopted a draft resolution to create the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority in early June and sent it out to the nearly two-dozen counties poised along the old North Coast Hiawatha Route in southern Montana.

Prairie County became the 10th county to adopt the resolution. The effort also has the backing of the Rail Passengers Association and Transportation for America. Sen. Steve Daines has expressed support for a southern route as well, as have cities in surrounding states.

[Read more.](#)

Expanding STEM Learning Across the State

A new report from Montana State University's Science [Math Resource Center](#) and the Montana Afterschool Alliance offers suggestions for expanding STEM learning across the state.

The report—which also includes an overview of the state of science, technology, engineering and mathematics learning in Montana—is based on ideas shared at a STEM Summit held at MSU in the summer of 2019. The statewide summit included 165 representatives from education, industry, government and nonprofit organizations discussing how to STEM learning in Montana.

Among other findings, [the 16-page report](#) notes that communication, collaboration

and connections between industry and education are top priorities. In addition, the report includes an update on actions taken in the months following last summer's event and suggestions for next steps.

[Read more.](#)

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.

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