

THE FIRST WORD

February, 2009

ACEC OKLAHOMA 2008 Engineering Excellence Grand Conceptor Award Presented to The Benham Companies

The ACEC OKLAHOMA Engineering Excellence Awards competition for 2008 had a record number of entries, with a total of seven firms submitting entries.

The 2008 ACEC OKLAHOMA *Grand Conceptor Award* was presented to The Benham Companies for the City of Ardmore's Co-Composting Facility during ACEC OKLAHOMA's January General Membership Meeting.

As part of the expansion and process conversion of the City's sewage treatment plant, the City of Ardmore wanted to develop and build a more efficient, environmentally sound method of handling their sewage sludge, which amounts to at least 30,000 gallons of stabilized liquid sludge each day. The increasing cost of transportation and overtime requirement had made efficient sludge disposal operations impossible for the City.

As part of the treatment plant upgrade, the City decided to modify its sludge processing train to include co-composting of sludge and yard waste as its principal sludge handling process.

The Benham Companies was engaged to develop sludge handling alternatives and design the required improvements. After due consideration of process feasibility, capital costs and operational costs, the City directed Benham to proceed with the engineering of a co-composting system.

The Ardmore system sludge is de-watered using a standard 2-meter belt press. The dewatered sludge is conveyed to the mixing floor where it is mixed with yard waste collected as part of the City's ongoing "Operation Pride" residential yard waste collection program.



After agitation and mixing of compostable charges, the dewatered sludge and yard waste, normally about 25 cubic yards or 14,000 pounds, is placed in the front end of one of five composting bays in which temperatures routinely reach 175 degrees. In order to produce a Class A bio-solid, the compost charge must be heated to at least 113 degrees for 10 consecutive days and during that time the charge must achieve or exceed 131 degrees for three full consecutive days. Temperatures are monitored throughout the process and the Ardmore System engages blowers to inject air into the bed to aerate, cool, activate, and sustain the process.

Benham Awarded 2008 EEA Grand Conceptor (cont)

At the end of 21 days, the material is withdrawn and stockpiled on the outdoor curing pad for at least 14 days. Since completion, the facility has produced over 15,000 cubic yards of co-compost that is used by the community and local wholesalers.

The resulting material is now distributed under the trademark “Okie Dirt” and is used as a soil nutrient; as a soil erosion reduction agent, and/or as landscaping material.

The Ardmore System is the first of its kind in the central United States with the closest system is in Goldsboro, NC.

With the assistance of The Benham Companies, a small municipality has invested a significant but not otherwise uneconomical amount of their resources to the development of a recycling facility that now produces a product that enhances the environment and that has potential for even greater revenue production.

* * * * *

Six other firms’ Engineering Excellence Awards entries were also honored at the January meeting. Those were:

Honor Awards

- Crafton Tull Sparks for QuikTrip Park in Grand Prairie, TX.
- Mehlberger-Brawley for the Walnut Ave. Bridge project in Oklahoma City
- URS for the Oklahoma City Core-to-Shore Development Framework.
- Wallace Engineering Structural Consultants for the National Weather Center project

Finalist

- Garver Engineers for the City of Claremore Country Club Road Improvements
- JAG Engineering, for the Putnam City High School Auditorium and Stage Expansion



ACEC OKLAHOMA Chairman Steve Ford (left) presents 2008 Grand Conceptor Award to the Benham Companies’ Alan Soltani, Tom Mansur and Mike Wright.

For an overview of each of the entries, go to the ACEC OKLAHOMA website at <http://www.acecok.org/2008%20EEA.htm>



Chairman Steve Ford & Chuck Mitchell of Crafton Tull Sparks



Chairman Steve Ford & Todd Brawley of Mehlberger-Brawley



Chairman Steve Ford, Sara Jane MacLennan of URS Corp., and Anthony McDermed of TAP Architecture.



Chairman Steve Ford & Tom Hendrick of Wallace Engineering



Chairman Steve Ford & Darold Davis of Garver Engineers



Chairman Steve Ford & Orin Johnston of JAG Engineering

2009 Legislative Session Kicks-Off

The 2009 Oklahoma Legislature opened for business on Monday, February 2nd with over 2,600 bills filed for the first half of the biennial session.

2009 marks a historic session, as for the first time in state history the Republicans control the State Senate. With a 26-22 margin in the Senate, Republicans now control both the House and the Senate for the next two years. Of course, the Democrats control the Governor's office, with Governor Brad Henry serving out his second term through 2010.

ACEC OKLAHOMA is tracking numerous bills as the session begins. With over 2,600 bills, one can imagine that right now we're in the process of separating the "wheat from the chaff." The first deadline is coming up the end of February, which means that many bills will fall by the wayside at that time.

For now, rather than focusing on specific bills, we're going to review the major issues on which action is expected this session:

STATE BUDGET

After several years of surplus budgets, last year Oklahoma faced a "standstill" budget year. Current estimates for this year are that the Legislature will have some \$600 million less to work with this session.

While it's too early to tell which state agencies will take budget hits, consensus is that the cuts will be spread out over a variety of agencies.

ACEC OKLAHOMA and the various transportation-related organizations will keep a close watch on transportation funding to assure that the gains made in funding for ODOT in recent years are not eroded.

TORT REFORM

With Republicans in control of the Legislature, the likelihood of a comprehensive Tort Reform bill reaching the Governor's desk is very high. Of course, the question on everyone's mind is what the Governor will do. Last year, the Governor vetoed a comprehensive bill, and little has changed since then.

The trump card which the Republicans hold is the possibility of a placing a Constitutional Amendment for a vote of the public. The Legislature can pass a "Concurrent Resolution" to place the question on the next statewide ballot, and the Concurrent Resolution does not require the Governor's signature.

So, if the Governor is not willing to negotiate on the issue as a whole, expect the Legislature to by-pass the Governor and go direct to the vote of the people.

ENGINEERING ISSUES

There are several bills which we are tracking, but at this point there are no major negative issues facing the profession at this time.

One "talking" issue we are watching is the possibility of a move to consolidate state boards and commissions, such as the State Board of Licensure. There is no specific bill, but in tight budget years this is an issue which always seems to pop up.

ACEC OKLAHOMA will keep you informed on these issues and specific bills as the session progresses.

Five "Lunch & Learn" Webinars Scheduled

ACEC OKLAHOMA has scheduled five "Lunch & Learn" webinars in coming weeks. The webinars are:

- * **Tuesday, Feb. 17th - Project Management for Design Professionals**
- * **Tuesday, March 10th - Risk Taking Under the 2007 AIA, Consensus, and EJCDC Documents**
- * **Tuesday, March 24th - Developing Future Leaders: Best Practices and Lessons Learned for Growing 20-23 Year Olds**
- * **Wednesday, April 1st - Professional Ethics: A Preventative Maintenance Approach**
- * **Tuesday, May 5th - Diverging Diamond Interchange: An Innovative Traffic Solution**

Attendees will receive 1.5 PDHs (Professional Development Hours) for each of the webinars.

Registration will be \$40.00 per person and information will be sent to all members as the dates for these "Lunch & Learn" programs draw closer.

Please mark your calendars now, and plan on attending these informative and educational programs.

PRESIDENT'S MONTHLY UPDATE

David Raymond, ACEC President/CEO

February, 2009

As we begin the month, the economic stimulus package is our highest priority. ACEC's "full court press" in Congress seeks to achieve both substantial new infrastructure funding and beneficial tax provisions. The House-passed bill includes \$100 billion in infrastructure spending above annual appropriations, as well as full repeal of the 3% withholding mandate and other favorable tax provisions. In the Senate, which votes later this week, we are seeking to boost infrastructure spending further, as well as to gain added tax relief. Because this bill continues to take shape hour by hour, we are constantly in the fray protecting and advancing your interests; we greatly appreciate the flow of information and feedback from you.

General

- * ACEC's "full court press" in Congress on the "stimulus bill" helped yield \$100 billion in new infrastructure and facilities in the House; action is now in Senate.
- * Maintaining close liaison with ACEC members and state organizations on stimulus bill; responding to press and member inquiries on various aspects of bill; providing special briefings upon request, most recently to ACEC/Delaware and ACEC/New York.
- * Engineering Excellence Awards program received 168 entries this year, compared to 158 in 2008, for judging to take place in February and recognition of winners at the EEA black-tie gala April 28, 2009 in Washington, D.C.

Government Affairs

- * Approved Minuteman Fund grant for ACEC/Virginia statute revision effort to permit A/E firms to use limitation of liability clauses in their contracts without challenge.
- * Advocated for successful House passage of the \$819 billion stimulus bill that includes over \$46 billion in transportation, over \$17 billion in environmental, and over \$49 billion in energy infrastructure, as well as over \$37 billion funding for public buildings, and business favorable tax provisions including repeal of the 3% withholding mandate.
- * Launched "Economic Stimulus Resource Center" on the ACEC website for easy access to bill summaries, legislative text, ACEC advocacy and other materials related to the stimulus effort.
- * The final fundraising tally for ACEC/PAC in 2008 was \$605,500 and \$1.6 million for the 2007-2008 election cycle, a new record; 34 State Organizations achieved their 2008 ACEC/PAC goal, also a new record.
- * Successfully challenged the use of "cascading set aside" procurements for A/E services by the Corps of Engineers.
- * Secured several key industry priorities among recommendations released by the National Committee on Levee Safety, including the need to address emerging liability issues.

Institute for Business Management

- * Sent new Engineering Careers brochures to all ACEC state organizations, for use in state activities to inspire interest by middle and high school students in engineering careers.
- * Held new online seminars: *Developing a Cleantech Business Strategy*, Scott Boutwell and *Calculating Carbon Footprints – Potential Business for Engineering Companies*, Mark van Soestbergen.
- * Developed a proposed business plan for EJCDC to place greater emphasis on marketing, and retain a general manager as a single point of contact.