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Dam Safety Association Presents Annual Awards

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At each annual conference, the Association of State Dam Safety Officials recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the field of dam safety. This year's award winners were recognized on September 12th, at the 2006 ASDSO Awards Banquet in Boston.

National Rehabilitation Project of the Year: Gannett Fleming, Inc. for Loch Raven Dam

Loch Raven Dam is a 131-foot high, 700-foot long concrete gravity structure owned by the Baltimore Department of Public Works. The dam impounds approximately 23-billion gallons of water in the Loch Raven Reservoir, the "crown jewel" of the water supply system for the greater Baltimore region.

A failure of the dam would jeopardize the lives of more than 3,000 people, public and private property, and vital infrastructure,

Accordingly, Maryland regulations require that Loch Raven Dam safely pass the probable maximum flood (PMF). When evaluated against this criterion, two major deficiencies were noted: inadequate factors of safety for structural stability, and insufficient spillway capacity. Maryland Dam Safety directed the City of Baltimore to rehabilitate or remove the dam.

City officials quickly concluded they had no choice but to rehabilitate the dam. They selected Gannett Fleming to design a solution that would increase the dam's stability and confine PMF overflow to the 288-foot-wide spillway. To this end, Gannett Fleming decided to increase the structure's mass, install rock anchor, and raise non-overflow sections of the dam.

Of prime concern during the development process was the reservoir's essential function of supplying water for nearly a million people. Building a new structure downstream was not an option, nor was an alternative to widen the spillway. The solution: Renovate the dam in two steps, one half at a time, while maintaining normal capacity.

Throughout the three-year project, the contractor faced formidable challenges. Unusually frequent and heavy rainfalls caused overtopping of the spillway, complicating the diversion scheme. All work took place in a pristine watershed environment, in compliance with stringent regulations and under close scrutiny from the surrounding communities. In spite of these complexities, the project was completed five months ahead of schedule and \$500,000 under budget.

The project was a great cooperative effort. The Maryland Dam Safety Program required the City to conduct additional investigations and to make needed repairs. The City, Gannett Fleming, and the ASI/Cianbro JV team created an excellent design and construction project. All performed their jobs admirably, and all deserve credit for the project's success.

Northeast Regional Award of Merit: New Hampshire Governor John Lynch

The Honorable John H. Lynch, Governor of the State of New Hampshire, was selected by the Northeast Region to receive its 2006 Regional Award of Merit. This award is in recognition of his strong, decisive, and compassionate leadership during New Hampshire's two natural disasters over the past year and his long-term commitment to improve dam safety in the state.

In October 2005 and again in May 2006, New Hampshire was hit by devastating floods that exceeded 100-year frequency levels. During both of these disasters and in their immediate aftermath, Governor Lynch took quick and decisive action, repeatedly visiting the affected communities, meeting with local officials, and personally directing the work of state agencies, including the Department of Environmental Services (DES) Dam Bureau. His attention ensured that everything possible was done to help the communities respond to the flood events and recover.

Governor Lynch also saw first-hand the threat posed by floodwaters overtopping dams during these events. This experience convinced him of the necessity to proactively manage this threat in order to protect the public and minimize flood damages. Declaring prevention of dam failures and incidents as a priority, the Governor personally directed his staff and the DES to identify ways to improve New Hampshire's Dam Safety Program. He has firmly committed to work with the New Hampshire legislature and state agencies to provide additional resources to make New Hampshire's Dam Safety Program a national model.

When fully implemented, Governor Lynch's initiative will increase the number of dams inspected each year; step up enforcement to correct dams with identified deficiencies; and ensure the proper operation, maintenance, and repair of state-owned dams into the future.

Southeast Regional Award of Merit: Jim Simons

James D. Simons, PE, PG, has worked for the North Carolina Division of Land Resources for more than thirty-two years. During most of this time he has been involved with dam safety at the state, regional, and national levels.

As State Dam Safety Engineer in North Carolina from 1985 to 1991, Mr. Simons reviewed all plans to construct, repair, modify, or breach state-regulated dams. He pursued enforcement against dam owners who were non-complaint, and provided training and guidance in dam safety inspection and emergency response to employees of the Land Quality Section.

Mr. Simons was the Chief Engineer of the Land Quality Section from 1991 until 2002. In this position he was in charge of the seven regional offices that inspect state regulated dams.

Since 2002, Mr. Simons has been State Geologist and Director of the Division of Land Resources. As such, he is in charge of all aspects of the State Dam Safety Program in North Carolina.

Mr. Simons has been involved with the Association of State Dam Safety Officials for most of his career. He served as ASDSO President in 1994-1995, and on the ASDSO Board of Directors from 1991 to 1996. From 2000-2005, Mr. Simons served as an ASDSO representative on the FEMA National Dam Safety Review Board. Currently, he is on the ASDSO Peer Review Committee.

Midwest Regional Award of Merit: Eric Hand and Ken Leiser, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ASDSO's Midwest Region honored two writers for their persistent efforts on behalf of the people of Missouri.

St. Louis Post Dispatch Science and Environment writers Eric Hand and Ken Leiser have worked diligently to inform the public about the importance of stringent safe dam safety regulations. Their intelligent consideration of the issues and people involved helped raise public awareness of potential threats posed by dams, and the state's role in ensuring public safety.

According to a Missouri official, "These two reporters were instrumental in increasing the public's knowledge of dam safety issues and the problems associated with levees in the U.S. They are to be commended for their thorough research and accurate reporting of these complex issues."

Alexander notes that, "Although the Legislature ultimately decided to retain some regulatory exemptions that we oppose, the efforts of Mr. Leiser and Mr. Hand have applied pressure to Missouri's elected officials to address needed changes to the state's Dam and Reservoir Safety Law."

West Regional Award of Merit: US Bureau of Reclamation and Bruce Barrett, Provo Area Manager

Representatives of ASDSO's West Region recognized the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for its positive impact on state regulated projects, particularly the major rebuild and enlargement of Big Sand Wash dam in Utah.

The significant expertise of Mr. Bruce Barrett, USBR Manager for the Provo Area, was instrumental in the project, designed by the consulting firm of CH2MHill. Mr. Barrett was on the design review team, and the Bureau performed all on-site construction inspection and quality assurance testing.

Raising the existing 112-ft-tall dam by 26 feet, to a height of 138 feet doubled the reservoir capacity, from 12,000 acre-feet to over 24,000 acre-feet, allowing the transfer of water storage from lakes in the high Uinta Wilderness to the enlarged reservoir.

The Bureau has worked with the Utah State Engineer's office to design stabilization solutions for these Wilderness dams and will use their own "in-house" construction crews to perform the work. Three of these projects are now underway.

The Bureau has also been actively involved in numerous projects that have improved dam safety in Utah and other western states. Recent projects include seepage reduction at Upper Stillwater,

seismic stabilization of Pine View and Deer Creek dams, and rehabilitation of the Hyrum Dam spillway, all in Utah; and the rehabilitation of City Dam, the “number 1 priority” unsafe dam in Arizona. The Bureau’s full-time on-site construction services are essential to the success and completion of the project.

National Award of Merit – Michael Grounds, Beacon Resources

The National Award of Merit is ASDSO’s most prestigious award, given to individuals who have advanced the dam safety cause nationwide. For his recognition of the importance of and exigent necessity for a strong National Dam Safety Program and his interest in the nation's critical dam infrastructure and security needs, the ASDSO Board of Directors is pleased to confer this award to Michael Grounds of Beacon Resources.

Mr. Grounds has 30 years of experience in systems engineering specializing in developing customized systems and in providing value-added customization to Intergraph’s standard commercial products to implement specialized workflows for Government customers. For the past 16 years this work has primarily been with the US Army Corps of Engineers.

In support of the National Dam Safety Review Board (NDSRB) and the Interagency Committee on Dam Safety (ICODS), Mr. Grounds is developing software tools to assist States and Federal Agencies with their dam safety program management. These tools can be used to provide simple, unbiased data that are useful separately and/or collectively to evaluate how well dam safety programs are being implemented at the National, State and/or Federal Agency level.

President’s Award: John Ritchey

The ASDSO President’s Award is given to someone who made a significant contribution to helping the President through the year. Outgoing ASDSO President, Kenneth E. Smith, of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, chose John Ritchey, Supervising Engineer with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for this honor.

Smith characterized Mr. Ritchey as “a volunteer who has consistently done his job well, needing so little direction that I didn’t ever need to worry.”

Over the years, Mr. Richey has served on several ASDSO committees and task groups, including the NDSRB Research Workgroup and the Committee to Develop a Report on the National Cost of Dam Rehabilitation. For the past two years he chaired the annual conference program committee, and served as both an exemplary moderator and audio-visual and technical support coordinator.

He has also worked tirelessly on behalf of the NJ-PA Council of Safe Dams, including organizing several of the council’s northeast regional conferences.

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The Association of State Dam Safety Officials is a national, not-for-profit organization made up of over 2,200 dam safety officials from federal, state and local governments, the private sector, and academia. The goal of ASDSO is to improve dam safety and state dam safety programs in the U.S.