

# Los Angeles Section

*Monthly: Est. 1913*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jay Higgins, P.E., M.ASCE  
Section President



## The Tradition Continues; Setting Section Goals for 2010

October marks the beginning of the Section fiscal year and changes to the Section Board. This is the traditional time of the year for the incoming Section President to report the goals that have been set for the coming year. As Section President, I will work diligently toward achieving the goals outlined below. Of course I cannot accomplish this alone and will have the privilege of working with the Section Board, Committees, and Technical Groups. Let me briefly highlight the makeup of the incoming Board which consists of the incoming Presidents from the Branches, a representative from the Younger Member Forum and Life Member Forum, and the new and returning Board officers.

We are fortunate to have several existing Board members that will fill out the remainder of their terms. These include Don Sepulveda as Past President, Janice Horcasitas as Secretary, and Sonia Nasser as Vice President of Technical Groups. It would be hard to find anyone with more experience at the Student Chapter, Branch, Section, and Society levels of ASCE than Don. We are fortunate to have his insight into the inner workings of ASCE for another year. Janice's experience as Secretary will keep the administrative functions of the Section running smoothly, and Sonia's experience gained while serving in positions at the Branch and Section level is a valuable asset to the Board.

We welcome the new officers including: President-Elect Greg Heiertz; Karen Sepulveda as Vice President of Student Activities, and Gary Gilbert as Treasurer. Greg's experience as President of the Orange County Branch, one of the largest Section Branches, will provide valuable input from the Branch perspective. Karen's extensive experience as a member of, and working with, Student Chapters over several years and her passion for working with students will greatly enhance our student activities. Gary's enthusiasm for ASCE and his past experience serving in several positions in the Orange County Branch will assure our financial shop is kept in order.

I have served on the Board as an Officer with three Section Presidents: John Morris, Mark Norton, and Don Sepulveda. I will do my best to maintain the high standards they have set and will work with the Board to build on their accomplishments and the programs they set in motion.

At the Training and Planning Workshop held in August, members from throughout the Section, who will be serving in a leadership capacity in the coming year, came together to learn how ASCE and the Section are organized and function. I would like to thank those members who are willing to step forward and take on leadership responsibility for the benefit of the Section and the civil engineering profession. The Section draft 2009 Strategic Plan was presented at the workshop for review and comment. Based on the

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## Reminder:

*Copy deadline for the Nov. 2009 issue is Oct. 1, 2009; copy deadline for Dec. 2009 issue is Nov. 1, 2009.*



## A New Beginning

We introduce in this issue our Fiscal Year 2010 set of officers. As our new Section President Jay Higgins, P.E. mentioned, this set consists of new and not so new faces. I have worked with quite a few of them in the past and would attest to their qualifications to perform the function of their office.

One thing to remember about ASCE is that all of us are volunteers. Have you ever once wondered if all of a sudden no one wanted to give any of their time any more? That is, if all of us suddenly adopt a personal policy that we would not do anything unless there is a corresponding mutually agreeable compensation associated with the effort? I cannot begin to do so.

The incoming officers of our Section [and our international organization] are examples of how such volunteerism in a mass scale works. We do what we do because we believe in our cause. These include:

- Tackling the current issues that face our profession and our future;
- Non-politically advocating for causes that affect engineers;
- Preparing leadership roles for our younger members by encouraging them to participate and lead local and national activities;
- Learning from the wisdom of our Life Members; and
- Maintaining membership by creating and adding value to our membership benefits.

We do a lot for ASCE and our organization certainly does a lot more for us. And thanks to the men and women who everyday toil to make this organization great, a lot more is coming. This is the opportune time to reflect on what more we can do for our profession, than what our profession can do for us. We live in very challenging times. It is up to us to make sure we all benefit from the lessons of these challenges.

Enjoy this issue of your newsletter!

- Dr. Cris B. Liban, P.E.

## A Great Idea From the Life Members

The ASCE Life Members' Public Image Committee request that members take their (to be discarded) Civil Engineering magazines to their doctor's office or barber shop and merge them with the stack of magazines. We feel that this will be an effective way to make the general public more aware of what civil engineers do.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*continued from page 1*

feedback received, a revised Strategic Plan will be presented at the October Section Board meeting for approval. My goals as Section President were also presented at the workshop. Here are highlights of the top three goals I have set as Section President:

- **Develop Leadership** – developing a continuous stream of responsible leaders and civil engineering advocates is crucial to our ongoing success of providing value to our Section members. We will accomplish this by:
  - o Continuing to provide leadership training through workshops, Strategic Plan development, and goal setting;
  - o Ensuring that our Section members are aware of the leadership positions and committee membership opportunities; and
  - o Encourage members to become civil engineering advocates in their communities by being appointed to boards and commissions or being elected to a public office.
- **Legislative Activities** – as civil engineers we are charged with protecting the public health, safety, and welfare. In order to accomplish this objective, we need to inform the decision makers of the impact of their actions and provide the input necessary to guide them in making effective decisions. We will accomplish this by:
  - o Increasing legislative involvement at the local level;
  - o Providing clear and concise direction to the Section Legislative Committee;
  - o Developing a consistent approach to Branch legislative activities throughout the Section, and coordinate these activities effectively with Region 9; and
  - o Enhancing public awareness of the infrastructure needs.
- **Pre-College Outreach** – in order to meet the future demands for civil engineers which will be needed to keep pace with infrastructure needs, we need to reach out to pre-college students and inform them of the wonderful career opportunities that are available to them in the field of civil engineering. We will accomplish this by:
  - o Building on the successes of the past YMF/Branch student outreach activities;
  - o Developing a consistent Section-wide approach; and
  - o Developing an effective method to reach out to and encourage our members to be involved in this important activity.

I look forward to my year as President. With the collective efforts of the Section Board, Section Committees, and all of the Section subsidiary organizations, I know we will achieve these goals. In future issues of this newsletter, I will be expanding on the goals stated above and report on the progress being made. I would like to hear from you. If you wish to be on a committee involved in the activities mentioned above, or if you have ideas for another committee activity, please contact me at [jay\\_higgins@urscorp.com](mailto:jay_higgins@urscorp.com). Let's have a great productive year that will advance the profession of civil engineering.



## Jay Higgins, P.E., M.ASCE

President

Jay Higgins is a professional civil engineer with 35 years of experience in the design and construction management of water, wastewater, stormwater, transportation, building, and earthwork projects. Jay currently works out of the Los Angeles Office of URS Corporation, Construction Services,

Dispute Resolution Group, where he specializes in construction claims analysis. His resident engineer and construction management experience includes inspection, construction schedule review, evaluation and negotiation of change orders, and resolution of disputes over cost and delay. His experience also includes Public Assistance Coordinator and Appeals Analyst for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Public Assistance disaster recovery grants program. He is currently providing contract administration services on State Water Projects throughout Southern California.

Jay has a B.S. in Civil Engineering from Northeastern University (Boston MA), a M.S. in Environmental Engineering from Northwestern University, and a MBA from the University of Chicago. He is a licensed Professional Civil Engineer in California and Illinois.

He has been a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers since 1973 and served as Treasurer (2002-2003) and President (2005-2006) of the Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch and Secretary (2006-2008) and President-Elect (2008-2009) for the Los Angeles Section. He was a Director of the Chicago Post of the American Society of Military Engineers (1994-1996), and was President of the Illinois Association of Environmental Professionals (1995-1996).

His goals as President of the L.A. Section are highlighted in the October '09 Newsletter President's message.



## Don A. Sepulveda, P.E.

Past President

Don Sepulveda is a Senior Project Manager and Southern California Rail Practice Leader with HNTB Corporation where he works on freight and commuter railroads and transit projects. Throughout his career, he has been involved in commuter rail design, high-speed rail studies, and heavy freight design.

He was the Lead Track and Signal Engineer for the Alameda Corridor railroad project, coordinating track and signal design and construction efforts for the over 95 miles of track in this consolidated rail corridor. Mr. Sepulveda received his B.S. in engineering from California State University, Northridge in 1995.

Don has been involved with student activities on the university level in the Los Angeles area since 1993. He was a student representative on the Los Angeles Section Student Activities and served as the Secretary and then Chair after graduating. While serving on this committee he has led scholarship efforts and worked to initiate efforts recognizing outstanding students, practitioner advisors, and faculty advisors.

Don has served on the ASCE Committee on Student Activities where he has served as the Chair. He has been awarded the honor of Practitioner Advisor of the Year by the Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch and the Los Angeles Section. He has received Letters of Commendation from ASCE for his work as Practitioner Advisor to California State University Northridge. He also serves on the Curriculum Advisory Committee at CSUN in addition to assisting in the teaching of the Senior Design Civil Engineering Program. Don served as President of the Los Angeles Section and as President for the Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch.

In addition to his ASCE work, Don is a Fellow in ASCE and the Institute for the Advancement of Engineering and a member of the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association where he serves on two technical committees. He has had papers published for both WTS and the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association.



## Greg Heiertz, P.E.

President - Elect

Greg Heiertz is the Director of Planning and Water Resources for the Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD). IRWD provides water, wastewater and reclaimed water services to over 100,000 customers in central Orange County, including the City of Irvine and portions of the Cities of Costa Mesa, Lake Forest, Newport Beach, Orange and Tustin. A thirty year veteran of the water district, Greg has served in a variety of planning, design, construction, and operations capacities. Prior to joining the water district, Greg worked in the Irvine office of James M Montgomery, Consulting Engineers (now Montgomery-Watson-Harza).

Greg holds BS degrees in Civil Engineering, and Biological Sciences as well as an MBA, all from UC Irvine. He is a Registered Civil Engineer in California.

Greg holds BS degrees in Civil Engineering, and Biological Sciences as well as an MBA, all from UC Irvine. He is a Registered Civil Engineer in California.

Greg has been a member of ASCE for his entire career. He was president of the ASCE Orange County Branch in 2004-05. In addition to his participation on the Board of the Orange County Branch of ASCE for the past ten years, he has also served as President of the UCI Civil and Environmental Engineering Affiliates. Greg is an active member of the American Water Works Association, the Water Environment Federation, the American Public Works Association and the Orange County Water Association.

Greg and his wife, Carolyn Lobell, reside in unincorporated North Tustin.

Greg believes that the future of ASCE is in the grassroots of the Branches and the Younger Member Forums. As President-Elect of the LA Section he plans to work to increase the resources available to the Branches and YMFs for their important programs. He is a strong advocate of infrastructure rebuilding and will work to see that civil engineers have a powerful voice supporting it for our region.

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**Gary Gilbert, P.E.**

Treasurer

Mr. Gilbert has over 10 years of geotechnical engineering experience at Diaz Yourman & Associates, and he is a licensed Civil Engineer in the State of California. He has managed the geotechnical aspects for a variety of projects including port facilities, airport pavements, commercial centers, bridges, and forensics. He has also been active in ASCE since 1995. As a student he was president of the ASCE Long Beach Student Chapter and member of the canoe team. After graduation Mr. Gilbert has been a practitioner adviser for Long Beach and President for the Orange County Younger Member Forum. Also, he was the Student Activities Committee Chair, Legislative Chair, K-12 Outreach Chair, and Engineers Without Borders Liaison for the Orange County Branch.



**Janice Horcasitas, P.E.**

Secretary

Janice Horcasitas is a professional Civil Engineer currently working for the City of Bakersfield, Building Department as a Civil Engineer III. She previously worked in the Public Works Department, with Traffic Engineering and Subdivisions. Prior to joining the City of Bakersfield Janice worked for the Kern County Water Agency where she worked in State Water Contracts.

Janice has a BS degree in Civil Engineering from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and has been a Registered Civil Engineer in California since 2004.

Janice has been a member of ASCE since college and has served as Treasurer, Secretary, Vice President, President and Past-President of the Southern San Joaquin Branch, and is currently serving as the secretary of the Los Angeles Section.



**Karen Sepulveda**

Vice President - Student Activities

Karen is a civil engineer currently working in construction and project management for the Bob Hope Airport in Burbank. She began her career as a roadway design and land development engineer and in construction management. Her work with ASCE includes formerly holding the offices of President, President-Elect, Vice President,

Secretary and Student Activities Chair for the Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch. She also worked with Orange County Branch students as Conference Advisor. Karen continues to be heavily involved in the recruitment of young engineers to the profession through student outreach programs.

Noted accomplishments would include her work while earning her degree as project manager for California State University, Long Beach's (CSULB) regional first place student bridge for ASCE and the honor of Outstanding Baccalaureate of her graduating class of civil engineers for CSULB. Karen currently volunteers as a national steel bridge judge and regional judge/head judge in the Pacific Southwest Regional Conference.



**Sonia Nasser, P.E.**

Vice President – Technical Groups

I've been involved with ASCE since my college days at Southern Methodist University; I was on the concrete canoe team. I graduated in 1989 then went to work at the Los Angeles County of Public Works. I worked in Carl Blum's division, but never was active in ASCE at that time. Later, I moved and worked for the County of Orange Integrated Waste Management Department from 1991 to 2001. When I was working there, Violet Jakab invited me to attend the History and Heritage Committee Meeting of the Orange County Branch. From that beginning, began a twenty-year friendship with Fred Meier, George Madsen, Greg Heiertz, Steve Marvin and John Hogan who were all on that committee. Later in 2001, I was asked by CT Bathala if I wanted to join the Board of Directors of the OC Branch as Secretary. That began my five-year engagement on the Board, serving as Secretary, then Treasurer, then Vice Present and finally President. Randy Berry who came before me as a President was an excellent mentor to me and helped me during my tenure as President. Bob Bein sometime during this timeframe became our National ASCE President and he was always very encouraging to all of us at the OC Branch. In 2001, I went to work for the Watershed and Coastal Resources Department of the County of Orange and also did a stint at the Dana Point Harbor Department. In 2007, I was invited to join the Los Angeles Section Board as the Vice President for Technical Groups. It has afforded me the ability to see how dedicated the engineers that the technical groups are and how much they care about sharing knowledge with their peers. As I look back at my twenty-years of being active in ASCE here in Southern California, it's been a lot of work and effort serving on report card committees, award committees, national conferences and the like. But it has been a rewarding experience because of all the great engineers I've been able to know and learn from. I will always remember Neil Morrison because he always kept reminding us to be patient with the members because you can't demand too much from volunteers. I'm now serving as the Vice President of Sustainable Solid Waste Planning, with Bryan A. Stirrat & Associates, a Tetra Tech Company. It's great to be a member of the Los Angeles Section of ASCE! Get involved, good things happen when you involve yourself with ASCE.

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**Drive Depends on You!**

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## DISASTER TRAINING

Classes are being organized for volunteers to help in the event of a major disasters under the auspicious of the State of California, Office of Emergency Services (OES). Classes will be held in alternate ASCE Branch areas when there are sufficient requests. Qualified individuals are California Registered Civil, Structural, Geotechnical, Certified engineering Geologists, or Architects. If you are interested in attending a class, or are interested in arranging a class, please contact the ASCE Disaster Preparedness Committee Chairman. There is a charge of \$15 for the class.

The class begins at 9 or 10 and lasts 5 or 6 hours

Classes will be given for Volunteers to assess damage and/or Coordinators from City or County to direct Volunteers for their area of damage.

To register for the class submit your name along with your Telephone number, Fax number. Zip code, and Email address. You will be contacted when 10 or more requests a class. The maximum number in the class should not exceed 20.

If your Branch, or Firm would like to offer the use of its facilities for a class, please register and provide the contact person, phone, Fax, and E-mail. You will be contacted to make arrangements.

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