

Building Arkansas

Official Magazine of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas & the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers



Taking aim

The ACEC/A's 1st Annual Trap Shoot was a huge success as it brought dozens of engineers like Travis Tolley, P.E., of Crafton Tull to Jacksonville. Meanwhile, ACEC/A is looking forward to another target – the end of the legislative session that starts in January. Once again, ACEC/A will be watching for issues that affect the industry such as licensing, taxes, education and workforce development.

Three big events in four months

Three big events will be happening in the next four months with the ACEC/A and the ASPE.

The first, the ACEC/A Industry Update, will be Jan. 26 at the Department of Energy and the Environment at 5301 Northshore Drive in North Little Rock.

The event typically occurs late in the year, but we've had to reschedule because this one will be special. Instead of hearing from different agencies, the program will focus entirely on the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. State leaders including Dr. Becky Keogh, the secretary of energy and the environment, will discuss topics such as how the federal government is handling things so far, how the program is administered, and how the funding flows work.

The IIJA is perhaps the most important infrastructure legislation in decades. It ensures money will be available for road, water and other projects for years



Angie W. Cooper
Executive Director

to come. It's an incredible opportunity for engineering firms to enhance public safety and welfare and gain a lot of business, too. I strongly encourage each firm to attend.

The second event will be the Engineering Excellence Award Gala March 9. This is perhaps the ACEC/A's premiere event on the calendar. It's always a treat to dress up and have dinner at the Governor's

Mansion. It honors individual awardees for their outstanding contributions, of course, but more importantly it celebrates the entire engineering industry.

Finally, the ASPE Annual Conference will be April 13-14. The conference offers great seminars as well as annual traditions like the passing of the gavel from one president to the next, the Emerging Leaders graduation, and the Order of the Engineer ring ceremony.

Last year's event was the first one since 2019 because of the pandemic. It was well attended, and we expect this one to be great, too.

It's going to be a busy four months for ACEC/A and ASPE. Each of these events is special in its own way. Learn about the IIJA at the Industry Update, celebrate our industry's outstanding work at the EEAs, and attend the seminars and enjoy the fellowship at the ASPE Conference.

See you at all three, I hope!

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A.J. joined HW's Little Rock office in 2013, became a Partner in 2019, and currently serves as Assistant Vice President. Since joining HW, he has played a key role in the growth of the Little Rock office and the firm's continued success. He received a Bachelor of Science in Biological Engineering from the University of Arkansas and is a licensed Professional Engineer in Arkansas. His project experience includes all aspects of water and wastewater engineering, working with both large municipalities and rural water utilities alike. The thing that A.J. has enjoyed the most about his career has been the relationships made with the utility managers, engineers, and operators that he has had the privilege of working alongside. He also finds reward in mentoring and assisting in the development of young engineers.

A.J. is a native Arkansan who grew up on a row crop farm in McGehee and attended high school at Subiaco Academy. He credits his time working on his family's farm for the strong work ethic that he has carried throughout his engineering career. He currently lives in Faulkner County with his wife Stephanie and their three children, and enjoys spending time with his family. He is also an avid Razorback fan and outdoorsman, and enjoys hunting and fishing.

Adrian J. (A.J.) Kaufman, P.E.
Assistant Vice President & Principal

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Crafton Tull

Building Arkansas

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- 25** Gov.-elect Sarah Huckabee Sanders comes into office after receiving nearly two-thirds of the vote and will have huge Republican supermajorities in both the state House and Senate. She will probably accomplish much of what she wants to accomplish this first session. It's unlikely that engineering-related issues will take center stage.

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News and Features

16 **Member Spotlight / Crafton Tull**

Matt Crafton, P.E., president, CEO and chairman of Crafton Tull, can look outside his window and see one of his firm's biggest recent projects. Crafton Tull did the design work for the Arkansas Department of Transportation that transformed the interchange of Walnut Street and Walton Boulevard in Rogers from a diamond to a single-point design.

18 **B & F celebrates firm's 50 years**

The founders and longtime leaders of B & F Engineering commemorated the company's 50 years in business while celebrating the firm's new status with Crafton Tull in an outdoor event Oct. 27.

20 **Largest Emerging Leaders class starts**

Members of the largest ever Emerging Leaders class spent their first day together Sept. 28 learning how to build bridges – between people, not land masses.

22 **Cover / ACEC/A Trap Shoot**

Fourteen teams with 65 total shooters participated in the First Annual ACEC/A Trap Shoot at the Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation Shooting Sports Complex in Jacksonville Nov. 2.

24 **Boll knows engineering, weather**

When KNWA, the NBC affiliate in Fayetteville, needed someone to deliver the weather for a few weeks this summer, the station's chief meteorologist reached out to Olsson' Aaron Boll.

25 **Sanders era begins. What to expect?**

A new governor will be at the State Capitol, and Republicans will have a larger supermajority than they did before. As for national politics, split-party rule returns.

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ACEC conference looks to future; firms should, too

Several of the ACEC - Arkansas Board Members were able to attend the Fall Conference in Colorado Springs in late October. In addition to the leaves changing to beautiful reds and yellows while we were there, the conference was packed with information about our changing industry. There were several interesting speakers such



Jerry Holder, P.E.
ACEC/A President

as Sue Desmond-Hellmann, the former CEO of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and futurist Amy Webb, founder and CEO of the Future Today Institute.

The most riveting speaker was retired U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Travis Mills. On April 10, 2012, Mills, a member of the 82nd Airborne, was critically injured on his third tour of duty in Afghanistan by an improvised explosive device. As a result of the blast, he suffered the loss of both arms and both legs. He is one of only five quadruple amputees from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He walked out on stage with two prosthetic legs and one prosthetic arm. He told us his story of the explosion and the long recovery he had been through. He filled his talk with jokes about his situation and had an incredibly positive attitude. Despite his daily challenges, he and his wife, Kelsey, founded the Travis Mills Foundation, a nonprofit organization formed to benefit and assist post-9/11 veterans who have been injured on active duty or as a result of their service to our nation. I found his story, and the work he is doing today, to be inspiring in a way that most people cannot be.

The Fall Conference covered a variety of topics. One of the most informative meetings was the Southeast Region Leadership Breakfast, where we heard from each state about their most pressing

issues. One of the most concerning issues was from ACEC-Alabama. A large agency there indicates it may not want to follow qualifications-based selection (QBS). Several of the states stepped forward to lend their experience to help them with the issue. The experience in the room was great to see. You may be familiar with the

Brooks Act that mandates QBS on projects with federal funding. This act was named after Rep. Jack Brooks, who led the passage of the bill in 1972. It was fitting that on the 50th anniversary of the act Brooks' son, Jeb Brooks, attended our Fall Conference to celebrate his father's legacy.

The most common topic brought up was the funding of the national political action committee, ACEC/PAC. All states felt they would meet their goals by year end. You should be proud to know that ACEC has a very strong PAC, and we use it wisely. I urge you to contribute. No matter how small the donation, every dollar gets us closer to our goal and improves our ability to protect our industry's interest. This year, ACEC - Arkansas distributed more PAC funds to local candidates than we ever have. One issue we will be focused on here in Arkansas is improving the indemnity language in state law that impacts our risk when we sign contracts with our clients.

Concerning the economy, the McMahon Siegel Group presented to us on Thriving in an Inflationary Environment. The bad news is they predict we will experience a moderate recession in 2023. The good news is our industry will have a "recession buffer" known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs

Please see HOLDER on page 8

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Why ASPE? Training, networking, advocacy

While pondering how we can drive participation in ASPE, I began thinking about what benefits engineers may see in their NSPE/ASPE membership. The easiest answer, and one that is particularly important to many engineers as license renewal season approaches, is the ability to earn 15 free professional development hour (PDH)

credits. The courses cover a range of topics that may appeal to many engineering disciplines. The current offerings include technical information, engineering ethics, project management, and leadership. Many of these topics can help engineers of any age develop skills. There are also several recordings available from the NSPE WORKability Wednesdays series that provide additional opportunities to earn more free PDH credits. All of the options are available to watch at your convenience.

These training options are certainly valuable; however, the main driver to join ASPE for me, initially, was the opportunity to meet engineers working in the region and participate in meetings with engineers of various ages and experience levels. Networking among peers is beneficial for young engineers to develop contacts, resources and tools, beyond technical knowledge, to apply in their burgeoning careers. Experienced engineers can utilize these opportunities to identify potential leadership traits they can continue to develop. Continuing education through professional development hours and honing soft skills help individual engineers in their career development.

Understanding the value of licensure to the profession and continuing to pass on ethical engineering practices to a new generation can provide stability, confidence, and protection for our profession. I began to have a greater appreciation for the advocacy provided by ASPE during my time as the president of the Northwest Arkansas Chapter. Bills were introduced in the Arkansas Legislature that, if approved, would



**Kale Farmer, P.E., CFM
ASPE President**

have removed the requirement for occupational licensure and registration. While this may not have been directed toward professional engineers, they were not specifically excluded. At that time the state society encouraged the local chapters to inform members about the legislation and encourage them to con-

tact their legislators. Ultimately the legislation did not pass, but it changed my awareness of the legislative process and how the wording of bills can lead to unintended results that can have substantial impacts.

NSPE keeps track of legislation introduced in state legislatures across the nation that may affect professional engineering licensure or the practice of engineering. This data is available on the NSPE website under "Advocacy: State Watch." Many similar forms of legislation, referred to as "threats" by NSPE, have been introduced across the nation, so the list is sorted by state. Threats in each state are indicated as "active" (introduced in the current legislative session), "potential" (introduced previously and could reemerge), or "enacted" (signed into law). Currently, there are no active threats listed for Arkansas; however, a legislative session of the 94th General Assembly will convene in January 2023. As licensed professional engineers and engineer interns, we should strive to be informed of any legislation that could affect our profession.

The first fundamental cannon of the NSPE Code of Ethics is "Engineers shall hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public." The first line in the Arkansas Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Surveyors states, "In order to safeguard life, health and property and to promote the public welfare, the practice of engineering in the State of Arkansas is subject to regulation." Our first obligation as engineers is to the public health, safety, and welfare. We must keep this obligation at the forefront of our minds when engaging in professional endeavors.

Holder

Continued from page 6

Act (IIJA). As you are aware, it is not our workload concerning most of our firms, but finding staff to get the work done. Speaking of staff, nine out of 10 firms are hiring, and the speakers noted that new hire salaries were up 10% over last year and existing staff salaries are up 7%.

And last, but not least, was a discussion about the hot mergers and acquisitions market. There are four main reasons for this. First, our industry is mature, and we have a favorable 4-6% standard growth rate. Second, the IIJA is making our firms a more attractive investment. Third, our industry is seen as recession resistant. The fourth reason is industry recapitalization.

Let's discuss that fourth reason. Today, 16% of ENR 500 firms are backed by a private equity firm. Two of three firms fail to transition internally, creating an opportunity for outside investors to step in. One of the most interesting things I learned is that most private equity firms will likely sell the firm they purchase in three to seven years. Their strategy is to buy a firm, make it more efficient, and sell it for a higher profit. If you are a leader in your firm and your plan is to sell to the next generation of leaders internally, you need to start making plans to do that now, not when you are five years from retirement.

There are resources on www.acec.org that can help you with this decision. Good luck!

— In the News —

Garver vet Mott on management committee



Mott

Growing up, Earl Mott, P.E., tagged alongside his father as he worked on Garver's Survey Team. That time spent learning the importance of working in the field helped prepare

him for a three-decade-long career at the firm – first as a project engineer and manager for Garver's Aviation Team and then as director of construction services. And now, Mott is the latest to be added to Garver's Management Committee.

From this position, Mott joins a seven-member committee comprised of company leaders in directing the future of Garver.

"I've been around Garver all my life, and not just all my professional life," Mott said. "I'm honored to help guide this century-old firm forward as we help even more airports, DOTs, and municipalities gain access to critical infrastructure solutions."

He currently serves as project manager for Garver's role in construction engineering and inspection services for the Arkansas Department of Transportation's 30 Crossing project, which is the agency's largest effort in history and will provide



Industry Update

Department of Energy and Environment
Jan. 26

Engineering Excellence Awards Gala
Governor's Mansion
March 9, 2023

safer and more efficient travel through the state's largest metro area. His team is also providing construction observation for the city of Wichita's new 120 MGD water treatment plant.

Maestri named to Ark Biz's latest '20 in 20s' list



Maestri

Arkansas Business magazine announced that Garver Aviation Project Engineer Chris Maestri, P.E., has been named as one of the publication's "20 in Their 20s."

This year's class, the 13th, brings together young leaders from across the state who are rising stars in their companies, organizations, and communities. A group of internal judges was tasked with selecting the best and brightest from more than 200 nominations.

Maestri is already making an impact on the rapidly growing aviation landscape in Northwest Arkansas. While working with clients like the Northwest Arkansas National Airport, he has managed projects with a value of more than \$10 million. Those include XNA's Taxiway B Reconstruction, which provided the region's

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In the News (Cont'd)

largest airport with vital infrastructure upgrades that will enable smooth airport operations for decades to come.

It's not the first time Maestri has been recognized for his leadership skills and commitment to his industry and community. He was one of 12 engineers selected for the American Council of Engineering Companies' Emerging Leaders Class of 2022.

Garver's Yancey selected for Leadership Ark.

Garver Construction Services Team Leader Seth Yancey, P.E., will have the opportunity to discuss the economic and political challenges facing Arkansas with a diverse group of business and community



Yancey

leaders after being selected to the latest class of Leadership Arkansas by the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce.

As a part of Leadership Arkansas' 17th class, Yancey will participate in a nine-month program that promotes engagement on issues facing the state, including agriculture, education, infrastructure, economic development, industrial development, and regional development with class members from a variety of fields and backgrounds.

"A large part of why I love my job in the engineering field is that it has a daily impact on my home state," Yancey said. "As engineers we strive to improve the safety and functionality of the infrastructure that we rely on every day to meet the growing demands of our communities. I look forward to finding new outlets to impact Arkansas and connecting with some of our state's best and brightest professionals."

Crafton Tull's Karr a Leadership Benton County grad



Karr

Ali Karr, P.E., CFM, a project manager and civil engineer with Crafton Tull, recently completed Leadership Benton County 2022.

The 11-session program provides leadership training specific to regional issues facing the county, and includes sessions focused on local and county government, education, economy, human services, health care, quality of life, state government, regional issues, and leadership skills and theories.

"I enjoyed getting to know other professionals within the community in different fields," Karr said. "I enjoyed getting to see all the different perspectives on the sectors of the community that we learned about and were exposed to."

Forero joins Crafton Tull's Fayetteville office



Forero

Andres Forero, P.E., CPESC, has joined Crafton Tull's Fayetteville office as a project manager.

Forero brings 24 years of knowledge and experience in drainage design, stormwater management, and erosion control for streets and highways, as well as experience with environmental compliance programs.

In addition to a variety of utility coordination projects in Texas and Kansas, Forero has extensive experience with AR-DOT permitting and projects.

Forero has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Universidad de Los Andes School of Engineering in Bogota, Colombia, as well as an MBA in operations management and finance from Pennsylvania State University. He is also a certified professional in erosion and sediment control.

In his role with Crafton Tull, Forero will primarily focus on project management of land development for private sector clients.



B&F-led Majestic Park named top outdoor facility

The Majestic Park baseball complex was awarded Arkansas' Outdoor Facility of the Year by the Arkansas Recreation and Parks Association at its annual conference in September.

This park, which competed with other facilities in the state that cost \$500,000 or more to construct, was born from a community vision to fill a void left by the 2018 closure of the Hot Springs Boys and Girls Club youth facility.

After Hot Springs voters approved an \$8.5 million bond issue in 2019 to fund the construction of a new baseball complex, B & F Engineering, a Division of Crafton Tull, was selected by Visit Hot Springs as the lead design professional for the project. It provided civil engineering and surveying services, while Halff Associates, Inc. provided master planning, field design, and landscape architecture. Sowell Architects led the design of park buildings, assisted by HSA Engineering for mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineering, and P.E., Inc. for structural engineering.

The new complex features four youth fields and one championship 400-foot field, all with synthetic turf. New restrooms, concessions, and a playground connecting to the adjacent community trail provide modern amenities. The project adds 266 on-site parking stalls, ADA-compliant sidewalks, LED lighting, a tree-lined center corridor between fields, and spectator seating, including shaded seating for spectators.



Moriconi

cial and recreational facilities, and grading design. Moriconi is a three-time published author in a significant engineering industry publication. Topics include solutions for flooding

events, city planning for climate change, and climate adaptation.

She served as the ambassador of the University of Arkansas Civil Engineering Department, a role that included speaking engagements at various high schools across the state.

Water Resources Team Leader Mark Rickett, P.E., CFM, said, "We are thrilled to have Liza on our team. Her experience and enthusiasm for the profession are essential in helping us continue growing our practice in Arkansas."

UA grad Moriconi joins Halff staff

Liza Moriconi, E.I., has joined Halff's Little Rock office Land Development/Water Resources team.

Moriconi joined Halff in May 2022 after graduating from the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville. Since then, she has been exposed to stormwater management, urban drainage planning, utilities and site planning for commer-

Vasquez joins Halff's planning, landscaping team

Brian Vasquez has joined Halff's Little Rock office Planning and Landscape Architecture team.

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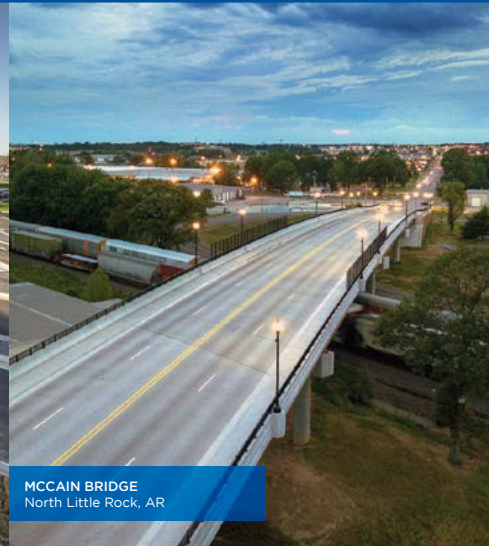
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Vasquez holds a Master's in Landscape Architecture from Florida International University in Miami. He is already involved in projects in Arkansas, including the Conway Soccer Complex, the Cabot Downtown Art Walk, and Pickleball Park in Hot Springs.

Planning/Landscape Architecture Team Leader Sally Horsey, PLA, ASLA, CLARB, said, "Brian has hit the ground running. His body of work and ability to analyze large-scale sites and integrate clever solutions to design challenges make him the perfect addition to our team."

Burns & McDonnell expands, adds Nunez as intern

Burns & McDonnell recently completed an expansion of its Springdale office as 2022 was the office's best year in terms of sales and projects executed.

The office opened in 2013 with a focus on transportation engineering, and moved to its current location in 2019. The transportation team has grown, but engineers and consultants providing geotechnical engineering, electric substation design, water and wastewater engineering, and zero-emissions technology consulting also have been added. The additional space will allow these teams to grow and add more capabilities to the team.



Nunez

Timothy Nunez recently began a co-op internship within the Springdale office. Originally from Overland Park, Kansas, he is a senior at the University of Arkansas in the civil engineering program. He is president of the U of A Student Chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers, where he works to strengthen the connection between students and engineering professionals. He has previous internship experience in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and with a regional construction company.



MCE PROJECTS. Top left, the groundbreaking at Our House. Top right, Dan Beranek, P.E., speaks at the Big Dam Bridge North Little Rock Plaza groundbreaking. Bottom left, a groundbreaking for Maumelle High School's track, indoor practice facility, softball field and baseball field. Bottom right, the topping out ceremony for the Texarkana Regional Airport's new terminal building.

MCE celebrates designs for Our House, three other projects

Three McClelland Consulting Engineers-designed projects recently celebrated their groundbreaking ceremonies, while a fourth project held a topping out ceremony.

On Sept. 23, team members from MCE's Little Rock office attended a groundbreaking for two proposed new buildings at Our House, a central Arkansas-based organization providing transitional housing for families and individuals in or facing homelessness. Our House has a focus on providing training programs and resources for career stability.

MCE is serving as the civil engineer and landscape architect for this project, which includes 8,000 square feet for family housing, 5,800 square feet for the middle and high school student program, and 200 square feet of space for a career center. Housing will be doubled by the expansion, increasing the capacity by 56 people. The little learners expansion and out-of-school program for middle and high school students also will be doubled. MCE's president, Dan Beranek, P.E., and Ed Hankins IV,

PLA, from MCE's Land Development Department participated.

Also in September, Beranek along with Brett Budolfson, PLA, and Caleb Zimmerman attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Big Dam Bridge North Little Rock Plaza. MCE designed this project for Pulaski County and worked closely with County Judge Barry Hyde and Steve Brummett, also from the county. The plaza will be completed next year.

On Oct. 11, Rodney McCain from MCE's Little Rock office attended a groundbreaking ceremony at Maumelle High School for its new track, indoor practice facility, softball field, and baseball field. MCE provided civil design services.

MCE was on hand for the topping out ceremony for the Texarkana Regional Airport's new terminal building Sept. 29. The project is in Phase III of four total phases of construction and is slated to open to the public in 2024. MCE is working alongside WD&D Architects and Nabholz as the construction manager.

Krishnan is ASCE Engineer of Year



Krishnan

MCE's Maaneesh Krishnan, P.E., was selected as the Engineer of the Year in October by the Arkansas Chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Krishnan has worked for MCE since 2007 and is a project manager and assistant department head for the Transportation Department. He works out of the Little Rock office.

In other MCE news, Alex Smith,

P.E., a project manager and partner at MCE, was recently selected to participate in this year's Leadership Greater Little Rock class. Forty-seven community members were selected for the program. Over the next seven months, Smith and his companions will be visiting different locations to explore topics including history, economics, education and social welfare services.

MCE's Tomlinson a project manager

MCE's Leah Tomlinson recently was promoted from a project designer to a project manager.

Tomlinson works out of MCE's Fayetteville office in the



Tomlinson

Transportation Department, where she has been since 2014. Projects she has worked on have involved roadway and drainage design projects including trails, bicycle lanes, roundabout designs and associated drainage. She has also worked on erosion control plans and temporary traffic control plans. She is experienced

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In the News (Cont'd)

with municipal water projects, sanitary sewer design projects, and multifaceted University of Arkansas projects, including those that incorporate low-impact design aspects.

Voegele joins Crist Engineers



Voegele

Trevor Voegele, P.E., has joined the staff of Crist Engineers, Inc.

Voegele is a registered professional engineer with four years of experience in municipal water and wastewater utility design and system management. His experience includes project selection, design review, implementation, new utility construction, rehabilitation, repair, replacement projects, and building renovation.

Prior to Crist Engineers, Voegele served as the water systems engineer with Conway Corporation in Conway, where he was responsible for water/wastewater system design, asset management, hydraulic modeling, construction project management, development plan review, regulatory compliance, and water quality/ source protection management.

His professional affiliations include service on the AWWA Aesthetic Quality and Perceptions Committee, and AWWA Disinfection Committee.

Crow Group changes name to TOLM Group

Crow Group, Inc. is changing its name to TOLM Group to better establish a sustainable, long-term identity from which the organization can continue to evolve, grow, and thrive.

TOLM Group is a full-service construction and engineering firm head-

quartered in Morrilton with a satellite office in Springdale. It provides a diverse range of services for clients across multiple divisions – industrial, water/wastewater, commercial, and heavy civil.



TWENTY YEARS. Michael Baker International Senior Transportation Engineer Bob Myers, P.E., left, receives a plaque for 20 years of service to the firm as it celebrated its 20 years in Arkansas Aug. 18. Presenting the plaque was Mike Stengel, P.E., office executive and vice president.



Killough



Toney

Michael Baker engineers pass P.E. exams

Two Michael Baker International engineers recently passed their P.E. exams and are now professional engineers in Arkansas.

Ian Killough, P.E., joined Michael Baker's Little Rock roadway team in 2019. He previously served eight years as an infantry officer in the U.S. Marine Corps and is a veteran of Afghanistan.

Jason Toney, P.E., joined Michael Baker's Bentonville roadway team in January

2022 after working for three years as a construction engineer/inspector with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

Benchmark named a top place to work by Arkansas Biz

Benchmark Group, Inc., was awarded one of this year's "Best Places to Work" by Arkansas Business magazine.

The award is presented by the magazine in partnership with Workforce Research Group. Based on employee surveys, it is designed to identify, recognize and honor the best employers in Arkansas benefiting the state's economy, workforce, and businesses.

"We are excited and honored to receive this recognition," said David P. Kimball, P.E., Benchmark's president. "The success of our company is due to the dedicated team at Benchmark Group, Inc., who work diligently to ensure the satisfaction of our clients. I would like to thank everyone on our team for this award."

Located in Rogers and Dallas, Benchmark Group is an architectural and engineering firm with professionals licensed in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

Benchmark Group, along with the other winners, was celebrated at a special awards ceremony in September, and all are published in a special supplement of Arkansas Business released Oct. 3.

Hammond of Olsson receives AWWA honor

Olsson Fayetteville office leader Brad Hammond, P.E., was honored by the Southwest Section of the American Water Works Association (AWWA) for using his engineering skills to benefit the water supply field on a regional level.

The Southwest Section presented Hammond with the George Warren Fuller Award. Only a few Fuller Awards

are given out each year on a regional level for “distinguished service to the water supply field in commemoration of the sound engineering skill, the brilliant diplomatic talent, and the constructive leadership which characterized the life of George Warren Fuller,” according to the AWWA.



Hammond

Hammond specializes in design projects for water and wastewater systems, as well as other municipal public works projects. He has been active with the Southwest Section for more than 20 years, and he served as its chair in 2022. He has also served as president of ACEC/A and as a board member of ASPE.

The AWWA will present Hammond with a plaque at its annual conference and exposition in Toronto in June 2023.

RP Power, KOHLER help expand Ozark Point water plant

RP Power provided an emergency standby solution for Central Arkansas Water’s expansion of its Ozark Point treatment plant. The systems ensure constant power for new high service pumps, new backwash blowers, and other existing plant loads. The project’s challenges included its location in a historic area with narrow streets and tight curves. Complicating the solution was the need to power the plant’s existing electrical service.

The solution includes a KOHLER KD1250-A generator set featuring a brushless, permanent-magnet pilot exciter alternator. An aluminum sound level 2 enclosure with automotive-grade finish provides advanced corrosion and abrasion protection as well as enhanced edge coverage and color retention. An internal silencer provides quiet operation, length-

ens component life, and increases operator safety. Also included is a 5,808-gallon capacity fuel tank. It offers continuous operation until grid power is restored or refueling needed.

The generator set also features a KOHLER APM603 controller for one-source system integration and remote communication. The controller provides advanced control, system monitoring, and system diagnostics.

To facilitate the integration of generator and controls, utility services, and other distribution equipment, the solution includes paralleling switchgear for command and control of multiple power sources.

The custom work was designed by Brown Engineers and performed by Max Foote Construction and Koontz Electric to properly integrate the solution. This allowed CAW to meet a precise need now, as well as into the future, as further expansion plans are being developed.

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ACEC/A Member Spotlight

Employee-owned Crafton Tull grows

Engineering firm is state's third employee stock ownership plan company

Matt Crafton, P.E., president, CEO and chairman of Crafton Tull, can look outside his window and see one of his firm's biggest recent projects.

Crafton Tull did the design work for the Arkansas Department of Transportation that transformed the interchange of Walnut Street and Walton Boulevard in Rogers from a diamond to a single-point design. The project has been under construction for three years and is almost completed.

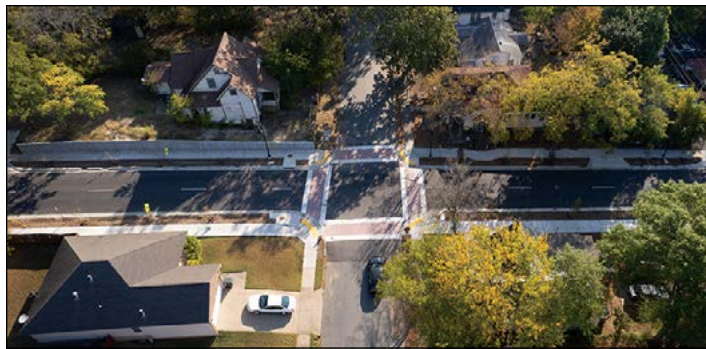
Crafton Tull is involved in other major projects in Arkansas. In Little Rock, former ASPE President Brad Peterson, P.E., is working with Michael Baker International on a study considering a more direct route from the Little Rock Port to I-530. The firm also is completely redesigning Northwest Park and its eight Little League-sized baseball fields in Rogers, and is redesigning Bentonville's Phillips Park, with 10 baseball fields.

Crafton heads a firm that was co-founded by his father, Bob Crafton, 59 years ago. He and his college buddy, Lem Tull, had both gone to work at the Highway Department after graduating. But when the Army Corps of Engineers dammed the White River and created Beaver Lake, Tull anticipated that Northwest Arkansas would start to grow and convinced Crafton to start their own partnership. They moved their families to Rogers and set up shop in a downtown motel room on Nov. 20, 1963.

Crafton retired in 2000. Tull died in 2019. His son, Jim Tull, is the company's chief financial officer.

From those humble beginnings, the company has grown to roughly 300 employees, about a third of them field surveyors, in 10 offices in Arkansas and Oklahoma. It also does work for oil and gas companies in Texas.

It does primarily civil engineering, about half for governmental clients and half for private ones.



AMONG CRAFTON TULL'S projects have been the Pleasant Grove Road roundabout in Rogers, top, and the 12th Street "jump start" project to redevelop a corridor in Little Rock, left. Crafton Tull was started by Bob Crafton and Lem Tull in 1963.

Its most recent acquisition occurred this year, when it acquired Hot Springs-based B & F Engineering, which is celebrating its 50th year in business. That move added 40 employees to Crafton Tull. Matt Crafton said the two firms had worked together on highway projects for more than 20 years. He said the two have been "a great cultural fit."

The Hot Springs office is currently known as "B & F Engineering, a Division of Crafton Tull," but it will adopt the Crafton Tull name over the next year.

Crafton said the firm is contemplating other acquisitions.

"We want to grow our business," he said. "There's no secret about that. We need to grow and we want to grow, and we just want to make sure if we do an acquisition that it's going to be in the best interest of everybody."

Crafton Tull became Arkansas' third ESOP, or an employee stock ownership

plan company – in 2019. The first two were Harp's and Central States Manufacturing.

Crafton said the company made the switch because leaders knew it would undergo an ownership transition in the coming years. Shareholders agreed to make the switch and sold their interest back to the company. Now all employees have an ownership in the company and receive stock if they work a certain number of hours in a year.

Crafton said that being business owners will hopefully change employees' perspective on the company. For example, if they see a piece of paper on the sidewalk outside the building, they're more likely to pick it up.

"We think it's going well," he said. "It creates a great culture of openness and just sharing information with everybody, setting goals together and all trying to make the business successful."

In the News (Cont'd)

BXS change to Cadence Insurance now complete

BXS Insurance is now completely re-branded as Cadence Insurance.

“Our team continues to adhere to our commitment to our core values and to delivering excellent service for our clients and industry partners,” said Cadence Insurance President and CEO Markham McKnight. “We focus on understanding our clients’ risk and designing plans addressing that risk. Doing so is part of our identity – past, present and future.”

McKnight added that Cadence Insurance’s team is remaining in place.

The change comes after regulatory approval after the merger of Cadence Bancorporation into BancorpSouth Bank, with BancorpSouth as the surviving company in October 2021.

BancorpSouth adopted the Cadence Bank name, and its stock trades on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol CADE.

Registration opens next month for tickets for EEAs

Registration for tables and individual tickets for the ACEC/A’s Engineering Excellence Awards Gala will open Jan. 13. Go to arkansasengineers.org to register for the event.

The EEA Gala will be held as usual at the Governor’s Mansion March 9. It showcases the outstanding work of award-winning engineering firms and, more importantly, highlights the vital role played by the engineering profession.

The submission deadline for the 2023 EEAs has already passed. Entries could



GRAND CONCEPTOR. CEI Engineering’s Nate Bachelor, P.E., center, and Rogers City Engineer Lance Jobe, P.E., right, accept the Grand Conceptor Award from Olsson’s Brad Hammond at the 2022 Engineering Excellence Awards.

be accepted in 12 project categories, all but one of them for both large and small projects. Judging was to begin in December and is based on original or innovative application of new or existing techniques; future value to the engineering

In the News continues on page 19

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“This is one of those projects that does not come along very often in Arkansas. It will prove to be a legacy project for all involved and will be a notable time in history. Our team at TOLM is excited to allow this project to further serve as a representation of the talents and capabilities that our organization has developed over the years. We are honored to partner with Crist Engineers and the City of Hot Springs to construct such a beautiful and meaningful facility.”

- Greg Smith, Vice President of TOLM Group



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B & F celebrates firm's 50 years

Firm's leaders look back, look ahead to future after being acquired by Crafton Tull

The founders and longtime leaders of B & F Engineering commemorated the company's 50 years in business while celebrating the firm's new status with Crafton Tull in an outdoor event Oct. 27.

The Hot Springs-based company founded by Don Beavers and Bill Fletcher reached its 50th year in business in January 2022. Effective Jan. 31, it was acquired by Rogers-based Crafton Tull. It is now known as B & F Engineering, a Division of Crafton Tull, but will adopt the Crafton Tull name over the next year. Crafton Tull staff members from its Little Rock, Tulsa and Rogers offices attended.

James Montgomery, P.S., B & F's former president and CEO who now manages the Hot Springs office, told attendees that B & F's projects and revenues had grown in the five years prior to 2022.

But that growth along with the COVID pandemic brought new challenges and demands, and the company's leadership was trying to determine how to maintain B & F's tradition of family, community and quality service. The company had long partnered on projects with Crafton Tull, an employee-owned company, and the two firms began talking about an acquisition.

Montgomery acknowledged that the decision to be acquired was bittersweet, but it was best for the employees, clients and community. He had joined the company in 1992 after interviewing with a shoeless, sock-wearing Fletcher on a relaxed Friday. He choked up at times talking about the company and did again when he described Crafton Tull's Matt Crafton, P.E., and Jim Tull, as "genuine people." He said their presence in Hot Springs that evening showed what they thought about the community.

Matt Crafton, the company's CEO, said the two companies had contracted together for 20 years and were a "natural fit" whose cultures easily blended. He said his company knew from experience that B & F staff members were people of integrity who care about their community and do outstanding work. He said he



JAMES MONTGOMERY, P.S., former B & F Engineering president and CEO and now head of Crafton Tull's Hot Springs office, speaks while B & F co-founder Bill Fletcher, left, and B & F partner Gary Ryles look on. Left photo, CEO Matt Crafton, P.E., speaks.



may have met Montgomery 20 years earlier while they were surveying a swampy area south of Pine Bluff.

B & F Engineering's relationship with the community also was part of the story. Gary Troutman, president and CEO of the Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce, said co-founder Beavers had led the Chamber's transportation committee from 1965 to 2019. He said B & F had played a major role in projects such as the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Expressway as well as Highway 70 connecting Hot Springs and Benton. Montgomery had helped hire him at the Chamber five years earlier.

Beavers and Fletcher along with Gary Ryles attended the event. Ryles had joined the company in 1972 and became a partner in 1976 before retiring in 2009. He recalled a staff meeting where Fletcher announced the meeting would begin with a prayer.

Fletcher said that meeting had come during a hard time both personally and professionally. The company was struggling, and his twin brother had recently died. He was driving at 2 a.m. in the morning wondering what the company needed to do to survive. He went to his brother's still somewhat fresh grave and prayed. He left the cemetery thinking that faith in the Lord had kept the company together, so he started opening staff meetings with prayer.

"I guess the one point that I want to bring out tonight is that all of the success that's happened here is due to our Lord, and I want to give Him the glory," he had earlier said. "But there's been several times, I won't name them, that we, especially in the early days, didn't know how we were going to make the next payroll, but the Lord always sent us a job that got it done."

In the News (Cont'd)

profession; social, economic and sustainable design considerations; complexity; and exceeding client/owner needs.

The event culminates in the naming of the ACEC/A Grand Conceptor Award as selected by a panel of judges. The 2022 winner was CEI Engineering for its Railroad Park project for the city of Rogers.

The event is being planned by a committee whose members are Travis Tolley, P.E., Crafton Tull; Keith Britton, P.E., Iconic Consulting Group; Lindsay Young, nu marketing; Brittany Goff, Crafton Tull; and Clare Dunn, Halff.

ACEC/A Past Prez Council takes shape

ACEC/A has started a Past Presidents Council whose purpose will be to serve as the Council's historians. It also will be a resource during the Senior Leader-

ship Roundtable for the ACEC/A's Emerging Leaders, the group of young design professionals who spend a year learning about management and communication skills.

Rick Geraci, P.E., is chairing the group and is developing a charter.

ACEC/A Executive Director Angie W. Cooper said the idea came to light in 2021 and then solidified this past year. A number of past presidents participated in the 2022 Senior Leadership Roundtable.

"I have 14 years of history," she said. "The rest of it, I depend on others, so if any past president wants to participate, please call me."



Geraci

Plans forming for ASPE Conference

The ASPE Annual Conference is scheduled for April 13-14 at the Hot Springs Convention Center.

As with this year, the conference will be held in person after the previous two conferences were held virtually.

Plans are still being formed, but highlights typically include the passing of the gavel from one ASPE president to the next, the Order of the Engineer ring ceremony, the graduation of the year's Emerging Leaders participants, and the recognition of the Engineer of the Year and Young Engineer of the Year. Those last two are nominated by the ASPE local chapters.

Presenters and sponsors are being sought. Please contact Angie W. Cooper at awcooper@arkansasengineers.org or at 501.912.4099.



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EMERGING LEADERS. This year's class includes back row, from left, William Kraner, P.E., CEM, Benchmark Group; Ian Killough, P.E., Michael Baker International; Tyler Feemster, P.E., Crafton Tull; Clinton Muse, CEI Engineering; Blake Johnston, E.I., Iconic Consulting Group; Anthony Jones, P.G., McGeorge Contracting; Stephane Bossio, EIT, Michael Baker International; Luke Jost, P.E., Crafton Tull. Front row, Samantha Campbell, E.I., Olsson; Danny Hernandez, McClelland Consulting Engineers; Zach Morehart, P.E., McClelland Consulting Engineers; Steven "Cody" Chisholm, Mid-South Engineering; Ryan Clark, CEI Engineering; Jessica Hollinsworth, CDI Contractors; Matt Loos, P.E., LEED AP, Olsson; Luke Freedle, P.E., Garver. Andrew Obsenshain, Arkansas Welding Academy, Inc., is not pictured.

Largest Emerging Leaders class starts

Group learns how understanding people's differences can help them manage conflict

Members of the largest ever Emerging Leaders class spent their first day together Sept. 28 learning how to build bridges – between people, not land masses.

The young design professionals worked with Michael Brown, founder of Fayetteville-based Insight Leadership Group. Among the lessons learned was recognizing how they and others handle conflict.

The Arkansas Emerging Leaders Program is a six-session program focused on right-brain thinking – the people skills associated with business management and the creative, visionary skills required of effective leaders. Accomplished pre-

senters provide personal insights, timely information and useful tools that help participants enhance their engineering career and serve their employer and the engineering industry.

In addition to the Leadership Development Series at Garver's office in Fayetteville Sept. 28-29, participants also are attending classes in Contracts and Risk Reduction, State Government, Business 101, and a Senior Leadership Roundtable. The seven-month program concludes with the ASPE Annual Conference, where participants are recognized as graduates and participate in the Order of the Engineer ceremony.

The program is open to anyone over 25 who is a member of ASPE and/or an employee of an ACEC/A member firm. It costs \$925. Participants earn 10 pro-

fessional development hours. Alumni are allowed to attend sessions – and earn professional development hours – at no additional cost.

Seventeen professionals are participating in this year's program. It traditionally has been limited to 12 participants, but there was so much interest this year that ACEC/A and ASPE organizers decided to open it up to additional applicants.

As part of the Leadership Development Series, the participants completed the SDI 2.0 assessment. SDI stands for Strengths Deployment Inventory.

The assessment is a tool offered by Core Strengths, an organizational development company that helps people develop what it calls "relationship intelligence." It measures four areas: an individual's motives, how they handle con-

flict, their strengths, and the strengths that they overdo.

Motives are charted on a tricolor Motivational Value System (MVS) triangle based on three priorities: people, performance and processes. Individuals whose tests show they are “blues” tend to be people-focused. “Reds” tend to focus on results or performance. “Greens” tend to be process-oriented and analytical. Others are combinations of two colors or “hubs,” which are a mixture of all three. Brown said knowing where one falls on this spectrum – and where others fall – creates more effective communication and avoids the problems that can arise in conflict. For example, blues tend to accommodate others while reds tend to be direct. A red leader might express an opinion so directly that a blue staff member feels unsafe challenging it, not realizing that the leader is willing to consider other options. As the blue accommodates again and again, feelings of resentment can arise.



MCE'S ZACH MOREHART, P.E., left, chats with Matt Loos, P.E., LEED AP, Olsson, at the Leadership Development Series session Sept. 28, top.

Brown said red supervisors should circle back with a blue and give them a chance to offer their thoughts when

they've had time to think and are ready to present their viewpoints.

Please see EMERGING on page 23



When the **Arkansas Game and Fish Commission** needed to expand and rehabilitate the Jim Hinkle Spring River State Fish Hatchery in Mammoth Spring, who did they call?



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ACEC/A Trap Shoot



FOURTEEN TEAMS with 65 total shooters participated in the First Annual ACEC/A Trap Shoot at the Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation Shooting Sports Complex in Jacksonville Nov. 2. Those firms were Garver, CEI, McClelland Consulting Engineers, HNTB, Terracon, Michael Baker International, McGeorge Contracting, Corporate Tax Advisors, Pickering Firm, Crafton Tull, Iconic Consulting Group, and Atlas Geo Tech. Top right, Terracon won the team prize. Pictured from left are Corey Bowen, Michael Samuhel, Aaron Hunter, Darcy Adams, ACEC/A President Jerry Holder, P.E., of Garver, Jacob Earls and Matt Wood. Hunter won the individual award. The team won \$500 while Hunter won \$300. Top left, John Youll, a project manager with CEI, blasts a trap. Middle right, Landon Miller, P.E., with Michael Baker International destroys a trap. Bottom right, Adam Triche, P.E., with McClelland Consulting Engineers takes a shot. Triche won a \$1,000 shotgun through a raffle sponsored by ACEC Business Trust. Other sponsors were: lunch, Garver; beverage, Environmental Technical Sales; target, Michael Baker International; pull, HNTB, McClelland Consulting Engineers, Corporate Tax Advisors; range, Atlas, Haynes Water and Waste Water Equipment; others, Cadence Insurance and nu marketing



Emerging

Continued from page 21

"How do you adjust your approach if you're working with a green versus a hub or red to help that person move towards a result so they hear your words?" he told the Emerging Leaders. "And when they have a struggle, how do you hear from their perspective to adjust your approach? That's what we're talking about. That's relationship intelligence. ...

"What I hope is that at the minimum, you recognize and realize we are not all the same. We don't think the same way, we don't process the same way, and that's OK. So therefore, what do I do about it is I adjust my approach."

Brown told Building Arkansas that while engineers are stereotypically analytical, the assessment taken by the Emerging Leaders showed a wide range of results across the MVS triangle.

Zachary Morehart, P.E., of McClelland Consulting Engineers appreciated the opportunity to learn skills that weren't taught in his engineering classes at the University of Arkansas - Fayetteville.

"It's been good, very insightful [and it] puts a whole new thought process when dealing with people, how you see people, how you read people," he said. "So it's been interesting."

Morehart has been an aviation civil engineer at MCE for a little more than eight years. His team currently is working on a new terminal at the Texarkana Regional Airport. He's been moving into project management roles, and his boss recommended the class so he could grow his leadership skills.

"I'm very analytical, so this is kind off the cuff for me, but it's good to stretch how I think," he said.

In addition to Morehart, this year's participants include the following:

- Andrew Obsenshain, Arkansas Welding Academy
- William Kraner, P.E., CEM, Benchmark Group
- Jessica Hollinsworth, CDI Contractors
- Ryan Clark, CEI Engineering
- Clinton Muse, CEI Engineering
- Tyler Feemster, Crafton Tull
- Luke Jost, Crafton Tull
- Luke Freedle, P.E., Garver
- Blake Johnston, E.I., Iconic Consulting Group



MICHAEL BROWN of Insight Leadership Group discusses how the young professionals can improve their "relationship intelligence" by understanding how they and others handle conflict. **Steven "Cody" Chisholm**, left, with Mid-South Engineering, and **Luke Freedle, P.E.**, Garver, look on.

- Danny Hernandez, McClelland Consulting Engineers
- Anthony Jones, P.G., McGeorge Contracting
- Stephane Bossio, EIT, Michael Baker International
- Ian Killough, P.E., Michael Baker International
- Cody Chisholm, Mid-South Engineering
- Samantha Campbell, Olsson
- Matt Loos, Olsson

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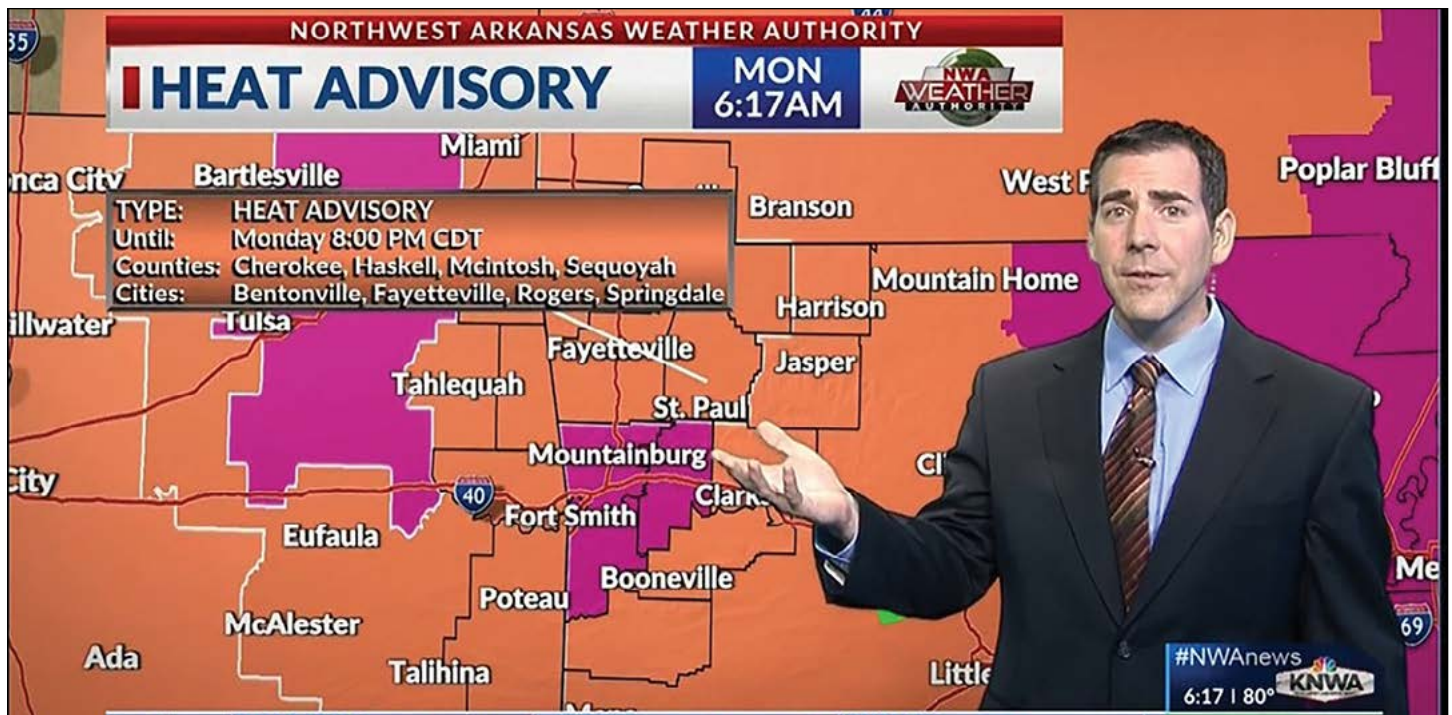
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MICHAEL BAKER INTERNATIONAL'S Ian Killough, P.E., participates in a group discussion with the other Emerging Leaders.



Boll knows engineering, weather

He was on the air when the tornado hit Joplin in 2011. Then he became an Olsson engineer and helped Joplin rebuild.

By Mark Derowitsch
Special to Building Arkansas

When KNWA, the NBC affiliate in Fayetteville, needed someone to deliver the weather for a few weeks this summer, the station's chief meteorologist reached out to Olsson's Aaron Boll, P.E.

Boll's expertise is well documented. Before he became an engineer, he was a meteorologist who graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a bachelor's degree in meteorology.

"It was kind of fun to step back into the industry," he said. "But it definitely reaffirmed my decision to go back to school and become an engineer. It was nice to dip my feet back in the water and not stay long-term."

After earning his bachelor's degree in meteorology, Aaron interned at several TV stations and then ended up in Springfield, Missouri, in 2011. Weeks later, the Joplin tornado hit. As the only weather person on staff at KSPR that day, he did wall-to-wall weather coverage for five hours, warning viewers to take shelter as the storm continued to produce tornado damage. The following days and months,

he also reported on tornado recovery efforts and told miraculous survival stories.

Though he enjoyed his work, he realized as he approached his 30th birthday that he wanted to do something different. With the job came long shifts at odd times and frequent moves.

As a kid, Boll was fascinated by the weather, especially flooding, and he would build dams and channelize storm drains. That's how he decided to become a stormwater engineer.

"Instead of telling people it's going to flood, I could fix the infrastructure before it happens," he said.

Boll enrolled at the University of Missouri Science & Technology, and two years later left with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. He spent time in the stormwater department with the City of Springfield before joining Olsson in 2017.

His first task with Olsson was to help with final recovery projects in Joplin.

"It was really neat to go from warning viewers about the destructive tornado and documenting their stories of survival to actually helping the community rebuild," he said.

As a member of the firm's Water Resources practice, he's been able to help communities avoid and fix problems with floods rather than report on the devastating effects of rising waters.

"It's really rewarding to help communities that may have struggled with flooding," he said.

His newest venture is to start a Water Resources team in Northwest Arkansas, so he recently relocated to Fayetteville to help Olsson grow its presence.

Boll's team is working on stormwater rehabilitation projects in Bentonville, which entails fixing aging storm sewers and adding new storm sewers to address flooding issues. In addition, the team began a study of Lake Fayetteville to help the city discover options that will improve water quality, which will benefit recreational uses for area citizens.

Water Resources team members in Fayetteville have extensive experience in creating stormwater master plans, designing culverts and bridges, mapping and permitting floodplains, designing detention basins and drainage ditches, and coming up with plans to stabilize or restore stream banks.

"Northwest Arkansas has grown so quickly in the past couple decades that infrastructure is playing catch-up in many locations. I look forward to helping communities deal with their flooding issues," he said.

He might also help you know how to dress for the weather before you head out the door in Northwest Arkansas.

Sanders era begins. What to expect?

Engineering issues probably won't be at the forefront when legislators meet in January. But there will be plenty to keep an eye on.

By Steve Brawner
Editor

A new governor will be at the State Capitol, and Republicans will have a larger supermajority than they did before. As for national politics, split-party rule returns.

Arkansas Republicans won all statewide offices in the Nov. 8 elections, all of them by wide margins. Heading the ticket was Gov.-elect Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who won with 63% of the vote. Lt. Gov.-elect Leslie Rutledge's election means Arkansas will not only have its first-ever female governor but also its first female lieutenant governor as well. Rutledge, the state's current attorney general, will be trading jobs with Tim Griffin, the state's current lieutenant governor. He was elected attorney general with almost 68% of the vote.

Meanwhile, Republicans grew their supermajorities in the Senate, from 27 seats to 29, and in the House from 78 seats to 82. The results assure Republicans that they will comfortably have more than the 75% majorities needed to pass appropriations bills. Democrats won't be able to stop anything as long as Republicans are



GOV.-ELECT SARAH HUCKABEE SANDERS speaks after voting Nov. 10 in Little Rock while her husband, Bryan, looks on. Sanders enters office with huge Republican supermajorities in both the House and Senate.

united. Meanwhile, Republicans passed a rule in the Senate's organizational meeting limiting Democrats to two members on any committee, which are typically eight members total.

Robert Coon, a political consultant with Impact Management Group who works with ACEC/A, said Republicans in

Arkansas enjoyed a better election than Republicans nationwide. Overall, Republicans underperformed by barely winning the House and failing to gain control of the Senate in what was expected to be a "red wave." In Arkansas, Republicans benefitted from the state's historic shift to

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“I want us to be able to responsibly use our resources, to be good stewards, to be conservationists in the truest sense in the idea that we use what we have and leave a place better than we found it for future generations. That’s both environmentally and economically, and there’s a model and a way that we can do that.”

- U.S. Rep. Bruce Westerman, speaking to the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

the right as well as the district lines they drew for the first time in history after the 2020 U.S. census. Coon said the lines were not really gerrymandered, meaning they weren’t drawn in ways that unfairly benefit one party over another. The fact is, this is a Republican state.

The Democrats’ top vote-getter, gubernatorial candidate Chris Jones, only managed 35% of the vote despite running a very active campaign and raising millions of dollars during the primary and general election campaigns. Polls taken in September and October by Talk Business & Politics and Hendrix College showed him potentially reaching the 40% mark, which would have been better than any statewide Democrat has done since 2014. But in the end, he performed only a little better than the other statewide Democrats.

Sanders will come into the governor’s office with a ton of political capital. She will be the only person involved in law-making who was elected on a statewide basis, other than Rutledge and Griffin to a much smaller extent. She won with two-thirds of the vote, a strong majority. She was already well-known and well-liked as former President Trump’s former press secretary and as former Gov. Mike Huckabee’s daughter.

Coon expects her to enter the January legislative session with a clear agenda, and Republicans will largely work towards those goals. To a large extent, what she wants, she will get.

“I think her vote share kind of reinforces that as well,” he said. “I think it will be the expectation that she will be able to kind of drive the conversation. She obviously has the bully pulpit. I think she will want to throw out what her initial agenda is. I think obviously the Legislature is its own body, and there will be people that have priorities, but I think what we’ll see

is probably a focus on Sarah’s priorities at the outset, and then see what other issues come up.”

Sanders’ campaign was heavy on themes and light on specifics, which is not unusual for modern campaigns. She did not talk much about engineering-specific issues, although the “N” in her Arkansas LEARNS education program referred to broadband networking.

Engineering not a focus

Coon does not expect engineering to be a focus this session. Procurement processes have been discussed in recent years, but there doesn’t seem to be movement in that area. Occupational licensing again will be brought up. There’s long been a feeling that too many barriers exist in too many professions – hair-braiding being an often-referenced one. Engineers and architects should be insulated because legislators won’t want to put public health and safety at risk. However, engineers will need to remind legislators of their role, and be vigilant to ensure engineering doesn’t somehow get caught up in other bills.

Likewise, Coon does not expect much movement on infrastructure. Arkansas voters in 2020 enshrined a half-cent sales tax in the Constitution dedicated to roads and highways, while the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act signed by President Biden into law in 2021 will send billions of dollars to the state. The focus, Coon said, will be on seeing through that process.



Coon

There could be movement on workforce issues, which affect engineering firms along with other businesses. The lack of qualified employees in the labor force is no secret, and it’s a huge priority for the state’s business interests. The “R” in Sanders’ LEARNS plan stood for “readiness” regarding workforce development. Her campaign website said she would create flexibility for students to pursue internships and apprenticeships, and would align career and technical programs with in-demand jobs. It said she would establish a workforce cabinet and launch a statewide campaign supporting technical and trade schools.

“It doesn’t matter what part of the state I’ve traveled to or what type of business I have met with, there has yet to be a single person that tells me that they can hire the skilled, qualified workers that they need, and so that has to be a priority for our next administration,” she said in her gubernatorial debate on Arkansas PBS Oct. 21.

It’s almost certain that Sanders and lawmakers will cut taxes. Income taxes were cut throughout Gov. Asa Hutchinson’s eight years in office, but the state still ran a \$1.628 billion budget surplus in fiscal year 2022. Sanders during the campaign said she supported phasing out the income tax completely, although she wasn’t specific about when that would occur.

Coon expects legislators to cut taxes cautiously despite recent huge budget surpluses and the Republican supermajority. There are just too many unknowns about the future.

“No one wants to put themselves into a position where they have to come back and raise taxes, and so I think that is a key dynamic that’s at play is to do it in a way that they don’t get ahead of themselves,” he said.

Another issue that could arise – but also might not – is tort reform. Changing the state’s lawsuit rules has been a priority for the business community, but the Arkansas Supreme Court removed the last big attempt from the ballot in 2018. Coon said Republicans have fractured on the issue in the past. Some oppose tort reform, as do Democrats. Any issue would have to go before the voters, which is a challenging process.

Split-party rule returns to D.C.

Like the state offices, Republicans won every congressional race in Arkansas. Sen. John Boozman was elected with 66% of the vote. The House members – Reps. Rick Crawford, French Hill, Steve Womack, and Bruce Westerman – were re-elected by large majorities.

The Republican takeover of the House could pay dividends for Arkansas. Westerman, an engineer and also Congress' only forester, is currently the ranking member on the Natural Resources Committee and is in line to chair it starting in January. The committee has jurisdiction over land and water use including oceans, the National Parks, and energy and mineral resources.

Westerman explained his vision in an interview with the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, saying, "I want us to be able to responsibly use our resources, to be good stewards, to be conservationists in the truest sense in the idea that we use what we have and leave a place better than we

found it for future generations. That's both environmentally and economically, and there's a model and a way that we can do that."

Meanwhile, Womack is the ranking member of the House Appropriations Committee's Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee. This would put him in a powerful position if he becomes chair, which he expects to happen. The Appropriations Committee is one of the House's most important, as its jurisdiction is funding the federal government. Subcommittee chairs are known as "cardinals" – referring to the Catholic Church's senior leaders – because of their influence over the federal budget. Womack's subcommittee has jurisdiction over the Department of the Treasury, the District of Columbia, the judiciary branch, the Executive Office of the President, and numerous independent agencies.

Coon said being a committee chair brings additional benefits beyond the chairmanship itself. Chairs get extra at-

tention from their colleagues because they may have issues coming before them.

If Republicans had won control of the Senate, then Sen. John Boozman was in line to chair the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry. He's currently the ranking member.

"The Senate not going Republicans' way, it really is a missed opportunity to kind of complete the trifecta with Sen. Boozman as the chair of the Agriculture Committee, but we definitely would see some tremendous benefit to having Womack and Westerman in increased positions of influence," Coon said.

Instead, we enter a new year with Republicans in charge of the House and Democrats in charge of the Senate, both with slim majorities, while a Democrat is in the White House. Americans have had enough experience with divided government to know what will be accomplished, which is not much.

Given what could be the alternatives, that might not be a bad thing.

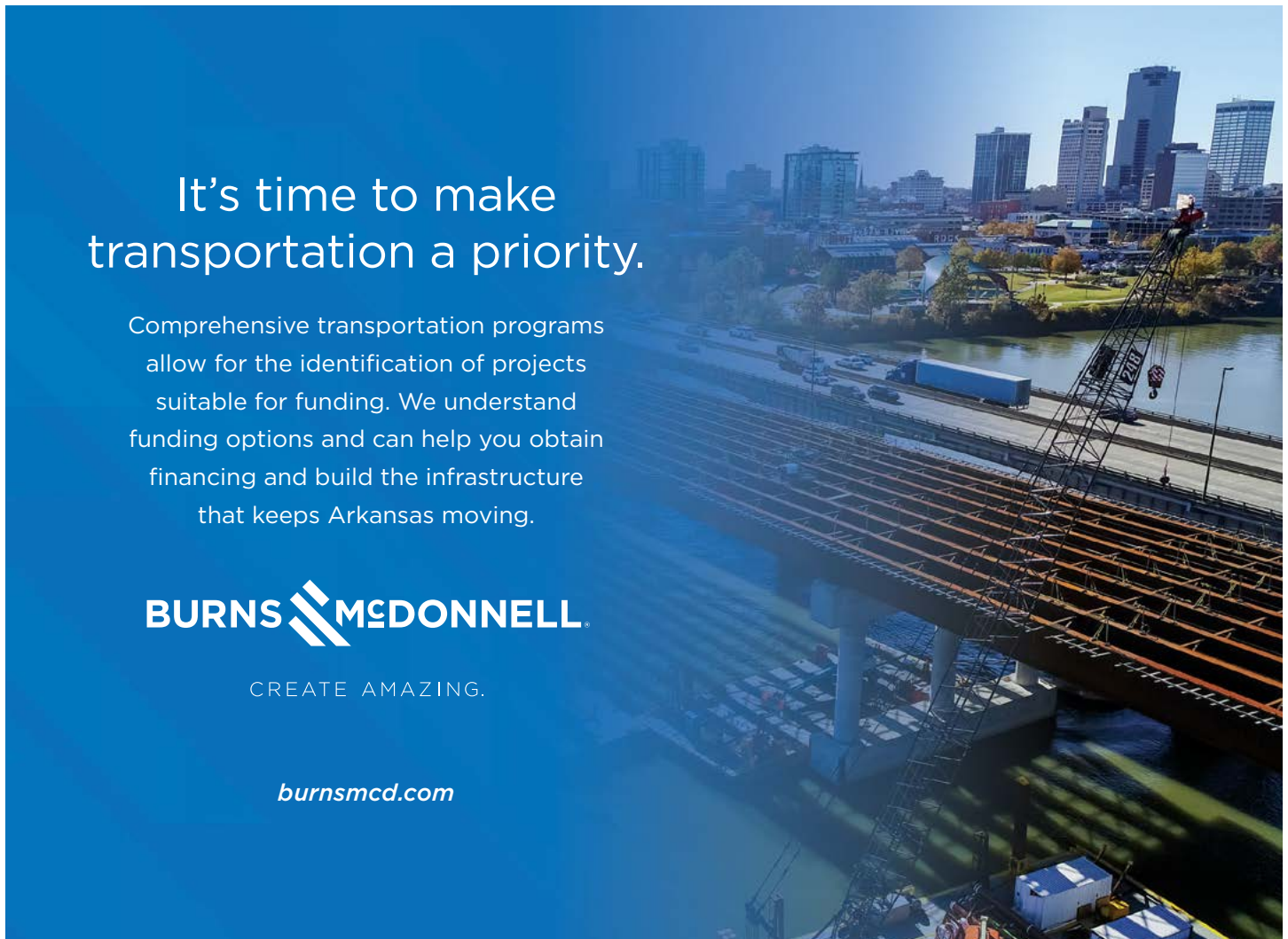
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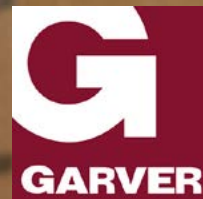
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