April 2026

Formerly Arkansas Professional Engineer

Building Arkansas

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

Biggest project, biggest award

Burns & McDonnell's Steven Beam, P.E., stands in front of the new Arkansas River Bridge. The bridge is part of the 30 Crossing Project, which won this year's Grand Conceptor Award at the ACEC/A's Engineering Excellence Awards banquet. It's the Arkansas Department of Transportation's biggest-ever project and it's first design-build project.

In the News

Garver's Mott named to pub's Fifty Over 50

Garver Director of Field Services Earl Mott, P.E., was named to Arkansas Money & Politics Fifty over 50 list.

The Mott legacy began with his father's service on Garver's survey team. Mott grew up working with his father during the summers, which preluded his own 35-plus years with the company. The Little Rock native and University of Arkansas alum began his formal career with Garver on the firm's Aviation Team, eventually leading him to his role on Garver's Management Committee in 2022 as director of field services.

Notable contributions include the largest undertaking in ARDOT's history, the historic 30 Crossing project, as well as 36 additional construction projects for ARDOT.

Garver engineers mark EWeek with school visits

In honor of Engineers Week (EWeek), ARDOT and Garver teamed up statewide to introduce young students to engineering.

Engineers from Garver visited schools across the country with the goal of encouraging students to consider a future in engineering through hands-on STEM activities. Throughout the week, students were exposed to basic engineering principles that affect their everyday lives by providing necessities such as clean water and bridges. Garver engineers shared their career journeys and engaged with the students to provide an inside look into an engineer's everyday life. Through these efforts, Garver aims to build a pipeline for students nationwide to become tomorrow's engineers and ensure the future of the nation's infrastructure.

THESE GARVER professionals introduced students to engineering at the North Little Rock School District's Crestwood Elementary School.

In the News continues on page 8

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16 Steven Beam, P.E., with Burns & McDonnell was project design director for the 30 Crossing Project, which won the Grand Conceptor Award at the Engineering Excellence Awards March 5.

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EWeek highlights engineers

Mike Foster, P.E.
ACEC/A President

Each year, Engineers Week (EWeek) provides an opportunity to recognize the enduring contributions of licensed professional engineers and to reaffirm the standards that define the profession. The week celebrating engineers was established by the National Society of Professional Engineers and was recognized this year from Feb. 22 through Feb. 28. More than a celebratory observance, the week highlights engineering's essential role in safeguarding public welfare, advancing innovation, and strengthening the nation's infrastructure and economic vitality.

Professional engineers occupy a unique position of responsibility. Through rigorous academic preparation, progressive experience, and successful completion of both the Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) and Principles and Practice of Engineering (PE) examinations, they earn the privilege of licensure and the authority to place the P.E. seal on designs and documents. This credential represents not only technical competence but also a binding commitment to ethical practice and accountability. The professional engineer's obligation to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare remains the discipline's foundation.

In a time defined by rapid technological advancement and complex challenges, professional engineers' responsibilities continue to expand. Aging infrastructure demands strategic rehabilitation and modernization alongside ever-increasing project constraints. Emerging technologies require careful integration into existing systems. The complexity of today's projects requires multidisciplinary collaboration and forward-thinking leadership. Licensed engineers are uniquely positioned to evaluate risk, ensure compliance with regulatory frameworks, and deliver solutions grounded in evidence-based analysis and sound engineering judgment.

Engineers Week also underscores the importance of public trust. Engineering achievements often operate in the background of daily life – within water treatment systems, transportation networks, healthcare facilities, power grids, and digital communications. Yet their reliability is not an accident. It is the result of disciplined design processes, adherence to codes and standards, peer review, and continuing professional development. The profession's credibility depends upon maintaining these rigorous standards and expectations.

Equally significant is the role of mentorship and workforce development. As demographic shifts and technological demands reshape the engineering landscape, cultivating the next generation of professionals is vital. Experienced engineers serve as mentors, supervisors, and ethical role models, transmitting years of institutional knowledge to the next generation. Investment in STEM education, recruitment practices, and structured professional development pathways strengthens both the talent pipeline and the resilience of the profession.

Interdisciplinary collaboration further defines contemporary engineering practice. Complex projects require coordination among engineers, architects, planners, environmental scientists, policymakers, and community stakeholders. Effective communication and systems-level thinking are now as critical as technical expertise. Professional engineers who engage across disciplines help ensure that infrastructure and technological systems are not only efficient and durable, but also meet the community's needs.

As we observe Engineers Week, the focus extends beyond recognition to reaffirmation. It is a time to recommit to ethical integrity, technical excellence, and lifelong learning. It is an occasion to advocate for policies that uphold licensure standards and reinforce the central role of professional engineers in public decision-making.

The profession's legacy is built upon service, stewardship, and innovation. By upholding these principles, professional engineers continue to shape a safer, more sustainable, and more resilient future. This advances both the engineering profession and the communities we serve.

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Celebrating the quiet work that keeps cities running

Landon Miller, P.E.
ASPE President

As I write this during Engineers Week, I find myself reflecting on both how far I've come in my career and how much there still is to learn. Working in engineering, particularly in public infrastructure, offers a front row seat to the complexity required to make modern cities function. What becomes clear quickly is that no discipline, profession, or agency can do this work alone. It takes a coordinated network of engineers, planners, utility operators, contractors, administrators, and public officials to keep our communities operating safely and reliably.

Most residents experience infrastructure as a set of assumptions. When they flip a switch, electricity is available. When they flush a toilet, wastewater is conveyed and treated. Traffic signals operate as intended, roadways carry daily demand, and buildings remain structurally sound. These outcomes are not accidental. They are the result of decades of engineering standards, regulatory oversight, asset management, and long-range planning.

As my career has progressed, I've gained exposure to the full life cycle of public infrastructure: master planning, capital improvement programming, funding strategy, procurement, design, construction, and ongoing maintenance. Each phase builds upon the last, and failures in early planning are often magnified downstream. In practice, infrastructure performs best when it is planned holistically and with future demand in mind.

Many large metropolitan areas have invested heavily in long-range planning efforts to anticipate population growth, land use changes, and system capacity needs. However, as housing costs rise and development expands outward, growth increasingly shifts to smaller or historically rural communities. These communities often experience rapid increases in traffic volumes, utility demand, and service expectations – frequently without the staffing, funding mechanisms, or technical studies necessary to respond effectively.

While new development can increase tax revenue, growth without adequate planning quickly stresses existing systems. Water and wastewater treatment capacities approach their limits. Roadway networks designed for local traffic must suddenly accommodate regional demand. City staff are tasked with responding to public complaints while simultaneously trying to plan, fund, and deliver capital projects.

Funding is often the most visible challenge. Bond issues, impact fees, and rate adjustments become necessary tools for financing system upgrades. Yet securing funding is only the first step. Cities must then determine how to allocate limited resources: whether transportation improvements should precede development or be triggered by it; whether utilities should be extended proactively or reactively; and how to phase projects when capital availability lags behind growth pressure.

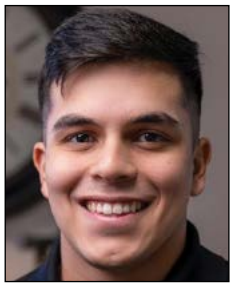
Without a comprehensive long-range planning study, these decisions become reactive rather than strategic. Many of these studies covering transportation, water, wastewater, and stormwater systems are eligible for state or federal grant funding. However, communities must initiate these efforts early before growth outpaces capacity. Too often, cities find themselves overwhelmed, uncertain where to begin or how to navigate the funding landscape.

As Engineers Week comes to a close, it's worth recognizing the scale and coordination required to sustain our built environment. Engineering is inherently collaborative. Success depends on partnerships between municipalities, consultants, regulators, and the public. No individual or organization can deliver resilient infrastructure in isolation.

In the News (Cont'd)


Campbell


Crews


McCoy


Tucker

Four Olsson engineers earn PE licensure

Four Fayetteville-based Olsson employees have earned their P.E. licenses within the last year: Samantha Campbell, P.E.; Mariah Crews, P.E.; Andy McCoy, P.E.; and Brynn Tucker, P.E. All are University of Arkansas alumni.

At Olsson, new professional engineers earn a promotion and gain more responsibilities on projects.

"We're proud of our employees for accomplishing this incredible milestone in their careers," said Brad Hammond, P.E., local area leader of Olsson's Fayetteville office. "They worked very hard to get here, and I can't wait to see the positive impact they will have through their work as professional engineers."

Olsson's newest PEs support projects spanning diverse industries across Arkansas and throughout the country.

- Campbell designs water and wastewater conveyance systems.
- Crews focuses on transportation engineering of roads and bridges.
- McCoy provides protections and controls engineering and design for electric utility substations.
- Tucker conducts hydrologic and hydraulic analyses, modeling and floodplain studies.

Throughout the firm's footprint, nearly 40 employees earned their PE licenses in 2025.

McClelland opens its fifth office, located in Benton

McClelland Consulting Engineers, Inc. (MCE), a regional multidisciplinary consulting engineering firm, has opened its fifth office location – this one in Benton, Arkansas.

Located at 146 W. South Street, Suite 101, the Benton location houses three former Little Rock employees – Claire Schoppe, P.E.; Jason Temple, P.E.; and Haley Hamilton, P.E. — with plans to continue expanding. This office widens MCE's reach through Arkansas. Plans for a grand opening will be announced soon.

Three MCE pros named company associates

MCE has promoted three team members to become associates on its professional staff: Trent Williams, MBA, P.E.; Andrew Stephens, P.E.; and Will Wingfield, P.S.


Williams

Williams has worked with MCE since 2022 and was promoted to Water/Wastewater Department lead in 2025. After graduating from Missouri State University and obtaining his MBA, he went on to gain more than 12 years of experience in civil engineering. His experience has contributed to municipal water and wastewater distribution from concept to construction.

He has worked on projects across the Natural State, including Fayetteville's West Transmission Main and North College Avenue Water Main replacement, sewer rehabilitation projects in Greenland and Lincoln, wastewater pump station repairs in Fort Smith, and system improvements in Washington County.


Stephens

Stephens joined MCE's Water/Wastewater Department as a project manager in 2020. He earned his bachelor's degree in biological engineering in 2017 and his master's degree in engineering in 2021, both from the University of Arkansas.

Bringing nearly a decade of experience to the team, Stephens has contributed to the planning, design, construction, and management of several infrastructure projects. Among the projects Stephens has played a key role in developing are system improvements across Washington County, lift stations in Prairie Grove and Springdale, and treatment plant expansions in Huntsville.


Wingfield

Wingfield joined MCE in 2022. He earned his degree in land surveying from the University of Arkansas at Monticello and later obtained his professional surveyor license. He assists with field collection, drafting, and scheduling day-to-day survey projects. His work as a party chief and draftsman has played a pivotal role in several projects, including Central High School in Little Rock, the Pennington Road gravity sewer extension in Warren, and the Arkansas State Parks Mount Nebo Campground and Trail in Dardanelle.

Three with MCE earn licenses

Two MCE staff members earned professional landscape architect licenses, while another earned his survey intern license.

In the News continues on page 10

ENGINEERING ARKANSAS

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Crafton Tull

In the News (Cont'd)


Duncan

Emily Duncan, PLA, gained her Professional Landscape Architect license in February 2026.

Duncan joined MCE in 2023. She earned her degrees the same year from Mississippi State University, graduating with a bachelor of landscape architecture and a bachelor of science in landscape contracting and management. While at MCE, Duncan has worked primarily on projects that include conceptual design, landscaping plans, and detailed project design. She has produced landscape plans for Maumelle's pickleball complex, Wildwood Park for the Arts, Little Rock's Arkana Labs, and several other projects. She also contributed to site and master plans for the Saline River Greenway, boat ramp, and trailhead in Benton; the master plan for Berryville's Thomas Park; and many more projects.


Tao

Ruxin Tao, PLA, also gained his Professional Landscape Architect license in February.

Tao joined MCE in 2022 with a bachelor's in plant science and a master of landscape architecture from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Through his time with the company, Tao has worked on various projects including parks and recreation, streetscapes, green infrastructure, rooftop gardens, planting design, and historical landscape preservation. He has also developed his skills in the Little Rock office for project design, master planning, concept rendering, and cost estimation.

Morgan Taunton, S.I., earned his survey intern license in January 2026.

The newest member of MCE's survey team started in December 2025. He earned his degree in land survey technology from the University of Arkansas at Monticello in 2025. He has primarily been collecting field data for boundary and topographic surveys. These tasks directly contribute to several of MCE's ongoing projects. He is excited for the opportunity to improve his skills in Civil3D and to continue studying for his future exams.


Taunton


Turner


Ussery

Two with Crist earn Professional Engineer licenses

Crist Engineers' Christian Turner, P.E., and Morgan Ussery P..E., have earned their professional engineer licenses and have been integral parts of the firm's design and project delivery teams.

Turner joined Crist Engineers in May 2024 as a project engineer. He earned his bachelor of science in civil engineering and construction management from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock,

Ussery joined Crist Engineers in November 2022 as a project engineer. He earned his bachelor of science in civil engineering from the University of Arkansas.

CEI hires Carroll to manage Local Development team

CEI Engineering Associates has hired David Carroll as manager of the Local Development Department.

This strategic hire reinforces CEI's commitment to providing comprehensive engineering, planning, and land-use solutions across Northwest Arkansas.


Carroll

Carroll brings more than 40 years of experience, including an extensive background in development and construction. He has participated at various levels in multiple commercial mixed-use assets and residential units totaling more than $16 billion and has conducted due diligence and market exploration throughout the United States.

Carroll and the Local Development team boast more than 100 years of combined experience in solving complex client needs. They have participated in the development, construction, and management of large-scale developments, including vertical mixed-use projects, campus planning, and single-family residential communities. Furthermore, they foster high-level collaborations with federal, state, and municipal jurisdictions on critical issues such as military housing, endangered species mitigation, floodplain management, and more.

Carroll's leadership is defined by a mentorship culture that aims to learn, lead, teach, and invest. Carroll says this allows him and his team to offer superior services to clients at every point of contact.

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In the News (Cont'd)

"Our motto is to work hard, engage with clients, and solve client needs with precision and collaboration," he said.

In the rapidly evolving NWA market, Carroll and the Local Development team's services include land acquisition, survey, land use design, entitlements, engineering, landscape architecture, and construction administration.

BENCHMARK GROUP staff members participated in the Forms Follow Fitness 5K sponsored by Blackson Brick in Dallas. Benchmark Group's Dallas team supported The Architecture and Design Exchange, which promotes access to architecture and design for everyone through their programs and scholarships.

Bista

Royal

Two Benchmark engineers earn P.E. licenses

Benchmark Group's Subhanjan Bista, P.E., and Nicholas Royal, P.E., have become licensed professional engineers.

Bista joined the firm in January 2019 as a part-time intern and transitioned to a full-time refrigeration designer following graduation. He previously earned his Engineer-in-Training (EIT) designation. His experience includes design of Traditional DX; Transcritical CO2; liquid overfeed and pumped glycol refrigeration systems; and integrating building automation systems. He is a member of the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying and the Nepal Engineering Council.

BENCHMARK GROUP professionals attended the ICSC Red River Conference in San Antonio. It provided firsthand insights into the latest trends shaping retail, dining, workplace, entertainment, and community spaces. Benchmark Group staff members pictured are, left, Jason C. Adams, P.E., LEED AP, executive vice president; third from left, Guss Jahchan, AIA, NCARB, architectural program director - Houston; and right, Nick Unich, LEED AP BD+C, architectural program director - Rogers.

Royal joined Benchmark Group in 2021 and is involved in project scope development, design, and quality control. His role is centered on ensuring that each project is thoughtfully planned, accurately executed, and aligned with the team's high standards. He earned his bachelor of science in mechanical engineering and associate of science in nuclear technology from Arkansas Tech University. He is a member of the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers and the American Society of Plumbing Engineers.

ACEC Convention set for May 2-6 in Washington, D.C.

The ACEC's Annual Convention and Legislative Summit will be May 2-6 at the Grand Hyatt Washington in Washington, D.C.

The event will bring engineers together to discuss future market intelligence, advocacy impact, competitive positioning and leadership development. It also will give leaders a chance to engage in national networking opportunities.

General sessions will feature timely, high-impact conversations about issues shaping the future of the engineering industry.

Convention speakers include Federal Highway Administration Administrator Sean McMaster; former U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Pennsylvania; former U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Oregon; presidential historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jon Meacham; Politico Politics Bureau Chief Jonathan Martin; and John Rathke, P.E., S.E., ACEC Board chair and a vice president and principal at Mead & Hunt.

More information about registration and the schedule is available at the ACEC's website, www.acec.org.

April 29
NWA Trap Shoot
Legacy Ranch
Gravette

May 3-6
ACEC Annual Convention and
Legislative Summit
Grand Hyatt Washington
Washington, D.C.

July 23-25
ACEC/A Deep South Conference
Sandestin, Florida

Aug. 5-7
NSPECon
New York Marriott at the Brooklyn Bridge

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ACEC/A Member Spotlight

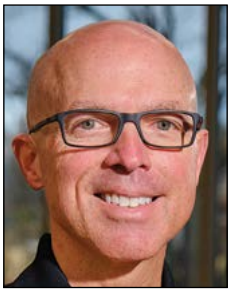
Garver growing, staying the same

North Little Rock firm reaches 60 offices in 20 states, but President and CEO Hoskins says culture isn't changing

The firm started by Neal Garver 107 years ago in 1919 has grown to 60 offices in 20 states, more than 1,400 employees, and 111 professional engineers.

But even as Garver grows, it's remaining true to its core values.

"We have town hall meetings and people used to ask, 'How are we going to keep our culture as we grow?'" President and CEO Brock Hoskins, P.E., said in an interview. "That was probably back in 2018-19 when people were asking that a lot, about our centennial time frame. They don't ask that as much anymore, I think, because we've demonstrated we can do it."



Hoskins

Since its 2019 centennial, Garver has risen 34 places to number 88 on Engineering News-Record's Top 500 Design Firms, based on the previous year's design revenue. Most of the growth has occurred organically rather than through acquisitions.

"We try very hard to grow," he said. "So we do a lot of things to take care of our people and make them want to come here and stay here and recruit other people once they get here. I think we really take care of our people well, and we give them opportunities for growth in a place where they feel loved and appreciated."

Hoskins said the company's values haven't changed.

"Giving our people the best employee experience, being our clients' most trusted advisor, and growing with purpose – that's our flywheel, and that hasn't changed," he said.

When Hoskins started working for Garver, it had only its Little Rock headquarters with what he estimated were 100 employees. It's early expansion plans centered on Texas, which is now "by far" its largest revenue-producing state, he said. It has offices as far away as Denver, Phoenix, Omaha and Indianapolis. Its target now is the Southeast: Florida, the Carolinas and Georgia, where it already has offices and where it plans to grow.

GARVER PROJECTS. Top, Garver provided design services for I-49 in northwest Arkansas and the Bobby Hopper Tunnel, which was completed in 1998. Above left, Garver designed the Broadway Bridge connecting Little Rock and North Little Rock over the Arkansas River, which opened in 2017. Above right, U.S. 62 over the White River.

The employee-owned company offers engineering, planning, and environmental services. Business lines include aviation, transportation, buildings, federal projects, water and wastewater, surveying, advisory services, and construction engineering and inspection.

Hoskins said the firm has added offerings in recent years related to its core disciplines. Those include an enterprise solutions business line that offers program management and procurement services for clients, especially state departments of transportation. One major recent Arkansas project handled by that line was the 30 Crossing Project that replaced the I-30 bridge over the Arkansas River and reconfigured the associated interstates. It was ARDOT's largest-ever project and its first design-build project.

Garver has a history of designing major projects in Arkansas, including the completion of I-540, later renamed I-49, through northwest Arkansas. The 22-mile section included more than two miles of bridge structures, some of them 200 feet above ground, and the Bobby Hopper Tunnel, consisting of two tunnels passing through almost 1,400 feet of sandstone and shale.

A Best Firm to Work For

Even as the firm grows, it maintains its employee-centered culture. It has finished in the top three of the Zweig Group's annual Best Firms to Work For ranking for 11 consecutive years, including four consecutive years at #1. It is one of only two AEC firms to be awarded the Zweig Group's Legacy Award for firms ranked in the top three for 10 consecutive years.

Creating such a culture doesn't happen by accident. Garver takes many steps to support employees and create a spirit of teamwork. It hosts Garver town hall meetings across its footprint. Its annual Garver Summit brings staff members from across the country for two days of fun, games and fellowship. The events bring people together from different geographies who work together but not in person. This year's Summit, which brought nearly 1,200 Garver employees to Houston, was its largest ever.

"No, it's not cheap," he said. "And we can't prove the stuff we do works on a spreadsheet. You have to believe in it. You have to believe that we're better off because we can't look at the bottom line and say, 'Well, this was worth it.'"

The firm offers employees a holistic wellness program. Many Garver locations have on-site gymnasiums, and those that don't offer reimbursements for gym memberships. The firm has a chaplain program and offers mental health services. Employees and their spouses can access a dashboard where they earn points and extra pay for their wellness activities. In 2025, 96% of employees met wellness requirements, and the company paid $312,508 in end-of-year wellness rewards.

Meanwhile, the company exports its culture outside its doors. Its GarverGives program serves the company's communities through grants, employee giving and volunteer activities. STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) education is a major focus. To celebrate EWeek this year, Garver professionals across the country visited with elementary students and shared what engineers do and why students should consider engineering.

Garver's paid internship program, Garver Launch, lets student interns over the course of 10-12 weeks shadow industry professionals, connect with industry leaders, and be trained in engineering technology. Many interns are offered a chance to return or go on to full-time positions.

The company has come a long way since Neal Garver founded it in 1919. As it gets bigger, Hoskins is determined that it doesn't change too much.

"That's what I want to say about myself, and a lot of other leaders at Garver is, we believe God has blessed our company," Hoskins said. "I mean, we work hard and are smart, but we could work this hard and be this smart and not be this blessed. So we're thankful the Lord's chosen to bless us, and we hope we're honoring him by the way we run our business. And we're going to keep trying to do that."

Engineering Excellence Awards

GRAND CONCEPTOR. **Burns and McDonnell won the Grand Conceptor Award for the 30 Crossing Design-Build Project for the Arkansas Department of Transportation. It also won in Category H: Transportation. Garver was the program manager for the overall Connecting Arkansas Program, of which the project was a part. Kiewit-Massman Construction was the design-build contractor. HDR was a major subcontractor. Iconic Consulting Group was one of the firms that was involved. Pictured are, from left, John Cantabery, P.E., Garver; Justin Carney, P.E., S.E., HDR; Talesha Little, Iconic Consulting Group; Jacob Dvorak, Garver; Stacey Dvorak, Kiewit; Mike DeBacker, P.E., Burns & McDonnell; Keli Wylie, P.E, ARDOT; Jared Wiley, P.E., ARDOT; Steven Beam, P.E., Burns & McDonnell; Jerry Holder, P.E., Garver; Tyler Moncrief, P.E., Burns and McDonnell; Lawren Wilcox, P.E., Garver; Jessie Jones, P.E. ARDOT; Mark Trickey, P.E., ARDOT; and Scott Eldridge, ARDOT.**

30 Crossing a Grand Concept

Burns & McDonnell wins ACEC/A's highest honor for Connecting Arkansas Program's capstone project

Banquet photos by Michael Priest, Garver

Burns & McDonnell won the ACEC/A's biggest award for its work on Arkansas' biggest-ever transportation project.

The firm's 30 Crossing project won the Grand Conceptor Award at the Engineering Excellence Awards March 5. The Grand Conceptor is chosen by a team of judges based on a set of criteria. The event attracted 33 entrants, one of the highest numbers ever.

The $633 million project reconstructed 4.7 miles of Interstate 30 and 4.5 miles of frontage roads in Little Rock and North Little Rock between the interchanges of I-40 and I-630. The centerpiece was the replacement of the fracture-critical I-30 Arkansas River Bridge with twin 3,363.5-foot bridges, each with three lanes, two collector-distributor lanes and an auxiliary lane. Overall, the project involved replacing 11 land bridges, removing 19 bridges, reconstructing 22 intersections and re-engineering the Highway 10 interchange into a split-diamond system.

It was the Arkansas Department of Transportation's first design-build project, which employs a single contract for both the designer and the contractor. The method included an optimization and refinement period after the project was

AWARD WINNERS. Burns and McDonnell's Steven Beam, P.E., the 30 Crossing's project design director, poses with Keli Wylie, P.E, ARDOT, after receiving the award. Burns & McDonnell was part of a design-build team that included Kiewit Massman Construction and HDR.

awarded where the team perfected plans developed by the Arkansas Department of Transportation and its owner's representative, Garver.

Steven Beam, P.E., of Burns and McDonnell, the project's design director, said he couldn't imagine using the traditional design-bid-build method with such a complex project. The design-bid method allowed for collaboration during the optimization and refinement period.

Scheduled to be completed in July 2025, the 30 Crossing project was finished ahead of schedule in November 2024.

It was the culmination of many years of work by the partners in the design and construction team. Beam said Burns &

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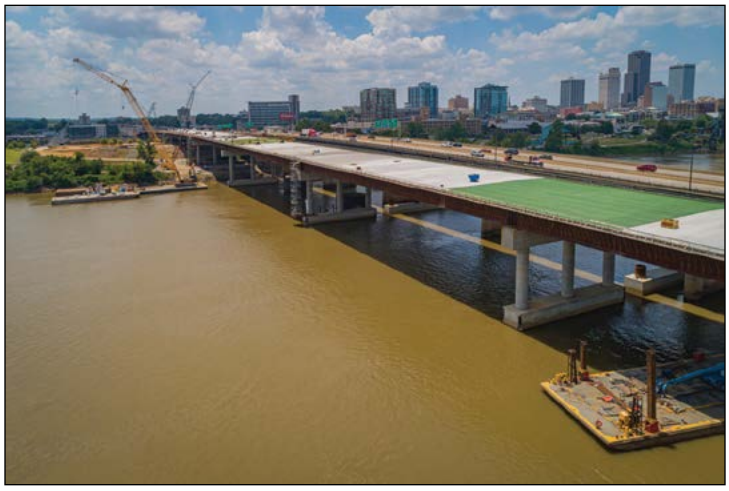

30 CROSSING. Burns and McDonnell's 30 Crossing was a $633 million project reconstructing 4.7 miles of Interstate 30 and 4.5 miles of frontage roads in Little Rock and North Little Rock between the interchanges of I-40 and I-630. The centerpiece was the replacement of the fracture-critical I-30 Arkansas River Bridge with twin 3,363.5-foot bridges, each with three lanes, two collector-distributor lanes and an auxiliary lane. The extra lanes allow traffic between Little Rock and North Little Rock to avoid merging onto I-30.

McDonnell was working on winning the 30 Crossing Project as far back as when he joined the firm in 2013. Leaders knew the project would be the capstone for the state's $2 billion Connecting Arkansas Program, a collection of 31 projects funded by a half-cent sales tax passed by voters in 2012.

He said the relationship between the principal partners was established a couple of years before ARDOT released a request for a design builder in 2018. Kiewit Massman Construction was the contractor. It was a joint venture composed of Kiewit Infrastructure South Co. and Massman Construction Co. Burns & McDonnell was lead designer and engineering firm of record. It provided roadway,

bridge, drainage, traffic and maintenance of traffic design and quality management. Beam was the design director responsible for contracts, commercial activities and finance. Andy Fries, P.E., senior project manager at Burns & McDonnell, was design manager leading the job's day-to-day aspects. HDR was the engineer of record for portions of the roadway, bridge, drainage and intelligent transportation systems. Ed Potthoff Jr., a senior project manager for HDR, was deputy design manager.

Co-location and collaboration

The three major firms collaborated and kept ARDOT's goals in mind. They co-located for several months in Burns & McDonnell's Kansas City office after they were shortlisted. After the team was selected by ARDOT, an optimization and refinement period followed when the team perfected the initial draft design. During that time, the three firms co-located for about six months in one of Kiewit's offices in Dallas. Then they moved to a co-located office at the Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport in Little Rock for a 15-month intensive design schedule. Beam said team members had weekly task force meetings that addressed issues proactively. Kiewit Massman developed a block schedule depicting work areas and timelines. Work was designed around 48 packages based on geographic areas rather than job types across the entire project.

"We didn't wait until we had a milestone submittal for them to see the progress on the project," Beam said. "We did those over the shoulders on a monthly basis, so that everybody was informed and everyone's making more proactive decisions throughout the project. And so that collaboration not only resulted in a better end product of constructed project, it also allowed us to stay on schedule."

Three months into a 15-month design schedule, the team faced a challenge no one expected: COVID.

"I think it's a testament to the people with everybody involved," Beam said, "that in spite of the challenges of working remotely, and not just working remotely and in your office, but we've all gone to work from home, that people were committed to the success of the project. That allowed us to not miss a beat."

Other firms provided their expertise to the project. Garver was the program management consultant. HNTB was a program advisor. HG Consult was the engineer of record for portions of the drainage design. Iconic Consulting Group assisted with supplemental maintenance of traffic design. McClelland Consulting Engineers assisted with survey and geotechnical design. Geotechnology Inc. assisted with geotechnical exploration and testing. Dan Brown and Associates assisted with foundation and geotechnical design for the new Arkansas River Bridge.

The bridge was the project's centerpiece. The original crossing was a

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Garver led 30 Crossing's CAP program

Garver played a leadership role in developing the 30 Crossing Project as the program management consultant for the Connecting Arkansas Program.

The CAP was a 31-project, $1.8 billion effort by the Arkansas Department of Transportation. The 30 Crossing was its capstone project. The CAP was funded by the temporary half-cent sales tax passed by voters in 2012 that voters made a permanent tax in 2020. ARDOT contracted with Garver to manage those 31 projects.

Jerry Holder, P.E., Garver's senior vice president and enterprise solutions director, led the CAP program as program manager.

The $634 million 30 Crossing was not only the largest CAP project but also was ARDOT's largest project ever. It also was ARDOT's first-ever design-build project involving a single contract for both design and construction – a method Holder said saves time.

The project began with initial concept designs created by Garver and CH2M HILL, an environmental engineering firm that has been acquired by Jacobs. The early designs moved the process to 30% completion and led to the Federal Highway Administration's approval of the environmental impact study. Holder said Garver didn't want to go farther because it wanted to give the design-build team the flexibility to make improvements. Garver then undertook a competitive bidding process among three applicants based on cost and approach.

It ultimately selected a team led by Kiewit Massman Construction with engineering firms Burns & McDonnell and HDR serving as the major subcontractors.

As program manager, Garver oversaw design, provided construction management, reviewed the plans, and set up controls on the schedules, invoicing, utility relocations, permits and right of way. It required the design-build team to submit a resource-loaded critical path method baseline schedule before receiving a notice to proceed. The contractor submitted a monthly schedule update with the invoice. At different times probably 40 Garver staff members were involved.

JERRY HOLDER, P.E., Garver's senior vice president and enterprise solutions director, managed the Connecting Arkansas Program. The program involved 31 projects, including the 30 Crossing.

The design-build team opened an office at the Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport co-located by the firms and by Garver's on-site project manager, Mike Ebeling. Holder had worked with him in the past and hired him specifically for the project. Ebeling had helped manage the $4 billion Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge in New York that was completed in 2017. At one time it was the largest transportation design-build project in U.S. history. He has since passed away.

The project presented several challenges. It involved an existing, busy downtown corridor through which traffic flow had to be maintained during construction. It included the confluence of I-40 and I-30, two heavily trafficked truck routes. It involved demolishing a bridge over a navigable river through which the shipping channel had to remain open.

Communicating with the community was one of the project's most important and challenging facets. Garver and Holder led numerous public meetings that allowed citizens to express their concerns.

"I was asked during one of the public meetings, 'What do you think's going to happen to downtown Little Rock if we don't do this project?'" he said. "And my answer was, 'I think it's going to die a slow and painful economic death because people aren't going to have the ability to get in and out easily, and so they're not going to want to come down there for entertainment, restaurants, things like that.'"

Some in the community wanted to replace the interstate design with a boulevard concept that Holder said wasn't a realistic option. But the meetings also provided useful insight that led to design changes.

"I remember there was a woman in North Little Rock who questioned our modifications to the Curtis Sykes exit," Holder said. "She engaged us several times, and I met with her individually on more than one occasion. In the end, we came up with an option that was better for the project and kept her happy. I didn't learn until afterwards that her father was Curtis Sykes."

fracture-critical bridge with only two girders and no redundancy of support. Now there are multiple girders, the largest ones being 10.5-feet deep and therefore more prepared for a seismic event. The bridge's lengthened spans provide a clear navigational channel for barge traffic below. Each side features three-lane highways along with two collector-distributor lanes and an auxiliary lane. The collector-distributor lanes and auxiliary lanes eliminated the need for drivers traveling between Little Rock and North Little Rock to merge onto I-30. During the optimization and refinement phase, designers realigned river bridges on the eastern side. That change, along with the implementation of post-tension integral

CATEGORY A: STUDIES, RESEARCH & CONSULTING. The winner was Garver for the ARDOT Project Dashboard for the Arkansas Department of Transportation. From left are Zach Reed, Garver; Keli Wylie, P.E., ARDOT; Jared Wiley, P.E., ARDOT; and Jerry Holder, P.E., Garver.

CATEGORY A HONOR AWARDS. Olsson, left photo, won an Honor Award for its Springdale Water and Sewer Master Plan for Springdale Water Utilities. Pictured are, left, Brad Hammond, P.E., Olsson, and Mike Bender, Olsson. Right photo, Crist Engineers received an Honor Award for the City of Bryant's Wastewater System Master Plan. Pictured is Mason Allen, P.E., Crist Engineers.

bent caps on the south approach, allowed the contractor to save a North Little Rock pump station. It also allowed the construction of the eastbound River, Washington and Broadway bridges in a single phase while avoiding a costly right-of-way acquisition. These also allowed for U-turn movements under the bridge and reduced the project's footprint and right-of-way acquisition costs.

The project also required the design of a 24-inch waterline and a communication duct bank consisting of 24 conduits across the bridge.

The design and construction team also made changes to the roadways on either side of the bridge. One of the most noticeable is the addition of new opportunities to access the downtown area in a more pedestrian-friendly manner. The old design accessed downtown via a loop ramp with a split between Cantrell and Markham. The new design eliminates roadway that was elevated on fill dirt, improving downtown quality and walkability.

The project also made needed changes to the I-30 and I-40 interchange. It realigned the ramp from eastbound I-30, eliminating a non-typical left-hand exit that created a hazardous traffic weave. The changes added two bridges, both of which were designed for future growth. Engineers moved ramps and used ultra-light foamed glass aggregate – composed of 99% recycled materials – as fill to protect an aging, large-diameter sanitary sewer line beneath that interchange. It was the first time ARDOT had used that product. To avoid spread that could occur on the north approach's liquefiable soils during a seismic event, the team drove timber piles deep into stable material, with a aggregate base load transfer platform resting above. Another major change was eliminating a large multiple-span flyover in the Highway 167/I-40 interchange by constructing a much smaller structure in the north terminus interchange.

The 30 Crossing project not only improved transportation efficiency but also walkability and livability. It incorporated new green spaces alongside existing parks. The design team improved traffic patterns and pedestrian accommodations in Little Rock's Collins, 2nd Street, 3rd Street and President Clinton Avenue. At the I-30 & I-630 interchange, new on-ramps and off-ramps provide additional capacity, accommodate future growth, and feature more gradual curves. Designers widened sidewalks on McGowan Street and the I-30 west side frontage road adjacent to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock campus. In North Little Rock, replacement structures over East Washington Avenue, Broadway Street and Riverfront Drive were lengthened and reconfigured to improve routes, visibility, and access to Simmons Bank Arena. The design team also increased the use of permeable ground within the project area. Team members integrated a 68,526-cubic-foot underground detention basin that controls discharge and allows the continued use of an existing pump station.

This all occurred while maintaining daily traffic flow for more than 120,000

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CATEGORY C: STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS, LARGE PROJECT. **The winner was Martin/Martin for the Alice Walton School of Medicine. From left are J.B. Mullins, AIA, LEED AP, Polk Stanley Wilcox; Christina Uludag, P.E., Martin/Martin; Mandy Breckenridge, AIA, LEED AP, Polk Stanley Wilcox; Ben Downey, P.E., Martin/Martin; Ethan Nichols, P.E., Martin/Martin; Caleb Chesnut, P.E., Martin/Martin.**

CATEGORY C HONOR AWARD. **Garver received the Honor Award for the Fourche Creek Scour Repair for the Arkansas Department of Transportation. From left are Mark Hammons, P.E., CFM, Garver; Jessie Jones, P.E., ARDOT; Jared Wiley, PE., ARDOT; Jessica Halbrook, P.E., Garver; and A.J. Khairi, P.E., Garver.**

CATEGORY E - ENVIRONMENTAL. **The winner was Halff for the Gravel Ridge Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements. Pictured from left are Noah Easom, P.E.; Mike Marlar, P.E., PLS; and Liam Van Houtte, E.I., all with Halff.**

vehicles along with river navigation. To minimize lane reductions and on-site personnel risks, team members developed maintenance of traffic and staged bridge construction plans.

"There were three lanes open at all times on the main corridor," Beam said. "There was no capacity reduction as far as lane numbers during construction, except for maybe at some really short-term, nighttime closures."

Beam said there was little staff turnover during the project, especially among the project principals. Several waited until after their work was completed to retire.

Beam, who is in the prime of his career, likewise recognizes the project's importance.

"For me, as an Arkansas boy, this is a career defining project for me. … It's not a capstone for my career because I'm not done yet. But it was a capstone for ARDOT's Connecting Arkansas Program," he said.

He later added, "I might not ever work on another one this big. But if I do, I won't work on one that's this close to my heart because this one's right here in the heart of Arkansas."

In addition to winning the Grand Conceptor Award, the 30 Crossing project also won the category award in **Category H: Transportation**.

There were seven Honor Awards in this category. They were:

- McClelland Consulting Engineers, for the Lake Catherine Marina Improvements Project for Arkansas State Parks. That project won the People's Choice Award, sponsored by Gallagher, as selected by banquet attendees. (Story, page 30.)
- McClelland Consulting Engineers, for the J Wright Loop Project for the City of Jacksonville
- Burns & McDonnell, for the 8th Street Safety & Capacity Improvements Project for the City of Bentonville
- Crafton Tull, for the Uptown Rogers Connectivity Project for the City of Rogers
- Halff, for the Faulkner Lake Road Project for the City of North Little Rock
- CEI Engineering Associates, for the South Arkansas Street Gateway project for the City of Rogers
- Olsson, for the Fayetteville Midtown

CATEGORY E: ENVIRONMENTAL, SMALL PROJECT. The winner was Olsson for the Northwest Arkansas Energy and Environment Innovation Plan for the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission. From left are Olsson's Andy Brewer, P.E.; Eric Fuselier, PWS, ENV SP; and Brad Hammond, P.E.

Corridor Project for the City of Fayetteville

Category winners

Other category winners were as follows:

Category A: Studies, Research, and Consulting. Garver won in this category for the Arkansas Department of Transportation's Project Dashboard.

ARDOT faced challenges managing fragmented construction project data across spreadsheets, databases, and software systems, slowing decision-making and limiting transparency. To solve this, ARDOT implemented a centralized Project Dashboard developed by Garver. The dashboard brings together real-time data on contracts, timelines, budgets, and progress into one intuitive platform that is accessible to the public and officials and features user-friendly filters that make it easy to locate projects quickly. Project Dashboard supports accountability, simplifies reporting, and sets a new transparency standard for DOTs. Leveraging advanced technology, the solution transforms complex data integration into an easy-to-use system, earning praise from ARDOT commissioners as "the Mona Lisa of reporting."

There were four Honor Awards in this category. They were:

- Olsson, for the Springdale Water and Sewer Master Plan for Springdale Water Utilities
- Garver, for the Ebbing ANG Base Stormwater Master Plan for Ebbing Air National Guard
- Crist Engineers for the City of Bryant's Wastewater System Master Plan for the City of Bryant
- McClelland Consulting Engineers for the City of Bryant's Bryant Parks Master Plan

Category C: Structural Systems. Martin/Martin won in this category for the Alice Walton School of Medicine for Polk Stanley Wilcox Architects.

The Alice Walton School of Medicine is a new medical education campus in Bentonville. The design integrates architecture, landscape and art to foster innovation and provide a safe environment to advance health and wellness. The design features 154,000 square feet of program space, a two-acre green roof that mimics the natural bluffs found in the surrounding region, and a dramatic 82-foot cantilever that features two-story steel trusses. The project required nearly 3,000 tons of structural steel. Beyond the green roof, the landscape introduces a water feature, walking trails, and a series of seating areas that encourage everyday use and community gathering.

The project team's ongoing collaboration with contractors, strategic use of staged modeling, and diligent onsite monitoring directly contributed to achieving schedule and cost targets, which enabled the school to welcome its first class in August 2025.

There was one Honor Award recipient in this category: Garver, for the Fourche Creek Scour Repair project for the Arkansas Department of Transportation.

Category E: Environmental - Small Project. The winner was Olsson for the Northwest Arkansas Energy & Environment Innovation Plan for the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission. Olsson developed the Northwest Arkansas Energy and Environment Innovation Plan for NWARPC, creating a regional roadmap to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 across three counties. The plan outlines voluntary strategies for energy, transportation, industry, agriculture, buildings, waste, and carbon removal to cut emissions, improve air and water quality, and promote equity.

The plan creates strategic pathways for emission reduction, job creation, and

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CATEGORY F: WATER AND WASTEWATER. The winner was Crist Engineers for the 4 Million Gallon Elevated Project for the Benton Washington Regional Public Water Authority. Pictured from left are Bob Werling, Landmark Structures; Josh Moore, P.E., Crist; Nathan Hooper, Benton/ Washington Regional Public Water Authority; and Matt Dunn, P.E., Crist.

CATEGORY F - WATER AND WASTEWATER HONOR AWARDS. Crist Engineers received three Honor Awards in the category. Above left, Crist received the Honor Award for the Crossett Sewer Improvements Project. From left are Bo Higginbotham and Dr. Brian Wintle, P.E., PhD, CHMM, BCEE, with Crist. Above right, from left, Crist received the Honor Award for the Wastewater System Master Plan for Paragould Municipal Utilities. Pictured are David Romine, P.E., Paragould Municipal Utilities; and Craig Johnson, P.E., Crist. Left photo, Crist received the Honor Award for the Wastewater Treatment Facility Headworks Improvements for the Arkadelphia Water Utility. Pictured from left are Mason Allen, P.E., Crist; Omar Alhallak, E.I., Crist; Wes Lemons, Arkadelphia Water Utilities Department; and Craig Dunn, P.E., Crist.

CATEGORY G - WATER RESOURCES. The winner was Michael Baker International for the South Fork Saline River Bank Repair at Deerpark Road project. From left are Michael Baker's Luke Stovall, P.E.; Travis Kaymer, E.I.; Abigail Pahls and Scott Thornsberry, P.E.

regional growth, including both priority and comprehensive action plans. It focused on five local goals including expanding electric and active transportation options, addressing landfill capacity, enhancing outdoor recreation, improving stormwater quality, and reducing flood risks.

Olsson managed the project in three phases. Phase 1 delivered the priority action plan. Phase 2 secured more than $36 million in funding to integrate active transportation streambank restoration and environmental restoration. Phase 3 produced the Nature-Based Solutions Mapping Tool and Comprehensive Plan. By aligning local priorities with state and federal goals, the Energy & Environment Innovation Plan supports sustainability, resilience, jobs, and public health.

Category E: Environmental - Small Project. Halff was the winner for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements Project for the Gravel Ridge Sewer Improvement District

Gravel Ridge's Sewer Improvement District 213 wastewater facility opened in 1975, utilizing facultative lagoons that served 1,500 customers in northern Pulaski County. When new Division of

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CATEGORY G HONOR AWARD. Pickering Firm received the Honor Award for the Shirey Bay WMA Infrastructure Renovations for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. Pictured from left are Mike Foster, P.E.; Jeff Haun, Game and Fish; Mike Cantrell, Game and Fish; Joey Monahan, E.I., Pickering; Kelsey Rebillout, P.E., Pickering; Slater Smith, P.E., Pickering; Cara Martin, P.E, Pickering; and Reid Phifer, Game and Fish.

CATEGORY H: TRANSPORTATION HONOR AWARD. Halff received the Honor Award for the Faulkner Lake Road Project for the City of North Little Rock. Pictured are Brian Vines, P.E., Halff; David Cook, P.E., City of North Little Rock; and Joe Moore, P.E., Halff.

CATEGORY H AND CATEGORY I : SPECIAL PROJECTS, LARGE PROJECT HONOR AWARDS: Olsson received the Honor Award in both categories. In Category H, it received the award for the Fayetteville Midtown Corridor. In Category I, Large Project, it received it for the City of Fayetteville Civic Plaza. Pictured from left are Brad Hammond, P.E., Olsson; Matt Mihalevich, Fayetteville; and Andy Brewer, P.E., Olsson.

Environmental Quality standards exceeded the facility's capabilities, Halff designed an upgraded treatment facility that repurposed existing lagoons for wet weather flow equalization and sludge handling. Improvements included a new influent pump station and an innovative sludge process, resulting in quality effluent and environmental protection. The upgraded treatment process features screening, activated sludge, clarification, disc filtration, ultraviolet disinfection, post-aeration and flow measurement.

By restoring and integrating assets, the project saved costs, boosted performance, met ADEQ standards, and set precedent for resourceful infrastructure reuse.

There was one Honor Award recipient in this category: Crafton Tull, for the Highway 70 West Transfer Station Rebuild Project for Garland County

Category F: Water and Wastewater. The winner was Crist Engineers for the 4 Million Gallon Elevated Water Storage and Surge Tank for the Benton Washington Regional Public Water Authority. In 2021, Crist Engineers completed a master plan for the Benton Washington Regional Public Water Authority, assessing current and future system demands. The study identified the need for additional water storage and surge protection to meet rising demand and recurring pipeline failures.

Crist Engineers proposed a single project combining elevated storage and surge relief. The solution was a 4 million-gallon composite elevated tank, the largest of its kind ever built, with surge relief piping integrated into the tank. This project stands out because of its size, innovative design, and efficiency. By combining record-setting storage capacity with built-in surge protection, the project saved on costs – staying within budget – and improved the long-term reliability of the drinking water supply in northwest Arkansas.

Crist Engineers also received three Honor Awards in the category: for the Crossett Sewer Improvements Project for the City of Crossett; for the Arkadelphia Water and Sewer Relocations Project for the City of Arkadelphia; and for the Wastewater Treatment Facility Headworks Project for Paragould Municipal Utilities.

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD. McClelland Consulting Engineers received both the People's Choice Award, selected by banquet attendees, and the Honor Award in Category H: Transportation, for the Lake Catherine Marina Project for Arkansas State Parks. Pictured above are Danny Hernandez, E.I., and Adam Triche, P.E., with MCE and Ken Estes with Gallagher, sponsor of the award. Bottom photo, Hernandez and Triche are pictured with, from left, MCE's Taylor Clark, P.E.; Caleb Zimmerman, P.E.; Will Perilloux, E.I.; and Ben Cobb, E.I. The project is featured on page 30.

Category G: Water Resources. The winner in this category was Michael Baker International, for the South Fork Saline River Bank Repair at Deerpark Road for Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. The South Fork Saline River faced severe erosion near Deerpark Road due to river migration and an undersized culvert that trapped debris and caused flooding. This erosion threatened homes, infrastructure and emergency access, with up to 75 feet of bank width lost.

Garland County partnered with Michael Baker International to design and manage comprehensive repairs, including funding, permitting, design and construction oversight. The solution rebuilt the east bank, added riprap revetment, and installed a J-hook vane to redirect flow, reduce erosion and enhance aquatic habitat. Unlike standard riprap-only solutions, this engineered system effectively redirects flow, minimizes erosion and protects the repaired embankment. These measures reduced erosion, improved habitat, and ensured long-term sustainability.

There was one Honor Award in this category: Pickering Firm, for the Shirley Bay WMA Infrastructure Innovations for Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

Category I: Special Projects, Small Projects. The winner was Michael Baker International for the Saline County Airport Taxiway Runway Improvements Project for Saline County.

The Saline County Regional Airport near Bryant faced a unique challenge: Grass would not grow in FAA-required safety areas, leaving eroded soil and compliance concerns.

Built on a reclaimed bauxite mine, the site's highly acidic soil demanded an innovative solution. Michael Baker International, with support from Olsson, developed a phased remediation plan using precise lime applications to neutralize acidity, restore grade and promote vegetation. After testing multiple scenarios, lime treatment proved the most cost-effective and sustainable approach.

Today, grass covers previously barren areas along the taxiways, ensuring FAA compliance, environmental protection and long-term stability for safe airport taxi operations.

Category I: Special Projects, Small Projects. The winner was Halff, for the FSM Runway 8-26 BAK-12/14 Aircraft Arresting System for Fort Smith Regional Airport.

Ebbing Air National Guard Base was chosen in 2023 as the U.S. Air Force's F-35 pilot training center for allied nations, requiring major runway upgrades.

Halff led design, coordinated procurement with the aircraft arresting system manufacturer, and provided construction management under strict FAA and unified facilities criteria standards.

Working on an active commercial and military runway, Halff implemented innovative phasing to minimize disruptions. Despite a typical 24-month

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CATEGORY I - SPECIAL PROJECTS, LARGE PROJECT. The winner was Halff for the FSM Runway 8-26 Bak - 12/14 Aircraft Arresting System. Pictured are Brian Maurer, P.E., Halff; Andrew Meyer, Fort Smith Regional Airport; and Curtis Osier, Halff.

CATEGORY I - SPECIAL PROJECTS, UNDER $5 MILLLION PROJECT. The winner was Michael Baker International for the Saline County Airport Taxiway Safety Area Improvements. Pictured from left are Matt Wallis, Matt Roddy and Mike Stengel, P.E, Michael Baker International.

schedule, the project was completed in just 16 months and certified in August 2024, enabling Ebbing to host 36 fighter aircraft and 1,500 military personnel. The work strengthened U.S. and allied defense readiness.

There were three Honor Awards in this category:

• Olsson, for the City of Fayetteville Civic Plaza for the City of Fayetteville

• McClelland Consulting Engineers, for the Alice Walton School of Medicine for AWSOM LANDS

• McClelland Consulting Engineers, for the Opera in the Ozarks Project for the Opera in the Ozarks

Category L: Small Projects. The category involves projects whose total construction budget does not exceed $2.5 million. The winner was Crafton Tull, for the Easterseals Academy Inclusive Playground for Easterseals of Arkansas.

Easterseals Academy needed an inclusive, ADA-compliant playground for more than 200 students with disabilities. While the site behind the academy was ideal, a 50-foot Central Arkansas Water easement protecting three major transmission lines limited permanent structures on more than half the site.

Crafton Tull coordinated with Central Arkansas Water to navigate these constraints and ultimately delivered a full site plan, design, and construction coordination that accommodated this important public infrastructure. The final design for the playground divided the area into two engaging play zones connected by an ADA-compliant pathway across the easement, demonstrating how engineering creativity can overcome constraints. What began as a challenge led to a unique solution that accommodates users with varying abilities while protecting essential infrastructure and realizing the client's vision.

There were two Honor Awards in this category:

• Garver, for the Highway 167 Emergency Bypass Project for the Arkansas Department of Transportation

• McClelland Consulting Engineers, for the Carol Ann Cross Park Playground Improvements Project for the City of Fort Smith Parks & Recreation Department

Sponsors, ACEC Fellows

The Engineering Excellence Awards Banquet was sponsored by Crist Engineers, Crafton Tull, Pickering Engineering and Design Professionals and Olsson. Gallagher Insurance sponsored the People's Choice Award, as it has done for many years. U-E-S Geotechnical and Environmental provided the table centerpieces.

The event also recognized eight members of the ACEC College of Fellows, a distinguished class of engineers who have been selected by their peers as deserving recognition for exemplary contributions to the profession. Arkansas' Fellows are Dan Williams, Bert Parker, Rick Geraci, Jeff Geurian, Dennis Ford. Matt Crafton. and the late Carl Yates and Brock Johnson.

CATEGORY L - SMALL PROJECTS. **The winner was Crafton Tull for the Easter Seals Inclusive Playground for Easter Seals of Arkansas. From left are Tyler Feemster, P.E.; Alex Roberts with Easter Seals; and Dave Roberts, PLA, ASLA, Crafton Tull.**

MASTER OF CEREMONIES. **Brad Hammond, P.E., with Olsson once again served as master of ceremonies for the Engineering Excellence Awards banquet.**

CATEGORY L - SMALL PROJECTS HONOR AWARD. **Garver received an Honor Award for the Highway 167 Emergency Bypass for the Arkansas Department of Transportation. Pictured are Erica Adams., P.E., ARDOT; Jessie Jones, P.E., ARDOT; John Cantabery, P.E., Garver; David Baker, P.E., ARDOT.; Jared Wiley, P.E., ARDOT; Nick Braddy, P.E., Garver; and Dustin Tackett, P.E., Garver.**

Engineering Excellence Awards

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD. Danny Hernandez, E.I., with McClelland Consulting Engineers, right, and Andrew McCauley, AIA, with Arkansas State Parks pose at the Lake Catherine Marina. MCE won the People's Choice Award for the project at the Engineering Excellence Awards Banquet March 5.

MCE's marina the People's Choice

Floating Lake Catherine boat dock can move laterally as future needs require

When visitors at Lake Catherine State Park go to the marina to rent a kayak or boat, they'll be stepping foot on this year's People's Choice Award winner, designed by McClelland Consulting Engineers.

MCE's Lake Catherine Marina Improvements project for Arkansas State Parks won the Engineering Excellence Awards' second highest honor March 5. The People's Choice Award is determined by a vote of banquet attendees.

The marina, which opened in time for Memorial Day in 2025, also received an Honor Award in Category H: Transportation – Large Project. It was one of seven Honor Awardees that were in the same category as the winner of the Grand Conceptor Award, the highest honor. That award went to Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company for the 30 Crossing Design-Build project for the Arkansas Department of Transportation.

The marina design by Danny Hernandez, E.I., and other MCE professionals created a floating marina structure that sits on polyethylene-encased floats, with weight and buoyancy calculations to ensure it maintains an adequate distance above the water level. The entire structure is tethered by cables and winches to shore-based anchors and to large underwater concrete blocks. The winches can be adjusted as the lake level changes so the marina doesn't rock. The marina is connected to the gangway via a fifth wheel, so it floats independently. An engineered steel truss system underneath the walkway provides stability.

"This whole structure floats," Hernandez said. "Everything right here – there's nothing on piers. All of this fluctuates with water level."

A floating marina is standard. It was especially needed here because of Lake Catherine's fluctuating water levels based on rainfall and the lake's status as a dam created by Entergy for hydroelectric power. Entergy has a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license to operate Remmel Dam, which created Lake Catherine. Its license gives it numerous responsibilities for managing the lake.

The design also allows the marina to be moved laterally, not just vertically, if circumstances require it.

"Depending on water level, if we need to move this whole dock out later on, if there's a major lake construction project, we can disconnect this whole structure from here and move it out deeper into the lake," Hernandez said.

The aging previous version, built in 1982, also floated but was tied to the shore by steel trusses that did not allow for flexible lateral movement. The water stretching 10-15 feet from shore was shallow, so when the lake level dropped, the boat slips potentially could be in the

mud. There were also close calls with propellers getting stuck.

Constructors took a section of the marina that faced the cove, turned it to face the shore, and then connected it to the new dock, providing more space. The only visible sign that differentiates the old and new was the keeping of the wooden walkway. The new walkway features two-foot-by-two-foot concrete blocks.

The design basically doubles the number of boat slips and added an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant accessible kayak launch. The dimmer yellow outside lighting on the marina complies with Entergy requirements and also reduces the number of bugs attracted to the light.

Hernandez said engineers tried to ensure people in the visitor center see primarily the lake and not the marina in their line of sight when they look out the back window.

"We kind of really had to balance lake level and boat depth compared to the

view, because we didn't want to have this (marina) blocking everything," he said. "We didn't want that to be the first thing you see. … It looks good, but I like the lake better. I like natural."

Other design features include an expanded store where visitors can purchase T-shirts and snacks. The store's walls and roof abut but aren't connected, accommodating flexion within the floating structure, and the green and red outside color scheme is similar to the nearby cabins. The store was designed by Andrew McCauley, AIA, an architect with the Arkansas State Parks.

The project also updated the fueling system, the only fuel service on the lake. The old marina's fuel shutoff system had reached the end of its useful life. The new system automatically shuts off if it senses a leak anywhere between the shore and the fuel pump. That system and a double-lined, self-contained pipe prevent a fuel spill in the lake.

The project's contractor was Hot Springs-based Larry Diggs Construction. The dock structures were manufactured by Meeco Sullivan, a national firm.

The design is part of a larger improvement effort for Lake Catherine State Park in general. MCE also recently completed a sewer collection system rehab and improvements to the onsite wastewater treatment plant.

The park averages 354,700 visitors per year.

"And whenever we do improvements like this, along with all the other improvements that we've done for the park, we'll see a small jump in that," McCauley said.


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