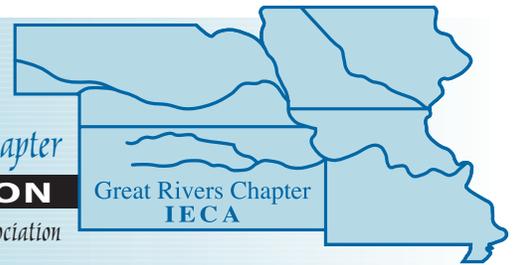




Great Rivers Chapter

INTERNATIONAL EROSION CONTROL ASSOCIATION

A Newsletter For Members and Friends of the Great Rivers Chapter of the International Erosion Control Association



Great Rivers Chapter
IECA

Spring 2009

EC09: IECA's Annual Conference in Reno a Success

Over 1,800 Stormwater and Erosion & Sediment Control professionals gathered in Reno, NV February 8th-13th, 2009 for EC09: IECA's Environmental Connection. The Atlantis Hotel and Casino and Reno-Sparks Convention Center buzzed with excitement as the Annual Conference kicked off with two full days loaded with 27 different training courses, with topics ranging from Low-Impact Development to SWPPP Preparation and Maintenance. The Expo and Trade Show with over 150 exhibitor booths opened up with a ribbon cutting ceremony Tuesday night, followed by a vendors reception for all of the EC09 attendees. The technical sessions and presentations began on Tuesday, with 57 different presentations and panel discussions offered over three days for attendees to choose from.

Attendees took advantage of some exciting field trips, as well. A tour of the Interstate 580 Extension project

gave attendees an inside glimpse at one of the largest roads projects in recent Nevada history. A guided tour of the historic town of Virginia City was also held.

The Great Rivers Chapter held an informal membership meeting led by Chapter President Tom Wells, which was filled with lively discussion about current industry happenings, and how the Chapter is meeting these challenges. Chapter members also participated in a series of events for IECA's "Chapter Challenge Survivor" competition.

It was a week filled with tremendous education and networking opportunities which can be found nowhere else. The Great Rivers Chapter encourages everyone to mark their calendars for February 14-18, 2010 for EC10: IECA's Environmental Connection in Dallas!

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greatriversieca.org

Log on for the latest information about workshops, conferences, regulations, calendar of events and industry news. The Great Rivers Newsletter is also available online for your viewing.

The IECA Great Rivers Chapter is looking for articles, events and other pertinent information to publish in YOUR newsletter. We also welcome suggestions to make the newsletter more useful to you. Provide your information to DeDe Vest at dede.vest@mo.usda.gov

This newsletter is published by the Great Rivers Chapter of the IECA.



President's Message *by Tom Wells, CPESC, CISEC*

Not too long ago developers across the country were signing grading permits for 500+ lot sub-divisions with the somewhat realistic expectation that homes would be built and people living in them before the ink dried on the application. Designers would lay out their SWPPP plans by sticking with the status quos of perimeter silt fence, interior sediment basins, swales, etc...everything they needed to satisfy the basic requirements of the NPDES permit. Then mass grading contractors would seemingly swoop in and begin moving dirt with such amazing efficiencies that often they would be done and on to the next site before even the most vigilant of EPA inspectors could get to the site.

The last six to twelve months have been an awakening of sorts to a lot of people in nearly every industry. The mass grading style of development has either stopped or been reduced so quickly that everyone is still walking around with a "morning after" look of confusion and sometimes embarrassment on their faces. As the haze is wearing off, for many the stark reality of what they committed to over the last 5 years is truly coming back to haunt them. To my developer friends, remember those permits you signed...well the regulators do. And in good times or bad you are still going to be held responsible for keeping your sites in compliance with the terms of the grading permit. That's right, just because the value of your stock portfolio may be going down faster than yours truly on rollerblades; the contract you signed still has the same content.

So can or will the regulators hold your feet to the fire in regards to Stormwater Regulations? Well simply put yes, they have to. The regulations were not created as a way to increase the cost of building, but it is a definite side effect. And the regulators themselves are held accountable by the many environmental watch groups. They are in the same boat you are in many cases, just trying to do your job and not get sued.

So we are at an impasse, we are running into situations where there is simply not funding to pay for repair and maintenance, but the regulators still have to do their job. Who is going to win? Truth be told I don't know if anyone will. I have noticed a remarkable trend of collaboration between the two groups. Regulators are trying to be as understanding as possible with the occasional delay in repair, while at the same time they are not just turning their heads to flagrant violations.

Historically the market goes through these up and down cycles (this one just happens to be rather painful and sudden). As I stated in my last message we as an industry have to take this as an opportunity to learn and grow.

As designers, the status quos just simply won't work anymore. We have to look at our sites and choose products very carefully. As inspectors we have to be as vigilant as ever while keeping the line of communication open between all parties involved. As contractors we have to learn to question and communicate, if you see a bad plan or a product that you know won't work... say something. Most of the time, no one knows more about product and performance than the folks working on the sites everyday (go figure). As regulators we have to communicate better, not everyone is trying get away with something. Sometime there truly are no funds to make the repairs immediately and adding fines or threatening fines won't help the situation. And finally as developers this is an opportunity to educate yourselves on the fine print of your grading permit. You are smart folks, and there is enormous cost saving potential in following the intent of some regulations instead of the exact definition (I will have to explain that a little more next issue).

So there it is; some of what I said may not be popular with some folks but the harsh reality is that in all situations in life perception is reality and this is my perception. You may disagree with me, if so I congratulate you on making it through the entire message. We can disagree and I may be wrong but that doesn't change what I believe are the underlying truths of this article. I wish everyone luck during the gear up for the spring construction season, and look forward to getting started on my next message.

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The Sediment Stops Here.

We have decided to add a new running segment to the IECA Great Rivers Chapter newsletter called "The Sediment Stops Here". This will be a place to review a new or existing BMP and our real world experiences and, yes, our opinion. This will be open to anyone, so feel free to send in your own "The Sediment Stops Here" suggestions and questions. And of course feel free to write and submit your own review, too. Keep a couple of things in mind. We don't want sales pitches — these are to be non-biased user reviews. These can be anonymous but feel free to add your name and take credit as well. Questions and answers will be posted on the next newsletter with the other reviews. Send all BMP reviews, questions, suggestions, etc. to tom.wells@LRA-inc.com.

"That's right, I said hay bales" by Tom Wells, CPESC, CISEC

For this first issue I will be defending the once proud name of hay bales. That's right, I said hay bales. Are you done laughing? When I first started doing inspections hay bales were more common than silt fence. They were your one stop BMP shop. If you needed inlet protection throw some hay bales in front of the inlet. You need ditch checks...you need hay bales. You want to protect the perimeter of your site from run-off/run-on, you guessed it HAY BALES! As the industry progressed we quickly realized that hay bales were not the panacea we once thought. They plug inlets, effectively widen ditches, and are great at protecting your perimeter as long as you get no precipitation.

The hatred of hay bales was so wide spread that many jurisdictions completely banned the use of them. And believe me for a long time I was a torch caring member of the hay bale burning mob. So why on earth would I even attempt to defend them? Quite simple they really do work! I have seen so many well respected presenters mock hay bales that just the image a hay bale on their slide show prompted immediate laughter from the crowd.

Over the past several years I have seen many products come and go and have a pretty good idea of what works, what doesn't and what REALLY doesn't work. One of the biggest things that I have learned is that there is a place for nearly every product, even hay bales. I truly feel that hay bales got a bad rap for two reasons. First, no product can fix everything. As I mentioned above, hay bales were used for nearly everything. A combination of lack of research, experience, and common sense led to them being installed everywhere for everything. Keep in mind this was back in the stone age when we were pretty limited on options. The second and final nail in the coffin for hay bales was something that still rings true today with just about every product. The product you are installing is only as good as the installation. I have seen countless hay bales just placed on the ground, sometimes not even

staked. How well do you think silt fence would work if you just tied it to the post and laid it on the ground?

I came to this realization after seeing hay bales widely used on several roadway projects in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri. When designed right and installed correctly they really did work. Not in every case mind you, but show me a product that does work every time in every circumstance. I have also seen them stacked, wrapped in fabric and used as concrete washout pits. I even met one homebuilder that carried a few with him to temporarily fill the gaps of silt fence they had to take down to get to their sites. And these are just a few examples of some of the creative and useful ways I have seen them used.

So keep in mind that the BMP tool box is huge. Think about your product selection carefully; don't just go by what the salesman or other inspectors may say. Use common sense and research what the true intent and best use of the product is. And finally, as hard as it is to admit, sometimes you have to check your ego at the door. If you used a product and it didn't work...was it the product that failed or was it that you failed to use the right product for the situation, or was it not installed correctly? Well I think that is enough insult for one opinion piece.

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Bring in Stormwater Planning and Monitoring Up Front by Rebecca Kauten

While I am no engineer or architect, I do have enough experience with construction to know that when a building like a single-family home is built, the basement is not the last feature to be included in the structure. Laws of physics would make this impossible, and on a whole it would just be bad planning. When it comes to taking stormwater management features and enhancements for water quality, however, this tends to be the case – designs weren't made correctly for innovative stormwater management at the "basement level." At least it appears to be the case in our part of the country. This approach may be why some attempts have failed, and may be a key element we as water quality professionals need to help change if we want to see progress and proper protection of our resources.

Recently I read through several industry magazines that showcased stormwater management projects for both new construction and retrofitting. As the case studies outline the projects, the ideas of managing runoff, and even monitoring for performance are part and parcel with the overall project plan. These elements were not added in after the designs were set, or when the project was let and the contractors were on the ground. Rather, from the conceptual phase to construction, the plans to take stormwater management into account were intended.

Recently I have had several projects come across my desk. People are looking for ideas and ways to add in a stormwater management component, or possibly measure the effectiveness of practices they do plan to build. However, in many cases, the plans for the projects are so far down the line no one is willing to incur the cost to go back, make changes and include what they really need. And at that stage of the game, it's hard to ask them to do so. What has puzzled me is why such elements weren't included in the concept or design from the start? To me, it's a sign that stormwater management has a long way to go before it truly is an institutionalized practice and approach to how we build and maintain our structural systems.

How do we help move this initiative forward? There may be several ways to do so. State and local regulatory agencies could ultimately require low-impact, infiltration features (versus stormwater ponds) as part of the designs before approval. This could work in the long run, but it may not generate the most creativity. Rather, the concept of managing stormwater through infiltration whenever possible, versus

impoundment, needs to become top-of-mind for the designers, engineers and planners. The same goes for any monitoring components that may be incorporated with a particular project. Yes, we can gather data after a site is built, but if this element were also part of the original plan, monitoring plans can adapt with the overall project – not at the mercy of it.

I may be speaking for many stormwater management professionals with the next statement: It is great to be considered a resource for the design-build industry, but at the same time it becomes challenging when we are asked to be miracle workers after the fact. It is much easier to incorporate innovative, scalable stormwater management components in a project in the early planning stages. If a project manager seeks assistance after ground is broken – or is running down the street to the storm drain – any assistance that might be offered will act as a band-aid. The ability to make a major impact is often lost.

Now, this isn't always the case. The perpetual optimist in me sees opportunities for retrofits every time I open my eyes in an urban area. However, we've already sunk the cost into building a site. Then, we have the added cost of "fixing it" for water quality. To me, it's better to do it right the first time. I think we have a way to go until this is the norm. However, with a growing number of stormwater management and water quality professionals in the marketplace, we may turn the corner soon.

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