

National Society of Professional Surveyors

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ABSTRACT: The activities, accomplishments, and on-going efforts and goals of the National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS) on behalf of the surveying community are reviewed. Ranging from government affairs to educational programs, a broad stroke overview of NSPS in 2005-2006 is provided.

Introduction

For over twenty five years, the National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS) has been the recognized voice and advocate of the surveying profession in the United States. With over 4000 members and affiliations with each of the fifty state surveying societies—each being represented on the NSPS Board of Governors—NSPS represents the surveying profession across the United States. This is in line with the mission of NSPS to “establish and further common interests, objectives, and political effort that would help bind the surveying profession into a unified body in the United States.”

In 2004, changes in the structure of the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping (ACSM) transformed NSPS into a truly independent organization, while still enjoying the associated benefits of the ACSM organization. Each ACSM member organization now exercises direct control of its activities, programs, and resources.

The National Society of Professional Surveyors is the largest member organization of the reorganized ACSM. The society has maintained its strong participation in many of the ACSM joint efforts, while using its self-governance and financial autonomy under the new structure to dedicate its resources directly to enhancing the surveying community professionally, educationally, and politically.

NSPS and ACSM Working Together

The National Society of Professional Surveyors has expanded its participation in ACSM's Joint Government Affairs Program. Through joint

efforts, NSPS is better able to affect a positive impact on surveying—at present and into the future. Surveying is a dynamic profession. NSPS generates and supports legislative action ensuring that the legal framework in which the profession evolves reflects the best interests of both the profession and the diverse constituencies served by surveying.

Current issues range from initiatives regarding the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Map Modernization and the Federal Land Asset Inventory reform to ensuring that programs such as the Federal Prison Industries do not circumvent licensing laws by offering surveying and mapping services. The National Society of Professional Surveyors continues to pursue National Surveyors Week legislation. In 2005, Resolution 361 successfully passed in the Senate. The House Resolution has gone through committee, and NSPS is currently working to arrange the co-sponsors needed to bring the Resolution to the floor for a vote.

The NSPS has begun working to secure appropriations or grants for the NSPS Trig-Star Program, a trigonometry contest and scholarship program for high school students. Youth outreach programs are among the most effective ways we can shape public perceptions of the surveying and mapping professions. The Society was also instrumental in the realization of the “Maps in Our Lives” Exhibit at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. This exhibit has been made part of the permanent collection at the Library, ensuring a place for surveying and mapping in the national heritage.

Equally important are issues affecting our practicing members. Together, ACSM and NSPS were instrumental in the inclusion of surveying services as part of quality-based selection of design services. The NSPS is committed to the importance of quality-based selection and continues to represent the profession at the federal government level. Efforts ranging from effecting changes in procurement requests to

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spearheading calls for policy clarifications have been successful.

Work on the mutual recognition of land surveying credentials under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is ongoing. Substantial concerns have arisen regarding the ability and the authority of the parties to negotiate a document that will have to speak to over fifty disparate jurisdictions. The NSPS has asked for guidance from each of our affiliates in order to determine the impact and compatibility of mutual recognition with state-wide licensing laws.

Providing health care benefits has become an increasing problem for many businesses in the United States. The NSPS has actively supported the passage of the Small Business Health Fairness Act. This Act would enable professional organizations such as NSPS to form group health plans, making health care more affordable and accessible.

We have witnessed a demonstrable change in the perception of the surveying profession in the U.S. Congress in recent years. Our efforts

are no longer confined to pursuing a moment or two to present our case. As the recognized national voice of the surveying profession, the opinions and input of NSPS are now sought after by agencies and departments throughout the government. The NSPS, by working in concert with ACSM and the other member organizations, provides the strongest possible voice on this myriad of issues.

NSPS, the National Surveying Society

With self governance, NSPS assumed the responsibilities of the national representative of surveying in the United States. The NSPS is uniquely positioned to provide such representation, taking full advantage of its nationwide network of representatives. The Board of Directors and the Board of Governors are an active presence with each of the NSPS Affiliates.

The requirements and guidelines for licensure in the United States differ from state to state

and among territories. The NSPS is affiliated with the professional societies in all of the U.S. states and territories. Through these affiliations, NSPS maintains a strong network that not only understands this diversity of circumstances but is able to articulate sometimes complex relationships from a national perspective. An integral part of this network is an on-going association with the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES). The NCEES represents the licensing boards from the various jurisdictions and formulates the national portions of the licensure exams.

The NSPS is particularly proud of its recent collaboration with NCEES in producing and distributing a Speakers Kit. The kit, completed a year ago, is designed as a working guide for making presentations to youth, schools, and other groups outside of the professional community. It presents surveying as an exciting career option, and it is one of the most successful promotions of surveying as a career available in the United States.

The NSPS recognizes education as a critical component in the evolution of the profession and the primary conduit to the next generation of surveyors. Representatives of NSPS, as well as members of the other member organizations of ACSM, assist the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) in evaluating curriculum accreditations. In cooperation with state affiliates, NSPS supports each of the regional university-level surveying programs. For instance, the six New England State Affiliates have recently completed a financial commitment to the surveying program at the University of Maine, which played a major part in the rebirth of this outstanding college degree program. All surveyors should look with pride at this revitalized program.

As part of NSPS' commitment to surveying education, the NSPS Foundation, Inc. continues to provide generous scholarships, grants, and awards to students enrolled in surveying programs. Recognizing the importance of encouraging young people at all levels to explore surveying as a career, NSPS sponsors annual Surveying Student Competitions which offer college students from across the country an opportunity to measure their skills against their peers and network with professionals from their chosen field. The Trig-Star and the Boy Scout Surveying Merit Badge programs are among the ways NSPS hopes to introduce surveying to young people making career decisions.

The development and support of certification programs such as the national Certified Survey Technician (CST) will continue to be a priority. The CST Program has exceeded all expectations. With over 1200 active participants, the program has achieved a positive income status, while continuing to be an important milestone for individuals employed in land surveying. The tests are subject to regular review and refinement, and test delivery options have been expanded. Over one third of the applicants now choose online testing. Applicants enjoy the ease of online testing as well as the immediate scoring available with this type of testing. The availability of online testing, coupled with an ever increasing state level access, has helped the program reach its goal of "anytime, anywhere, and online."

The NSPS continues to be a leading source of information about land surveying in the United States. Maintaining an extensive catalog of the best and most current literature, NSPS offers this catalog to the membership at affordable prices. With the publication of the *Surveying and Land Information Science* Journal and the *ACSM Bulletin*, NSPS, in conjunction with the other ACSM member organizations, provides widely read outlets for scholarly and innovative articles concerning surveying. Furthermore, a revised version of the best-selling *Definitions of Surveying and Associated Terms* is now available for purchase.

The same breadth of dedication is evident in the NSPS commitment to improving the practice of surveying in the United States. NSPS, in conjunction with the American Land Title Association (ALTA), completed and adopted revisions to the national standards for Land Title Surveys. The NSPS has devoted considerable effort to fostering a solid working relationship with ALTA. The seamless manner in which this process evolved is largely due to that relationship. The standards, also adopted by ALTA, became effective in January 2006.

For a number of years, NSPS has been concerned with the paucity of quality information about safety in the surveying workplace. After lying dormant for several years, the production of a safety video for the surveying profession has been contracted and is underway. The project has been funded with initial seed money from the NSPS Foundation, Inc., which is also soliciting outside funding and sponsorships for this long-overdue and worthwhile project.

A primary goal for NSPS over the last two years has been expanding and improving the benefits we are able to provide to our membership. An exciting new program NSPS has been working on through the Private Practice Committee is a comprehensive insurance package. The NSPS has approved Younths Insurance Agency and Assurance Risk Managers of Colorado as the exclusive providers of the NSPS insurance benefits package. We hope that this, in conjunction with the group health plan legislation mentioned earlier, will afford NSPS the opportunity to offer members a true group health plan.

For the second year in a row, the NSPS Foundation, Inc. has provided significant disaster relief to the surveying communities in areas of the United States affected by natural disasters. By working directly with state affiliates, NSPS has developed the best way possible to supply relief quickly to those surveyors most affected by these disasters. The NSPS will continue to assist surveyors in need whenever and wherever possible.

New Vision to Reality

It is the intention of NSPS to work in coalition with its affiliates and other professional societies, as well as independently, to expand the horizons and enhance the future of surveying. The NSPS stands prepared to work to define and embrace the changing landscape of the surveying profession. Its members are dedicated to the advancement of the profession both technically and intellectually. The NSPS believes the profession can only be as strong as its collective will. The Society's goal is to assimilate the needs and beliefs of its members, while fostering interaction and forging relationships with a broad spectrum of organizations within and outside the U.S. borders. The NSPS is committed to the growth and evolution of the surveying profession, and it will continue to encourage all professionals to work in concert to achieve these goals. We urge every surveyor in the U.S. to continue to support their state societies, the National Society of Professional Surveyors, and FIG. ■