



❖ RPG News ❖

A Publication of the Mississippi State Board of Registered Professional Geologists

Protecting the Public's Health, Safety, and Welfare

Winter, 2001

Members of the Board: Les Aultman, President (Mining - Mineral Extraction); Charles Swann, Vice President (At Large); David Patrick (Academia); Patricia Phillips (Government); and Winston Russell, (Environmental).

News of Interest

On July 13, 2001 the Board welcomed two new Board members who took their oaths of office during ceremonies at the regularly scheduled Board meeting. Dr. David M. Patrick was sworn in representing the Academic sector and Ms. Patricia Phillips took her oath representing the Government sector.

Dr. Patrick, who comes to the Board with an extensive background in geology and geological engineering and as a professor of Geology at the University of Southern Mississippi, replaces Dr. Darrel Schmitz who served in that capacity since the inception of the Board in 1997. Dr. Schmitz appears to have found other activities to keep him busy as he, in addition to his teaching duties at Mississippi State, is currently the President of the Association of State Boards of Geology (ASBOG) and also continues his keen interest in the activities of the Board.

Ms. Patricia Phillips, comes to the Board with a background in geophysics and geohydrology. Ms. Phillips who is employed by the Office of Land and Water Resources (MDEQ), replaces Mr. Stephen L. Ingram, Sr. who decided to return to academia to further his education (and punishment) beyond the BS level. Mr. Ingram started his involvement with geologic registration in Mississippi serving as Secretary of the Geologic Task Force in 1995, Chair of the Board's Advisory Committee in 1997, and as a Board member since July, 1999.

Both former Board members have provided an immeasurable degree of expertise, forethought, professional leadership, and vision during their tenure as Board members and their presence on the Board will be missed—even the bad jokes and long meetings which they both endured admirably. The Board wishes them continued success in their continuing and new endeavors as professional geologists and as leaders in the geologic profession.

A Letter from President Aultman

Welcome to a new year in the life of your professional board. Our state currently has roughly 650 Registered Professional Geologists and 20 Geologists-In-Training. The formation of the board and the registration of these geologists are significant milestones for Mississippi and our profession. However, it is time now to concentrate on the professional growth of our membership which will significantly enhance the opportunities and rewards for our registrants and, more importantly, to safeguard life, health, and property, and to promote the public welfare.

As professional geologists, you and I have an important job to do. Our mission as professionals is to make those important geological determinations that affect public health and the environment in this State. It is imperative that these decisions be made by the trained professionals registered by our board. It is our personal challenge to demonstrate that we have the qualifications to make those geological determinations which the job demands.

Education of the public is another area that needs our help. Many residents, businessmen and even employees of our State government do not know that our State has registered professionals to conduct geological activities. This leads to geology being practiced by persons who are not registered professionals and no easy recourse for those affected negatively. We as a group must continue to address education of the public during our daily professional activities.

The most important thing an individual or group must have to accomplish anything is a vision. This organization was founded because people have a vision for the future of geologists in Mississippi, the US, and the world. My vision is to see our profession recognized for our contributions to making Mississippi better and safer for its citizens.

I am proud to be a geologist practicing in Mississippi. I am also proud of the progress we have made for our profession in this State. I welcome you to go forward with us as a group and to contribute in making positive changes to our profession. Les Aultman, *President*

For Your Information: An Update on the Finances of the Board

It should be noted that there are several key elements which are related to the expenses of the Board to which you all should be aware of which are as follows:

- 1) The Board members (past and present) have never received any per diem for any board meetings nor special meetings since the inception of the Board. The Board has voted to forego these expenses as a sign of goodwill and frugality. The per diem allowed for and mandated under state law is \$40.00/day/board member or a minimum of \$200.00/meeting for the entire board. By not charging this expense there has been a savings by the Board of nearly \$8,000.00 in operating costs.
- 2) Additionally, the Board (past and present members) has resolved not to charge for mileage to and from Board and other meetings.

This policy has also been in place since the inception of the MSBRPG. At current mileage rates, this represents roughly \$5,000.00 in reimbursable mileage charges which have also been foregone by the members of the Board. 3) Lastly, since some Board members travel long distances to Jackson, where the Board meets, overnight lodging has to also be included in projected meeting costs. Generally speaking these too have been foregone by those Board members in order to minimize the costs associated with the operations of the Board. Estimated cost savings are currently on the order of nearly \$5,000.00.

So the bottom line of just these operational savings by the Board has resulted in a cost savings in operating costs of roughly **\$18,000.00**. By foregoing these expenses which would normally be paid to the Board members for serving on the Board they have instead paid for these and other expenses out of their own pockets — a testament of their commitment to aid in the advancement of your profession and careers in geology.

So the next time you see a Board member you might want to thank them for serving on the Board and for also being so cost conscious in its operation. These members are serving to better our profession of geology and to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare. They have and continue to serve with dedication, commitment and frugality.

Renewal Payments - Another area which should be of interest to you all is the manner in which your registration renewals are scheduled. Currently renewals are scheduled to be paid every two years, coincident to the quarter of the year in which you were first registered. This was done in an attempt at fairness for the dollars you spent (spend) to be a Registered Professional Geologist (RPG) or Geologist-In-Training (GIT). Most of the other boards in the State of Mississippi do not follow this method. Generally other boards renew on a yearly or more often on a biennial basis and only at that time. For example, if you were a registrant of one of these other boards you may be accepted and pay for registration in November (full amount) and if the renewal date is January, you would have to pay another full renewal fee. Just something to think about.

Enforcement/Disciplinary Actions

Complaints related to the unlicensed public practice of geology have been requiring an increasing amount of time and resources of the Board. It will be a continuing request of you as Registered Professional Geologists, Geologists-In-Training and the Public to report to the Board through formal complaints or through verbal notifications if you feel that there is or has been a violation of the RPG Act of 1997.

Remember, you are the eyes and the ears of the Board. If you are aware of any practice violation do not hesitate to either file a complaint (found at the Board's web site or by calling for a copy) or by contacting the Board's Director and if the concern has merit the Board may initiate an investigation on its own behalf. Remember that the public practice of geology must be done by or under the supervision of a Mississippi Registered Professional Geologist. Please notify the

Board of any appearance of or documentable evidence of violations to the RPG Act of 1997.

Voluntary Continuing Education

The MSBRPG continues its voluntary continuing education program for its registrants and enrollees. To date we have had three (3), day-long seminars and a one hour presentation all of which have had excellent attendances. This does speak well of the need for and also the desire of our registrants to keep themselves current on matters which may impact their profession and their careers in geology. We currently have at least one day long seminar planned (6 Professional Development Hours or 6 PDH's) in conjunction with the Petroleum Technology Transfer Council to be held November 28, 2001 on basic log analysis calculations and techniques. Enrollment in this seminar is available at the Board's web site. The cost of the seminar is free to government employees and \$25.00 for all others - this includes a buffet lunch and all course notes.

Other anticipated voluntary course offerings include seminars on geotechnical topics and also an offering related to basic geohydrology. The dates and times of these anticipated offerings will be posted on the Board's web site when they become available:

www.msbrpg.state.ms.us

Other Item's of Interest

The Board's Director continues to work with other state agencies in aiding them to implement the provisions of the RPG Act of 1997 into existing rules and regulations related to geological matters. Implementation has been slow but these agencies are gradually incorporating requirements that any geologic matters which impact the public's health, safety, and welfare must be performed and signified by a Registered Professional Geologist by their signature and stamp/seal on such geologic or portions of documents dealing with geologic matters. The Director continues with these efforts to provide assistance and encouragement to all those agencies that deal with issues involving geology in their rules and regulations in the protection of the public's health, safety, and welfare.

Public Notice of Rule Modifications

January 22, 2002 notice of public hearing. The Board will be filing within the time frame prescribed by Mississippi State law the required documentation related to the modification of Rules 4 and 8. The modification of Rule 4 is related to a minor discrepancy which has been noted to exist between the RPG Act and said rule. The modification of Rule 8 is being proposed to clarify the existing language and intent of that rule related to the qualifying examination(s) process.

These proposed modifications will be posted on the Board's web site shortly. The public hearing will be held at the Board's Large Conference Room located at the Jackson Enterprise Center, 931 Highway 80 West, Jackson, MS 39204. The public hearing will commence at 6:00 PM, January 22, 2002. Should you be unable to attend, the Board will accept written comments submitted and received by the Board on or prior to that date. If providing written comments,

please send them to: MSBRPG, P.O. Box 22742, Jackson, MS 39225-2742.

ASBOG Examinations - An Update

Spring ASBOG exam date is set for March 15, 2002 with February 8, 2002 deadline for payment of exam fees. Please be aware that you may only take only one exam during a scheduled exam offering. In order to take the FG exam, you must have first submitted your application as an enrollee (GIT) and to sit for the PG exam you must have: 1) four years of geological work experience; 2) previously passed the FG exam; and 3) have a complete RPG application on file with the Board. Failure to have the necessary information on file will disallow you from sitting for either exam. If you have any questions contact the Board! If you are taking the FG exam as an "exit" exam with the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, the University of Southern Mississippi, or Millsaps College the requirement for the Board's receipt of an application as an enrollee (GIT) is waived.

At the last offering of the exams, we had four who took the FG exam and 3 who took the PG exam. Since the inception of the Board's adoption of the ASBOG exams the Board has administered FG and 5 PG exams. The next ASBOG examination offering will be on March 15, 2002. The deadline for examination orders is February 8, 2002. Please visit the Board's web site for an exam application or call the Board for additional information.

Board's Web Site

Please visit the Board's web site from time to time. On it you can find items such as Memorandum of Understandings (MOU's), Attorney General and Board Opinions, meeting dates and times, continuing education information, order forms for stamps/embossers, complaint and exam forms, etc. It also has archived issues of this newsletter - the RPG News, as well as other useful information. The web site address is: www.msbrpg.state.ms.us and the Board's e-mail address is: geology@msbrpg.state.ms.us

Also, the Board's phone number is 601/354-6370; fax 601/354-6032; mailing address: P.O. Box 22742, Jackson, MS 39225-2742; and physical address is: Jackson Enterprise Center, 931 Hwy 80 West, Jackson, MS 39204.

Comity/Reciprocity Agreements

The Board has agreements with Alabama and Georgia and it is anticipated that our agreement will be in place with Arkansas at the beginning of next year. For reference to the terms and conditions of both the Alabama and Georgia agreements, they have been placed on the Board's web site. Please refer to these documents should you wish to apply for licensure through these agreements.

Legislative Issues - Upcoming Mississippi State Legislature

Budget issues will undoubtedly be of great interest and concern when the Mississippi Legislature convenes in January, 2002. With the current and projected shortfall in the State's General Fund collections it is anticipated that there will be some hard decisions facing Mississippi legislators.

It is important to note that this agency does not receive any General Fund monies. All monies used in the functions and operations of this Board are derived from fees charged registrants and enrollees. It is very significant to further note that all of these monies are transferred from the Board's clearing account and placed in the State's Treasury in the "Registered Professional Geologists Fund." In turn these monies earn interest which is then added back into the RPG Fund pursuant to the RPG Act of 1997. It is important to this Board that these funds and interest which these funds accumulate in the RPG Fund in the state's treasury be kept with and attributed to the agency. The interest earned on these monies is and has been a significant portion of the yearly operating budget of the Board.

Also of potential importance was the introduction last year of a bill which would significantly change the way in which nominees to the Board of RPG's would be chosen. As written, the RPG Act of 1997 sets up a nomination committee which in turn submits a list of nominees to the Board to fill an expiring or vacant position to the registrants of the Board for their consideration and vote to rank them (the nominees) in order of most to least votes received. This listing is then submitted to the Office of the Governor for the Governor's consideration and subsequent nomination. The bill which was tendered last year struck down this language and removed all input from the registrants of the MSBRPG and left the choice solely to the Governor. The bill subsequently died in committee. Reintroduction this year may again be a possibility.

Polling Request - Your Response is Requested Professional Liability Insurance

We, the Advisory Committee and the MSBRPG Board, have received several requests concerning the potential of locating affordable, liability insurance for professional, geological services rendered by our registrants. To that end, the Advisory Committee through Dr. James May, arranged to have Mr. Greg Maloney with Ross and Yerger Insurance research the issue and costs related to the possibility of offering this type of coverage. At the September 13, 2001 meeting of the Board, Mr. Maloney presented several options to the Board for consideration.

In order to offer coverage at a predetermined cost there will have to be a minimum number of 100 registrants who decide to participate. At this predetermined number of participants the estimated cost would be on the order of \$750/year for \$1,000,000 of coverage. So it is hereby requested that if you have an interest in obtaining some sort of professional liability coverage please simply respond by e-mail or regular mail indicating that you may wish to participate in an insurance offering of this type. Once we have heard back from you we will proceed and advise Ross & Yerger of the numbers of registrants which may have an interest in this insurance coverage. Remember, we must have a minimum of 100 participants.

Issues or Concerns? Contact the Board!

Should you have concerns, questions, or wish to know about a particular aspect of the functions and work of the Board do not hesitate to Rick Ericksen, the Board's director. If the Board does not have a rule or policy in place related to your inquiry we (the Board)

will attempt to develop one or answer your question(s) in a thoughtful and timely fashion. An example of this is in the web page listing under "Board Opinions."

Remember that the Board's mission is to license/register all those geologists who may publicly practice geology in the State of Mississippi; to enforce compliance related to the public practice of geology by qualified geologists; and to further the profession of geology through a proactive stance and voluntary continuing education offerings.

Advisory Committee Updates

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Advisory Committee, it is composed of registered geologists who are prominent in one of various sectors of geology such as government, academia, mining/mineral, environmental/engineering. These individuals are generally already active in various organizations and tend to have provided some type of assistance to the Board, or other activity which promotes the geology community. There are typically 12 members selected and approved by a combination of the Board, the Board's Executive Director, and the Committee Chairman.

The Advisory Committee serves the interest of the Board; and has been active as of late, working on voluntary continuing education matters, Web site, practice insurance, business education, political matters, and providing a sounding board for issues facing the Board.

The Committee would like to congratulate Pat

Phillips and David Patrick on their recent appointments to the Board and sincerely thank them for their service on the Advisory Committee. The Committee generally meets four to six times a year, with the officers providing annual service. The current Chairman is Tommy Dunlap, from the private sector, and may be reached at (601)856-9911 or at tdunlap@bcdgeo.com to obtain further details concerning the Committee.

Remember - Report Violations, It's Your Ethical Obligation

Should you become aware of any violations of the RPG Act or suspect them do not hesitate to contact the Board. Remember all information will be kept in the strictest confidence. Alternatively, you may file a complaint available on the Board's web site.

Congratulations to ASBOG Examinees

The Board wishes to congratulate Dr. Lisa Rhoades for her passage of the Fundamentals of Geology exam taken at the Board's testing facility on September 14, 2001. Also congratulations are in order for all three examinees who successfully passed the Practices of Geology examination offered that same date. They are Carol Lutken, Keith Goggin, and James Howell.

The next offering of the ASBOG examinations is March 15, 2002 with an exam ordering deadline of February 8, 2002. Please call the Board or go to the Board's web site for additional information and requirements of the exam process.



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