
FROM THE PRESIDENT OF NAEP

Jim Melton, President, NAEP

NAEP members and Chapter members:

This past quarter in the United States has been much like the previous one for NAEP leadership. Your Executive Officers and Board of Directors have had some extreme challenges and more than a few trying times. There has been lots of stress with daily and weekly calls. Some issues that have demanded our immediate and undivided attention have dealt with our Association's well being. Add in the recent impacts the economy has had on our jobs as environmental professionals and you get the idea.

However, this environment of challenge is an arena in which your leadership shines. We have chosen to focus on progress and keeping the environmental professions relevant in these changing times. Many of us are seeing more work for less pay, and in some cases just less work. Sometimes, despite ourselves, we have achieved great progress. There has been criticism as each issue has been faced and discussed. That is to be expected in an Association of brilliant minds and hard working characters. I am proud to say despite the odds, we have achieved great progress and are still moving forward. That progress has only occurred as a result of tremendous dedication and personal commitment by the leadership. Your Officers and Board have shown great leadership in using our available support to define weekly priorities, and take weekly action.

Your executive leadership has also paid attention to the obvious changes in government at the national level. The day to day advancements of the stimulus packages have provided us with ideas for the future of the profession. The Association outreach has sought to have significant input into the details of these changes. Internally, our association's challenges have been addressed by the leaders of our Strategic Initiatives. We have had frank surveys of issues that have plagued us for years. Our strategic planning efforts have taken the re-

sults of those surveys and used them to address our biggest challenges to success.

As has been the case ever since I joined NAEP almost twenty years ago, during our strategic planning process members have volunteered to take on issues and rolled up their sleeves and went to work redefining NAEP and resolving concerns. I wish to thank all of our Board Members who have looked at the present, knowing the good, bad and ugly of the past, and rose to the occasion to redefine our Association and move forward rather than looking backward. I am proud and very happy to say that those in your Association leadership chose the path of facing issues and concerns and taking steps to solve them.

We have done something about the membership numbers and we are already benefiting from that action by seeing old faces returning to the fold. However, this success has not been accomplished without trial and error. We have certainly learned that NAEP is not an organization that is easy to support or keep running week to week. We are unique and we have unique needs.

As we prepare to move on to a new executive leadership and new association support, we continue to make progress on the issues at hand. The membership can rest assured it is through input from our entire membership that we are seeing fresh ideas and stronger leadership. While in times past it has seemed like an association run by a select few active members interpreting what they thought was best, the fresh faces on the Board and attending the Board meetings are providing a new face to the Association itself, bringing new ideas. We are in fact growing in the environmental stewardship of our profession. We have an updated and newly envisioned mission statement. We are implementing actions aimed at launching our membership growth and attracting those professionals who remain just on the periphery of our influence. The Board and Officers are seeing more creativity and less criticism, more cooperation and less intractability. While we can't call it bipartisanship, we can say that there are a lot more positive things said about how we are operating than this time two years ago.

You as members have been kept informed all along the way and there should be little question as to how we are moving ahead. We are addressing our affiliation agreements with chapters and you should have been witnessing the improved communications and monthly efforts to keep your chapter and NAEP membership informed on operations and providing each chapter with the positive results of our renewal efforts.

You have a well defined and accurate budget that can be relied upon to direct funds to operate and grow NAEP membership. You have a clearly described and working dynamic strategic plan that leads our organization based on your input. That input is tracked and addressed at each Board Meeting. Your new and positive leadership comes from the dedication and hard work of our Board of Directors and Executive Officers. Remember, they are volunteers and have the best interests of the professions at heart. We have been able over the last two years to become less and less reliant on our paid association administrative staff to support and lead your organization. As it has turned out, that has worked to our advantage as we have struggled with that same support. Board members are stepping up to the plate to take on the issues we identify as important and are reporting on their actions at each Board meeting. All of this action is in support of the strategic plan and implementation plan that is aimed at keeping us effective as an association.

However, just as the new administration is attempting to address the largest crisis we have faced as a nation since the Great Depression, environmental professionals now face the economic realities of a business and national economy that is affecting all of our jobs and the future outlook. The economic crisis in our nation has brought many new and unexpected events and issues each day.

We as an association have responded to the call for input to our government and stand ready to assist and provide the best environmental technology and experience available.

As one of my favorite authors—Richard Bach—stated, in all crises, “we must look

at the gift in the problem.” He wrote some great and inspirational books like *The Bridge Across Forever* and *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. That feeling of optimism is the overall message that I would like to leave you with. We need to take heart in what we do best and what we have to offer. This includes strengthening our numbers, participating in our upcoming conference, and yes hav-

ing fun networking. NAEP is one of the few associations that keeps this important factor alive and well in our conference planning. Networking is not all about business, it is about friendships, some that have lasted for decades. You will not be disappointed in this year’s conference location; our unique resort conference site in Arizona will provide an atmosphere of camaraderie and

togetherness that can inspire the next decade-long friendships and partnerships. I guarantee you will find the upcoming conference program was planned with this important attribute in mind.

See you in Scottsdale Arizona May 2–6, at the beautiful new Fort McDowell Radisson Resort.