



## President's Angle

**Earl F. Burkholder, PS, PE**

**2009 NMPS President**

**April 11, 2009**

The 2009 NMPS Annual Conference was March 13 & 14, 2009 and a follow-up NMPS Board of Directors (BOD) meeting was held in Farmington, New Mexico, April 4, 2009. For those who might not know, most of the work associated with being an elected officer of NMPS occurs during the year one serves as President Elect. The President Elect is responsible for planning the NMPS Annual Conference

held during the following year. That way the NMPS President can be intimately familiar with all aspects of the conference. Although not perfect, that system works quite well and, once the Annual Conference is over, the President is free to devote more time to NMPS Board and committee activities. By comparison, the remaining months of the President's term and the following year as Past President are not so intense. I look forward to that.

I am happy to report that, although overall 2009 conference attendance was off about 6% from 2008, the conference was quite successful. Given the bleak economy facing many, we are grateful to all who attended and supported NMPS, to the vendors (we had 2 more than last year), to the speakers who presented interesting and thought provoking material, to the moderators who facilitated smooth operation of the workshops, and to the students from NMSU who generously donated their time and assisted in many ways.

A huge benefit for me in serving as an officer of NMPS is learning to know more of you - NMPS members. I have become more aware of many wonderful persons who are active in NMPS. There really is a huge well of talent within NMPS and I, as NMPS President, have been encouraged to draw freely from that well for the benefit of the organization. At the risk of not recognizing some that I should, I want everyone to know that, for starters, we are all deeply indebted to the following persons.

Our Executive Director, Patty Floyd, is the one who really deserves credit for a successful Annual Conference. Patty and her assistants do an excellent job of coordinating the logistics, arranging the facilities, soliciting and assisting the vendors, making travel arrangements for the speakers, securing door prizes, making sure coffee and rolls are readily available, preparing handout materials, and many other details. Patty, thank you! We all appreciate your efforts on our behalf.

There are several other examples I'd like to cite. First, Gary Eidson is the 2009 President Elect and will serve as NMPS President in 2010. After serving approximately 10 years as Treasurer of NMPS, Gary stepped forward to fill a vacancy in the rotation of NMPS officers. As NMPS President Elect, Gary has already begun planning the 2010 Annual Conference and, barring widespread economic catastrophe, the 2010 conference should be even better and more fun than the one just ended.

Kery Greiner is another person who is making a huge contribution to NMPS. Last fall, Gary Eidson asked me to find someone else to serve as NMPS Treasurer starting in January 2009. Responsibility for that Presidential appointment first appeared quite daunting, but I asked for help from the NMPS Board and ended up with the delightful dilemma of choosing between two well qualified persons willing to



serve as NMPS Treasurer. Thank you Kery for your willingness to serve NMPS members as Treasurer. Your leadership is already being realized in beneficial ways. Thanks to Gary Eidson's frugal diligence, NMPS finances are in good shape and Kery, we look to you to keep NMPS solvent.

The NMPS newsletter, Benchmarks, is one of the most visible benefits of NMPS membership. Karen Bennett served as Editor of the Benchmarks for 9 years and, in spite of routine problems, she consistently delivered a high-quality publication that served NMPS members very well. Due to health and related care-giving issues, Karen asked NMPS to find another Editor. We all owe Karen a huge debt of gratitude for the excellent service she provided. Oh my. . . how do we go about replacing her talent? Here again, the challenge was presented to the NMPS Board of Directors and Barry Phillips stepped forward to embrace the opportunity of serving as Benchmarks Editor. Barry published his inaugural March 2009 issue, just after the Annual Conference. This is the second issue for which Barry is Editor. Thank you Barry for accepting the challenge of publishing the Benchmarks and for maintaining the high standards of your predecessor. NMPS is committed to assisting you in any way possible and I know you will not be bashful in asking NMPS members for materials. We all want Benchmarks to reflect the vitality of the surveying profession in New Mexico.

Other persons deserving recognition are the NMPS Committee Chairs and Liaisons to various organizations. Discussions at the NMPS Board meetings are quite interesting because the committee chairs do an excellent job of organizing their materials and reporting on committee activities. Some of the committee chairs are there as a result of office they hold and other positions are filled by direct presidential appointment. Persons serving NMPS during 2009 are:

**NMPS Office-Appointed Person    Committee Chair/Representative to**

President-Earl F. Burkholder	NMPS Executive Committee
Past President-Tom Patrick	Web Committee
President Elect-Gary Eidson	2010 Conference Committee
Vice President-Allen Grace	Nominating Committee
Treasurer-Kery Greiner	Finance Committee
Editor-Barry Phillips	Benchmarks Committee
Appointed-Allen Grace	Legislative Committee
Appointed-Tom Patrick	Surveyor-of-the-Year Committee
Appointed-Allen Grace	Ethical Practices Committee
Appointed-Kery Greiner	Western Federation of Professional Land Surveyors
Appointed-David Cooper	Western Federation of Professional Land Surveyors
Appointed-Glen Thurow	ACSM M.O. - NSPS Governor
Appointed-David King	Representative to the New Mexico Geospatial Advisory Committee

The NMPS Chapter Officers and Directors – listed elsewhere in this issue – also deserve recognition for their service to NMPS. Second only to (or, if information flows freely in both directions, more important than) the impact of the Benchmarks, the Chapter Officers and Directors provide direct communication between the NMPS Board of Directors and the NMPS membership. The role of Chapter Officers and Directors is vital because that personal contact with local NMPS members fosters greater ownership in NMPS policies and practices. All NMPS members are encouraged to attend local chapter meetings and to make sure your chapter officers know your feelings on various issues. It is the Officers' and Directors' responsibility to convey collective Chapter sentiments to the NMPS Board of Directors. Officer/Director participation on the NMPS Board is also critical because it facilitates the continuity of discussions from one year to the next.



There are other organizational issues I'd like to discuss but those will need to wait until a subsequent issue of Benchmarks. In the meantime, I'd like NMPS members to be thinking about, discussing, and providing input on the following two items. In my opinion, the surveying profession has a huge stake in and is making valuable contributions in both cases.

1. What is the best or most appropriate way for New Mexico surveyors to enhance our interaction with the GIS community? Other reasons may be more important but, one reason I chose to hold the 2009 NMPS Annual Conference in Albuquerque, instead of Las Cruces or some other place, was to preserve the continuity of bringing local high school students in to visit the conference so they can see first-hand what it is that surveying is all about. Some of those students may end up in the surveying profession (that is great) but a greater number (not all) of them will probably find themselves working with spatial data in one form or another (and using GIS tools). Regardless of who does it, I believe that the persons and organizations responsible for planning and hosting those high school student visits deserve our appreciation and continued support. I've described only one of many examples that can be listed. For example, see the article on GIS Coordination in the March 2009 issue of Benchmarks.
2. What is the best or most appropriate way for New Mexico surveyors to enhance our interaction with the engineering and photogrammetry disciplines? This item may be somewhat more controversial than the first because there is a longer history of professional interaction. In the past, dedicated persons in various disciplines have articulated their positions well and, in some cases, remain resolute in them. That in itself is not bad. A well-thought-out position is personal and very valuable. This next comment goes both ways and applies to all of us. We all need to listen to each other with respectful attention. As new evidence becomes available, sometimes it is difficult to modify what we believe. The philosopher, Bertrand Russell once stated, "It is one of the rarest gifts to be able to hold a view with conviction and detachment at the same time."

In my opinion, the digital revolution is forcing many of us in traditional practices to acknowledge that an expanded skill set is required to handle 3-D digital spatial data competently, e.g., GPS, photogrammetry, Lidar, 3-D laser scanning and other remote sensing products. Yes, we can and do adopt new technology into our practice. That is good and many (but not all) of us do it routinely. However, it may be unsettling to realize that we surveyors are not the only persons capable of buying and using the multitude of measuring technologies, positioning gadgets, and databases so readily available. And it may be even more unsettling to discover that talented "technicians" (or related professionals) are better than we at collecting, processing, and using spatial data in a host of applications that may even include some of those activities traditionally coming under the "surveying" umbrella – geodetic surveying, 3-D laser scanning, photogrammetric mapping, deformation monitoring, and others. I believe the surveying profession is capable of making huge contributions to the spatial data user community and that there are many opportunities for us to pursue.

But boundary and cadastral surveying remain enormously important – especially in the licensure arena - and those are unique to surveying. But really, isn't it naïve of us to suggest that having a surveying license somehow qualifies us to offer/perform high-tech services or that one must be licensed as a surveyor to offer those services to the public? Yes, yes, a surveying license is certainly required of those offering services that include determination of land boundaries. But, this whole line of reasoning leads to a narrow definition of surveying with which I am not comfortable. What do you think?

In a subsequent column I plan to focus on the importance of education in meeting some of the challenges of successful interaction with a variety of spatial data professionals. As a way of starting that discussion, I'll ask a rhetorical question - which do you feel is more important, learning specific curriculum content or learning how to learn? Is there a difference?

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