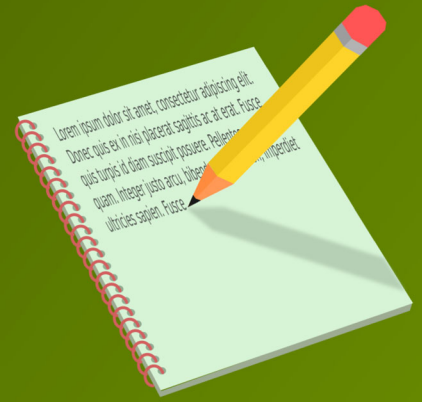


NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Are you rejuvenated?

By Dean Spindler



The Annual Conference was last week, with high attendance figures. Even though retired, I felt rejuvenated in our profession. I managed to assist the successors to my position at the IDNR LRD with our conference presentation, but suddenly felt inspired to follow up with them on some possible program improvements from information I learned from other presentations. I have written several times before about the value of the information I have taken away from the annual conference and how that value has been shared with the agency. That value was in the form of the talks that were presented, but also through the contacts made with other reclamation professionals willing to share their ideas, common problems, and solutions. The 2021 annual conference was no different.

Knowing our presentation was focused on bonding and the associated risks and the many upgrades we have made to our process from learning and encountering new situations, I listened to the other presentations with bonding in the back of my mind. Low and behold, some of the discussions red flagged issues we have either already encountered or might someday encounter, that are not fully addressed in the current version of our bond calculation methodology. I was also reminded of a past presentation Illinois did at a NASLR conference 20 years ago on similar issues, and how that presentation spurred an exchange of ideas with several other states after the meeting, as hopefully this one did too.

We can too easily get caught up in the usually terribly busy routine of our professional jobs, be it inspection, technical services, support services, or administration and not dedicate time for what I call Research and Development (R&D). Dedicating time toward R&D can tend to make the job easier, better and/or more efficient. Sometimes even the normal everyday work grind can cause a person to burn out from the demands or to become too complacent that we are “doing the best that can be done”, leaving no opportunity for improvement. When I was a kid, one of the things that was drummed into my head was to “learn something new every day”. Even though most of us have experienced the feeling of “look at all the work that piled up while I was at the conference”, participating in professional organizations and conferences will rejuvenate you, push you to do more based on what you learned, and it will make you a better professional. You will then be more valuable to your own agency or organization.

Although I still miss the in-person conferences, particularly the additional after 5 exchange of ideas, meeting new people in our profession, and the field trip, the online version did open the door to many who could not attend otherwise. Next year’s meeting in New York will be in-person and I am sure I will be equally invigorating to all who attend, and we will hopefully have an online version as well.