

Winter 2008

Infrastructure projects could get boost

By Ann Gryphan, Essie Kammer Group

President-Elect Barack Obama recently announced an economic stimulus plan that calls for a significant investment in infrastructure projects throughout the states. The hope is to get people back to work and give a boost to the local economies.

In response, Gov. Jim Doyle presented members of President-elect Barack Obama's economic team Wednesday with a list of nearly 1,800 projects in Wisconsin that could benefit immediately from an infusion of federal money, totaling \$3.7 billion.

Projects are broken into categories including transportation, education, "green" and energy-related, Great Lakes, health care and other. The transportation projects are the most expensive, totaling more than \$7.5 billion. They include the Madison-Milwaukee-Chicago rail projects; reconstructing Interstate 94 between Milwaukee and the Illinois state line; repairing bridges; and building a commuter rail line between Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee.

Education projects include building new schools; adding labs, offices and dorms across the UW System; and addressing deferred maintenance projects on the campuses. Those total nearly \$1.9 billion.

In the Great Lakes category, at a cost of about \$1.1 billion, Doyle said the money could go toward clean water projects, addressing water quality and cleaning up the Fox River.

The "green" and energy projects include converting a coal power plant on the UW-Madison campus to biofuels and come to about \$2.1 billion.

The \$800 million in health care projects include bolstering the use of electronic medical records and building a second tower at the UW medical research facility. Among \$100 million in other projects are addressing deferred maintenance on state buildings and repairing dams.

Obama challenged governors last week to come up with a list of infrastructure projects that could start immediately and benefit from federal aid. Governors want Congress to provide an economic stimulus package to help them alleviate budget shortfalls.

One proposal being discussed would send the states \$500 billion over two years. Wisconsin's budget is projected to be \$5.4 billion in the red by mid-2011, its biggest deficit in state history.

The Wisconsin Precast Concrete Association is considering ways to further benefit from these federal dollars for infrastructure. One suggestion brought to us is to try to increase the grant money allocated to the Wisconsin Fund for septic system repair and replacement.

We will keep you posted as we learn more about state infrastructure projects. If you are interested in receiving the copy of the potential projects in Wisconsin, call us at (608) 256-7701.

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Don't forget to register for winter convention

The WPCA Winter Convention will be held Jan. 12-13 at the Holiday Inn & Suites in Madison, Wis. There is still time to register!

The hotel room block will be released to the public on Dec. 29, so call now for your hotel reservations. After Dec. 29, you cannot be guaranteed a hotel room at the Holiday Inn! The number for reservations is: (608) 826-0500.

Guest speakers are from National Precast Concrete Association, Mixer Systems, Wisconsin Concrete Pipe Association and Herr Environmental.

We hope to see you in January!

Fee increases go into effect Dec. 1

Department of Commerce Safety & Buildings Division fee increases went into effect on Dec. 1. The revisions to chapter Comm 2 include adjustments to most fees currently collected by Safety and Buildings. This includes state sanitary permit fees, POWTS plan review fees, variance fees, product review fees, among others. The revisions to Comm 5 include increases for most licensing fees.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan. 12 & 13, 2009
WPCA Winter Conference
Holiday Inn & Suites
Madison, Wisconsin

What the election results mean to you

The fall elections are now a month behind us, but the impact is just beginning to be felt.

On Nov. 4, Barack Obama won big in Wisconsin, Democrats picked up 5 seats to take control of the State Assembly for the first time in 14 years and the State Senate Democrat majority remains unchanged. The Democrats now control the governor's office and both houses of the Wisconsin Legislature. Wisconsin's Congressional delegation is unchanged, with Democratic incumbent U.S. Rep. Steve Kagen beating challenger John Gard. The election results in Wisconsin:

Presidential

Barack Obama 56%
John McCain 43%

Assembly

Democratic Members 52
Republican Members 46
Independent Members 1

Senate

Democratic Members 18
Republican Members 15

Rep. Mike Sheridan of Janesville, a Democrat, was elected as Assembly Speaker on Nov. 12. He succeeds Republican Mike Huebsch.

The election will mean the reshaping of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee, which was previously chaired by Republican Scott Gunderson of Waterford. Rep. Spencer Black of Madison, a longtime Democratic legislator, has recently been appointed the new committee chairman. The Senate environment committee will remain unchanged with Sen. Mark Miller re-appointed as the chairman.

The new legislative session begins in January and once again an estimated 1,000 bills are expected to be introduced for consideration. We will need to continue monitoring these proposals.

Due to the state's financial situation, the Wisconsin Department of Administration announced in October that state jobs won't be filled without DOA approval. The newest projection is that the state could see a deficit of \$5 billion during the next biennial budget, although some groups are saying it actually will be about half that amount. Cuts in programs are probable—we will need to watch staffing levels within the Department of Commerce, as well as the status of the Wisconsin Fund, which was unsuccessfully targeted for elimination during the last budget.

Although some of you tend to lean Republican in your support of legislators, it is important to remember the reality that Democrats are now in charge of the governor's office, state Senate and state Assembly and our organization must work with and support legislative leaders.

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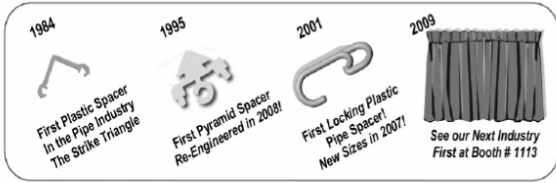
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National convention coming to Milwaukee

The National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) will present the NOWRA 18th Annual Technical Education Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on April 6-9, 2009. Milwaukee will serve as a great location due to its position in the center of the Midwest, in the southeast corner of Wisconsin, on Lake Michigan's western shore.

The NOWRA annual conference serves as the premier conference for the conveyance of new research, regulations and policy, experience and practices in the decentralized wastewater industry. The conference's exposition hall provides an invaluable opportunity to network and view the current and emerging technologies in decentralized wastewater treatment.

In addition to the three-day annual conference covering a broad range of topics relating to onsite/decentralize wastewater treatment, NOWRA will be hosting a pre-conference workshop on April 6th focusing on Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products in Wastewater, Surface Water, and Groundwater.

Educational sessions on:

- Watershed management strategies and applications
- Wastewater Reuse
- Small Community Wastewater Treatment
- Nitrogen Treatment, Research and Policy
- Innovative Products, Technologies, and Solutions
- Onsite System Performance, Reliability & Sustainability
- NOWRA's premier program, "The Basics of Onsite Systems – A to Z"

Don't miss these exciting tours:

- Four decentralized systems featuring ATU's, mounds, constructed wetland and drip distribu-

WPCA Volunteers Needed

The Wisconsin Precast Concrete Association plans to have an exhibitor booth at both the Wisconsin Onsite Water Recycling Association (WOWRA) and National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) conventions this winter. The dates are:

WOWRA: Jan. 30-31, Madison, Wis.

NOWRA: April 6-9, Milwaukee, Wis.

We are looking for volunteers to help staff the WPCA booth at these events. Thanks to Dalmaray Concrete and County Materials who volunteered to help with the WOWRA convention so far. This is a good opportunity to promote our industry to local, regional and national customers. If you are interested in helping with a booth, please contact the WPCA office at (608) 256-7701 or agryphan@ekgmail.com.

tion systems in residential, commercial and school wastewater applications.

- Tour of Milwaukee WWTP that produces Milorganite a high-quality, Class A/Exceptional quality Biosolid that is marketed around the country.

Things to do and see in Milwaukee:

- Miller Brewery Tour: Take a tour through the famous Miller brewery.
- Milwaukee Art Museum: Located on Lake Michigan the museum has a beautiful display of art in perhaps the prettiest building in Milwaukee.
- Milwaukee Public Museum: Always something exciting going on, including the NOWRA's off-site reception!

WPCA awarded \$10,000 for promotions in 2009

The Wisconsin Precast Concrete Association was awarded \$10,000 by the Great Lakes Cement Promotions Association to do promotion of precast concrete products in 2009. Our award in 2008 was \$12,000, so this is a slight reduction.

We plan to use the money in 2009 to have exhibitor booths the WOWRA and NOWRA conventions this winter (see inside for details). We also likely will continue to do direct mailings, as well as advertising in local and national trade publications.

If you have specific suggestions on how we can promote precast concrete products in the region, please call us at (608) 256-7701, or email agryphan@ekgmail.com

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NPCA: Market rebound coming in 2010

- *By the National Precast Concrete Association*

Predicting the manufacturing and construction markets for the coming year is a tricky business in any financial climate, and this year, with a new president in the U.S. and a global financial crisis, it's even more difficult. True to the uncertainty of our times, economists looking at the North American market provide various and sometimes conflicting viewpoints of how the construction sector will perform in 2009.

Nearly all agree that the recession in the construction industry will continue. Where they differ is on the depth of the recession, the length of time before recovery begins and the degree to which individual sectors of residential, commercial and public works construction will be affected.

Even with this unpredictability, certain indicators make educated guesses possible. Based on what we know at the end of 2008, the National Precast Concrete Association estimates that the U.S. construction industry will decline by 6% in 2009 before recovery starts sometime in the second half of 2010.

As usual, the residential housing market holds the key to the health of the overall construction industry in the U.S., and housing is nowhere near a recovery. The subprime mortgage crisis that started in the U.S. and has plagued the world for the last six months will likely take at least two years to sort out.

It's possible that new housing construction could recover toward the end of that two-year period, but it won't likely happen until sometime in 2010, according to Ty E. Gable, NPCA president.

Construction economists are predicting an overall decline of between 2-7% in new construction in 2009. It appears now that when the final numbers on 2008 are tallied, construction will have declined 6-10% in 2008, so the 2009 decline comes on top of an already receding market.

Thank you, scholarship contributors

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ASTM standards under revision for concrete tank testing

The Wisconsin Precast Concrete Association has been informed that the ASTM standards for precast concrete tanks by the negative air pressure (vacuum) test prior to backfill are under review for revision.

We will be contacting the National Precast Concrete Association to see their assessment of the proposed changes and if they are planning on giving input into this issue.

We do not have more information to share with you at this time, other than we don't expect that it would have a direct impact in Wisconsin, as we have our own state codes regarding testing of tanks. However, we definitely will want to give input on any proposed changes, as it might affect you if you work on other states that refer to these standards in their codes.

We hope to discuss this issue further at our January convention and have specific details and language to share with you at that time. We will keep you posted.

Biosolids converted into glass aggregate

The Sheboygan engineering firm of Donohue & Associates, Inc. received the 2008 Global Grand Project Innovation Award from the International Water Association for its design of the North Shore Sanitary District's Biosolids Vitrification Facility in Zion, Ill. The NSSD's facilities are the first in the world to convert municipal biosolids into a reusable glass aggregate using a drying and melting process. Each day, up to 187 tons of biosolids are transformed into 7½ tons of glass aggregate. The glass aggregate has no risk of soil or groundwater contamination since microorganisms in the biosolids,

such as bacteria and viruses, are destroyed through the heating processes. Trace metals and other inorganic materials that may be present are permanently stabilized within the glass matrix and cannot seep into the environment. NSSD has a 20-year agreement to sell the glass aggregate, which is permitted for use in construction fill, cement/concrete products, and utility trench fill. The biosolids drying and melting process offers many benefits to municipal wastewater treatment systems such as eliminating long-term dependence on landfill disposal.

Article: Pumping life into septic tank

- The following article appeared in the Nov. 21 issue of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's Real Estate section. Below is an excerpt of the article—to read the complete article, go online at www.jsonline.com

Thoughts of gurgling toilets, sewage backup and foul-smelling liquid saturating the lawn flashed across Karl Holt's mind when he realized his septic tank was nearly full. It was potentially a very dirty problem, but Holt said he didn't like the available remedies.

Pumping the tank is a short-term solution, and additives can hurt more than they help, he reasoned. Replacing the system would cost a minimum of \$15,000 - not including re-seeding the lawn and replacing the deck. "I was looking to save that \$15,000," said Holt, 45, president of Aero-Stream LLC in Hartland. So he began tinkering. The result is a patented product that sells for less than \$1,000 that Holt says homeowners can use to revive failed septic systems and avoid more expensive alternatives.

"One of the difficult things about this business is you have to educate people," Holt said. "They won't think twice about putting a coat of paint on the house or getting an oil change every 3,000 miles, but they just want to flush their toilet and not think about their septic tank."

Janet Vance was one of those people, until the septic system at her second home in Kentucky failed. "We couldn't do laundry and we flushed once a day. It was pretty much a goner," Vance said.

She did extensive research and found Aero-Stream on the Internet. Holt's solution seemed too good to be true, and Vance said her husband and other family members discouraged her from pursuing it. It seemed worth a try, though, and Holt offers a refund if customers aren't satisfied at the end of a year, she said. It worked, and now the water in the septic tank is clear with no odor, Vance said.

Aero-Stream's product, called a Remediator, transforms a septic system into one that is filled with

oxygen-loving bacteria instead of less efficient, oxygen-hating bacteria, Holt said.

Users plug the Remediator into an outside electrical outlet, he said.

Call it aerobic exercise for a septic system; the Remediator pumps oxygen into the tank through a hole customers drill in its cover. Holt says that destroys within 48 hours the oxygen-hating bacteria in the tank that have been eating the waste and encourages the growth of oxygen-loving bacteria. Oxygen-rich liquid begins to flow out of the tank into the leach field. The oxygen-loving bacteria are so much more efficient at gobbling up waste they cut off the oxygen-hating bacteria's food source by 70% to 80%, Holt said. They also eat the black slimy mix of oxygen-hating bacteria and their secretions that have been clogging the soil, and treated water starts flowing again down into the water table.

"Many people, even in the industry, do not understand the mechanics of the process and therefore find it difficult to comprehend the simple solution," Holt said.

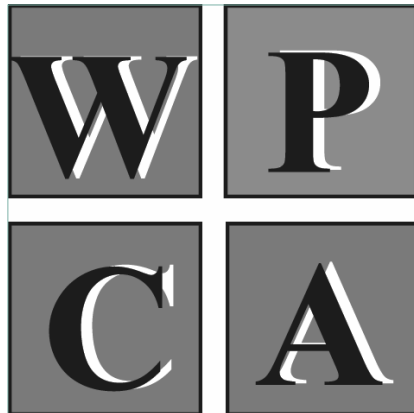
Professional doubt

The way Holt's product works is theoretically possible, but experts who aren't familiar with it wonder how the Remediator can get enough oxygen into the leach field to fix the problem quickly. Can it really unclog a drain field, given all the organic matter that stops water from flowing through it in a failing septic system, asked Brian Holmes, a professor of biological systems engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

It would seem more promising if the oxygen were being delivered directly to the field, said Rick Reichardt, an environmental engineer with the DNR.

Holt says once it's aerated, the liquid - known as effluent - flows fairly quickly out of the tank to help get rid of oxygen-hating bacteria. Soggy lawns with surface ponding will lose their odor within two weeks, and dry out in six to eight weeks, he said.

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