Company Line & People

AMEC Buys Geomatrix

In June, international engineering and project management company AMEC announced its purchase of Geomatrix Consultants Inc. for $85 million. Oakland, California-based Geomatrix employed 500 professionals in 18 offices nationwide. It is the seventh environmental consultancy business AMEC has purchased since January 2007 in efforts to expand its earth and environmental business.


Golder Buys Wireless Systems

In May, geotechnical engineering and environmental consulting firm Golder Associates acquired Wireless Systems Inc., a Denver-based business specializing in wireless instrumentation and controls for tracking and controlling remote process equipment. Wireless’s devices transmit data using radio, cellular data transmission, and satellite technologies. The company also provides engineering design and consulting services.


Parametrix Buys Taschek

Parametrix recently announced the acquisition of Taschek Environmental Consulting, a New Mexico environmental and cultural resources firm. John Taschek will lead the Parametrix New Mexico operations as principal, overseeing the Albuquerque and Las Cruces offices.


Orange County Water District Reaps Honors

Orange County Water District (OCWD) received several significant awards since last spring. In April, OCWD received the Public Water Agency of the Year award at the 2008 International Desalination Association/Global Water Intelligence conference in London. OCWD was cited for exemplary groundwater protection and management, and for its public outreach program. At the same meeting, OCWD also received an honorable distinction award in the “Water Project of the Year” category for its new advanced water purification facility, the Groundwater Replenishment (GWR) System.

In August, OCWD and the Orange County Sanitation District were jointly awarded the 2008 Stockholm Industry Water Award from the Stockholm International Water Institute. The prize recognized the GWR system which, according to the Stockholm Institute, “has established a blueprint for large-scale wastewater purification that is already being emulated in dry regions and nations, such as Singapore.”

Visit www.ocwd.com and
www.siwi.org/sa/node.asp?node=310

USGS Realigns, Strategizes

Last year the U.S. Geological Survey published a report outlining the agency’s strategic science vision for the next 10 years. The goal was to clarify USGS’s role in the country’s highest-priority issues for the next century: availability of water resources, climate change, the need for energy and minerals, natural hazards, the environment, and human health.

Addressing these issues requires multidisciplinary efforts, and USGS realized that although it had the needed expertise, its existing organizational structure was not conducive to mixing disciplines. So this year, the agency reorganized itself. Its three regions—Western, Central, and Eastern—were each subdivided into three smaller geographic areas. These are led by “regional executives” who work to integrate projects and personnel working in the agency’s four primary scientific disciplines of water, geology, geography, and biology.

The Southwest region comprises the new Southwest and Rocky Mountain geographic areas. Based in Sacramento and led by Mike Shulters, the Southwest area includes 15 USGS Science Centers from the four disciplines. The Rocky Mountain geographic area, based in Denver and led by Randy Updike, comprises eight USGS Science Centers from the four disciplines.


John Keys Mourned

Former U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner John W. Keys III was killed in a plane crash over Canyonlands National Park in late May. Keys had worked for the agency for nearly 40 years, including five as Commissioner, ending in 2006. Much of his career was spent in the Pacific Northwest, during which time he was awarded the Department of Interior’s highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award, for his work in the Yakima River Basin.

Visit www.usbr.gov.

USGS’s Hirsch Returns to Research; Larsen Moves Up

In May, Robert Hirsch stepped down from his position as the U.S. Geological Survey’s Associate Director for Water, which he held since 1994, to join the agency’s National Research Program (NRP). In his former position Hirsch was responsible for all USGS water science programs and services, including the National Streamflow Information Program, the National Water-Quality Assessment Program, the Global Change Hydrology Program, and the National Water Information System Web.

Matthew Larsen, who had been leader of the NRP since 2005, was named the new Associate Director for Water in June. Prior to that, he was the USGS Caribbean District Chief.