

AGC OF NEW JERSEY THINKS GREEN

NEW JERSEY CONTRACTORS FORM A NEW APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION BY PARTNERING WITH STATE AGENCIES

The AGC of New Jersey has traditionally viewed the Environmental Protection Agency and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) as large bureaucracies, the former being engaged in writing volumes of restrictive regulations while the latter is encouraged to fund a large part of its budget with industry fines. That view jeopardized the development of a closer working relationship between AGC of New Jersey and the environmental agencies—a relationship that is necessary to the success of New Jersey's transportation programs.

However, in the chapter's effort to understand and cooperate, it has found some common ground with the state and federal environmental agencies. AGC of New Jersey contractors have taken a new approach to balancing environmental and economic success by partnering with regulatory agencies and trade associations.

Recently, AGC of New Jersey has joined forces with other stakeholders to address environmental issues and improve New Jersey's quality of life. AGC of New Jersey believes in the partnering concept. And the association has proved that it is a key player when it comes to discussing common problems and encouraging productivity.

Following are a few of AGC of New Jersey's most notable partnering experiences.

NEW JERSEY QUALITY INITIATIVE PARTNERING AGREEMENT

AGC of New Jersey's quest to reach new levels of conversation with environmental agencies came to a head when the Federal Highway Administration introduced the National Quality Initiative (NQI) program to New Jersey. The initiative was formed in 1993 to provide a "safe, aesthetically pleasing, environmentally sensitive, efficient and economical transportation system."

AGC of New Jersey embraced the NQI program, and the New Jersey



Quality Initiative (NJQI) became one of the most active programs in the country.

AGC of New Jersey signed an NQI partnering agreement with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). In doing so, the chapter joined the New Jersey Quality Initiative program environmental working group. As a result, AGC of New Jersey and NJDOT now sit at the table as partners when new environmental initiatives are proposed by NJDEP.

This partnering effort was recognized at the annual meeting of the National Quality Initiative in Dallas, Texas, last fall. AGC of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection won the NQI Making a Difference Award, which showcases practical solutions to transportation problems.

The Making a Difference Award is especially significant because it involves an ongoing improvement process, not just a one-time improvement. Obtaining timely environmental permits and keeping transportation projects environmentally friendly are two of the most important goals NJDOT and the contractors who work for them have set.

AGC of New Jersey continues to raise environmental awareness within its membership by encouraging members to read and understand environmental permit provisions on all construction projects. As an aid, the permit provisions have been placed on NJDOT's website, and contractors have been advised to contact the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for provision interpretation, rather than relying on guesswork and their own interpretations.

"The increased attention to environmental issues on AGC members' projects pays huge dividends in our relations with contracting agencies and the public," says AGC of New Jersey President Thomas J. King, executive vice president of Schiavone Construction Co., Secaucus, N.J. "Our company performs environmentally sensitive urban bridge and tunnel construction. Right now, we're working right underneath Carnegie Hall in New York City. We know how critical the environmental considerations are and we're pleased that AGC of New Jersey is providing leadership on this important issue."

NJDOT ACTS AS NEUTRAL TERRITORY IN REGULATORY MEETING

Recently, the New Jersey Asphalt Pavement Association, including its partner, AGC of New Jersey, held a meeting to discuss NJDEP's recycled asphalt storage regulations and the need to encourage agencies to use more recycled materials in roadway construction. The industry's goal was to get the Department of Environmental Protection to clearly state its regulations for storing large quantities of recycled asphalt-related materials and to agree in principle to encourage other state agencies and authorities to do even more recycling.

In an unprecedented move, the New Jersey Department of Transportation set up and hosted the meeting at its headquarters, acting as a neutral party and providing a "facilitator": the department's Bureau of Environmental Compliance. This facilitator helped ease the

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dialogue between industry representatives and the NJDEP regulators, and created an atmosphere conducive to cooperation and conversation.

Previously, industry associations had been obliged to approach NJDEP on its own turf; holding the meeting at NJDOT lent a wider perspective to the issues at hand and proved successful. At the meeting, NJDEP clearly stated its policies on recycled materials storage, which allowed industry representatives to advise their members accordingly. An agreement was also formed in which NJDOT and NJDEP will provide support for industry efforts to expand the use of recycled asphalt among the state's transportation authorities (New Jersey Turnpike, Garden State Parkway, etc.).

AGC OF NEW JERSEY COFOUNDS CIAP

The Construction Industry Advancement Program (CIAP) was founded by the AGC of New Jersey, the New Jersey Asphalt Pavement Association, and the Utility and Transportation Contractors Association. Its purpose is to promote the construction industry, educate contractors about business issues, and encourage young people to enter the construction industry. CIAP is a comprehensive industry program with a host of important projects that it sponsors or supports.

John Clearwater, managing director of the CIAP, says, "One key to redefining the contractor's role in improving the quality of life will be an aggressive

and forthcoming participation in designing environmentally friendly projects and forging stronger links with essential efforts in energy conservation, waste management, recycling, and remediation."

Industry-sponsored environmental seminars, such as January's "Environmental Excellence on Construction Sites Part II," discuss issues critical to the contractor's environmental compliance. Seminar topics cover such issues as who is responsible on site; regulatory perspectives on environmental excellence on construction sites; special and standard permit conditions; and erosion and sediment control.

In addition to offering these seminars, CIAP has commissioned a "Best Environmental Management Practices for Construction in New Jersey: A Guide for the Construction Industry." The guide will be completed and distributed later this year.

AN INDUSTRY ACCOMPLISHMENT

AGC of New Jersey's efforts to improve communication between New Jersey's heavy-highway construction industry and state environmental agencies and transportation departments have proved effective and successful. Through partnering agreements and cooperation between state agencies and the industry, AGC of New Jersey has put its best foot forward to effect the "greening" of the heavy-highway construction industry in the state.

James Weinstein, commissioner for

the New Jersey Department of Transportation says, "I am extremely pleased with the cooperative spirit generated by the partnering agreement with NJDEP and the industry groups such as the Associated General Contractors of New Jersey. Together we can move the capital program forward and provide the highest order of stewardship for our state's environment."

By cofounding the Construction Industry Advancement Program, AGC of New Jersey has made a powerful statement about its commitment to the industry and to education, as well as to improving the quality of life in New Jersey through environmentally friendly construction projects.

AGC of New Jersey will continue its efforts toward fulfilling these commitments through further partnering agreements and by encouraging industry cooperation with local environmental organizations.

—By Richard L. Forman, executive director, AGC of New Jersey.



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TAKING THE NEXT STEP

The next step in AGC of New Jersey's "greening" of heavy-highway construction is to approach environmental advocacy groups about cooperating to find permanent transportation funding solutions. Some strong foundations were laid for such a partnership during the recent campaign to dedicate new sources of funds to New Jersey's Transportation Trust Fund. The environmental groups not only endorsed the ballot question, but actively participated in advertising campaigns.

"Contractors must form alliances with environmental interests that will foster scientifically sound, cost effective measures to sustain our environment," says John Clearwater. "We need to practice preventive medicine for the environment."

Regional transportation oriented environmental groups will be the chapter's focus for possible partnerships, the largest of which is the Tri-State Campaign. Headquartered in New York and working in Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York, this group was active in the campaign for the transportation trust fund ballot question last fall. Presently, the Tri-State Cam-

paign is "on board" for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's planned new capital program and toll raise. AGC of New Jersey hopes to engage the Tri-State Campaign in a positive role for the campaign to renew ISTEPA in 2003.

AGC of New Jersey's environmental projects for the future include:

- Partnering with coalitions to work on renewal of the federal transportation funding programs;
- Partnering with other construction associations and unions to make the state Transportation Trust Fund into the long-term stable funding mechanism it was intended to be; and
- Partnering with AGC of New Jersey's sister chapter, the Building Contractors Association of New Jersey, on such projects as the BCA's 3,000-attendee career day for high school seniors and their parents in March.

AGC of New Jersey will continue to pursue environmental partnering whenever possible. Not only does it make good business sense, but in the nation's most densely populated state it's the right thing to do.