

# NSPS 25 years

—by Curt Sumner  
ACSM Executive Director

Ever since five members of the Land Surveys Division (LSD) of ACSM met in a hotel room in September of 1979 to discuss what a national organization for surveyors would look like, NSPS has been working toward being recognized as that organization.

The meeting took place during the fall ACSM conference in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Those in attendance were Paul Lapham (Michigan), Richard Biggs (North Carolina), Paul Lamoreaux (California), Al Hebrank (Washington), and Lew Boyd (Kansas). Paul Lapham became the first president of what was to be known as the National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS). Al Hebrank became the third president, and Richard Biggs the eighth. To this day, Paul Lamoreaux is an active NSPS member, and actively participates in its Northern California Section. Mr. Boyd (now deceased) was once described by Richard Biggs as the “ultimate grass-roots country surveyor” from Newton, Kansas. At the time of the 1979 meeting, he was secretary of the LSD.

The governance structure that these pioneers drafted, virtually on a sheet of paper, is basically the structure within which NSPS still operates on its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. The two primary components of the structure are a Board of Governors and a Board of Directors (includes Area Directors, Officers, and Board of Governors Chair). Each of the 50 state affiliates and the territories has a representative on the Board of Governors, along with two representatives selected from among the state affiliate executive directors. Ten Directors are elected by members within their specified geographic regions. The President, President-Elect, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer are elected by the entire membership.

Two of the long-standing programs initiated by NSPS through the years are Certified Surveying Technicians (CST) and TrigStar.

The CST program has reached new heights recently due to the fact that NSPS has made it much easier for technicians to participate. The Level I, II, and III exams are now available online, and an individual can take the exams anywhere, and at any time, as long as a qualified proctor is present. The program has also become more well known among those who procure the services of professional surveyors, and some of them have begun to require that the surveying technicians in the employ of the professional surveyor be certified through CST. The acknowledgement of competence through the CST program contributes to the positive image the profession wishes for the public to have of surveyors. NSPS is responsible for the Board that is tasked with the administration of the CST program.

The TrigStar program also continues to grow. In 2005, contestants from 32 states participated in the national competition. Approximately 6500 high school students participate in the local competition each year. The exposure to



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the surveying profession gained by these students is helpful for the profession's public image and, in some cases, it also entices young people to choose professional surveying as a career.

Other outreach efforts NSPS has undertaken include the Boy Scouts Surveying Merit Badge program, and the development and distribution of a recruitment speaker's kit utilized for presentations to young people regarding careers in surveying. The speaker's kit development and publishing project was completed with funding assistance from the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) and Topcon Positioning Systems. A website, [www.surveyingcareer.com](http://www.surveyingcareer.com), was created to augment the speaker's kit.

NSPS is very active in government affairs issues through its participation in the ACSM Government Affairs Committee. For example, in 2004, reacting to confusion among surveyors regarding the application of the Davis-Bacon Act for prevailing wages, the Government Affairs Committee was able to get a letter of clarification on the matter issued by the Department of Labor. Recently, the Committee made comments to the Surface Transportation Board regarding the negative effects of railroad abandonment on the public's right to be able to identify property boundaries. These are but two of a multitude of legislative and policy issues that NSPS is able to influence through the Government Affairs Committee.

As the organization representing the interests of surveyors within the ACSM family of organizations, NSPS has taken on the role of the review and updating of the ALTA/ACSM Land Title Standards. The most recent version became effective January 1, 2006.

Another recent undertaking by NSPS is the creation of the oversight Board (structured similarly to the CST Board) that will administer the nationwide expansion of the Certified Floodplain Surveyor

(CFS) program. The program was initiated by FEMA in an attempt to expedite the review and approval of Letters of Map Amendment related to whether properties or structures actually lie in a floodplain, as depicted on FEMA's Federal Insurance Rates Maps. ACSM, through NSPS, was asked by FEMA to house the program and provide oversight.

NSPS has, just this year, begun a multifaceted insurance program available to its members nationwide. The intent of the program is to provide several options from which NSPS members can choose providers from whom to purchase insurance coverage for professional liability, general liability, property, inland marine-equipment, workers compensation, life, health, disability, and long-term care. A broker has been selected to administer the program, and that broker will work with others identified across the country who can help to achieve the program's objective of providing quality, affordable insurance coverage to NSPS members.

While NSPS does not have a large percentage of the professional surveyors it serves as its members, the goal of the organization has always been to represent the interests of those professionals, and the clients they serve. One of these interests is served by publishing the *Surveying and Land Information Science* academic journal and sponsoring the *ACSM Bulletin* as NSPS' official professional magazine.

The organization is recognized on a national scale as the voice of its professional constituency. Its progress during its 25 years of existence is noteworthy. NSPS doesn't just "offer to do good things and ask for the support of surveyors to help accomplish them," but it strives to "do good things in such a way that surveyors will see the value, and want to help accomplish more."

Let us hope that the next 25 years of NSPS will see an even greater unity of purpose embraced by the surveying community through the collaboration of NSPS, its members, and its state affiliate organizations. ■