



TBPG Newsletter Summer 2020

From TBPG Chair Becky L. Johnson, P.G.

NO ONE WANTS TO READ MORE ABOUT COVID-19, RIGHT?

I'm going to say that I hope you and yours are staying safe and healthy. TBPG put emergency procedures in place during the pandemic, so if you need help, don't hesitate to contact us! Enough on COVID.

While the past few months have been different for many of us, some things remain the same. For me, I've found that I can be much more productive when working from home because I have almost no interruptions. Well, I do have a deaf dog that barks a lot, but no one is dropping by my office and adding things to my plate. For some, they are more stressed than they've ever been. If you're in management, you have been on the front lines of planning the work-from-home (WFH) strategies, solving the unforeseen problems that come up, and trying to keep your employees safe and productive ON TOP OF your regular job.



No matter which part of the WFH scenario fits you best, the real key is to go easy on yourself. Remember that everyone is dealing with less-than-ideal circumstances, including you, and give yourself a break when things don't go exactly as planned. Silence that little negative voice inside your head that says things like "you should've known that would happen!" or "why didn't you think of that sooner?" and try replacing it with a positive voice ("hey, that was pretty good" or "wow, I figured that out really fast").

Our agency has certainly seen challenges, but I think every one of our licensees would be proud to see the way they have performed. I know I am. During this pandemic, we were the first state to defer the spring ASBOG exam (all other states followed suit), we've added 2 new staff, managed to train them remotely, revised work schedules to ensure limited numbers of people in the office simultaneously, overcome the technical challenges of WFH, shifted our IT services to a new contractor, enacted emergency procedures to ensure our licensees can continue to be in compliance without financial hardship, added a new board member, conducted our first ever public meeting via Zoom, completely reworked and redeveloped our 5-year strategic plan, are now working on a mandated budget cut (perhaps the first of many as a result of the pandemic), are preparing for our next 4-year rule review, and working with a newly-formed part of Texas government that reviews proposed rule-making. Kudos to our staff – they are the best!

Some of you may not fully understand all that goes on behind the scenes at TBPG, and that's ok. Your take away is that we have many, many obligations as a state agency that go well beyond issuing licenses to qualified geoscientists. We have a small staff that does

an outstanding job, which means that our licensees never have to see or get involved in what goes on “behind the curtain.” Their goal is to ensure compliance with the state requirements AND provide excellent customer service to our license-holders. After serving on the board for 9 years, I can tell you that our staff is fantastic. They deserve all the thanks and gratitude you can give them!

The same goes for our all-volunteer board. The 7 professional and 2 public members that make up our appointed board do so on a completely unpaid basis. While we do get reimbursed for expenses, we recognize that every reimbursement takes money from our already small operating budget. We are constantly trying to find ways to minimize expenses so that we can continue to operate effectively and efficiently. We are so lucky to have such great board members!

Maybe you should consider becoming a board member, so you too can have the opportunity to see how great staff, great volunteers, and a great executive director make a great agency!

Upcoming ASBOG Examinations

The next ASBOG examination dates are:

- **October 2, 2020** (Application deadline – 5:00 pm, August 4, 2020)
- **March 19, 2021** (Application deadline – 5:00 pm, January 6, 2021)

For more information about the ASBOG examinations, please visit: [Exam Information](#)

Current Licensing Numbers

May 1, 2020

Professional Geoscientists - 3499

Geoscience Firms - 348

Geoscientists-in-Training - 184

Actions in Response to COVID-19

EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY CE POLICY THROUGH AUGUST 2020:

Considering Governor Greg Abbott’s extended [Disaster Declaration](#) related to the coronavirus (COVID-19), and recognizing the continued impacts that COVID-19 will have on opportunities to earn the required 15 hours of continuing education credits, TBPG has extended the adopted Temporary CE Policy related to continuing education through August 2020.

TBPG is providing a 9-hour credit (tied to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions) for all P.G. licenses that expire between March through August 2020. This action lowers the required CE hours for licenses expiring during these months to 6 hours. One of those hours must be ethics (TBPG offers a video on our

website called Ethics in Geoscience). The Board has agreed that the remaining 5 hours can be obtained through any combination of on-line or self directed studies. Examples of self directed include any geoscience/ professional growth related opportunities including work projects. If you have any questions, please contact compliance@tbpg.texas.gov or call 512.936.4410.

COVID-19 RELATED ECONOMIC HARDSHIP: TBPG recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting all of our lives. If the COVID-19 crisis has created a hardship for you and your ability to renew your license or registration at this time, please contact our office to discuss options that may be available. You can reach out to us at 512-936-4403 or by e-mail at licensing@tbpg.texas.gov to discuss your individual situation. Also, visit our website regularly for any information and updates related to licensing.

DEFERMENT OF MARCH ASBOG TEST REGISTRATION: Due to COVID-19 related restrictions, the March ASBOG examination was cancelled. All candidates that were registered for this examination have been notified that they're registration was deferred to the next examination date of October 2, 2020. If you were impacted by this COVID-19 related cancelation and require any additional information, please contact licensing@tbpg.texas.gov or call 512.936.4403.

NOTICE: TBPG will continue to monitor the on-going COVID-19 situation and implement business adjustments as needed. If you require more information about the pandemic, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has detailed and up-to-date information about the impact of COVID-19 in Texas and the State's response and efforts: <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>

Highlights from the April 24, 2020 Board Meeting

Waiver Requests. The Board considered the following application for P.G. license. The applicant for PG licensure requested a waiver of the ASBOG Fundamental of Geology examination. The applicant met the requirements of TBPG's policy for waiver of the fundamentals and practice examinations. The Board unanimously approved the waiver a vote of 9-0.

Emergency Rules and Responses related to COVID-19 pandemic The Board reviewed agency responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, which included providing a 9-hour credit for the continuing education requirement for all PG licenses that expire in March, April, and May 2020. The Board unanimously approved to continue the actions taken by Executive Director Rene Truan through the end of August, 2020. The Board also unanimously approved allowing the agency to extend license expiration dates and to defer licensing renewal payments for all license types on a case by case basis through August 2020, as authorized by 22 TAC 851.85.

Upcoming Meetings. The next Committee and Board meetings are scheduled to occur on August 13 and 14, 2020.

and to the geosciences community. Additionally, we welcome any ideas or suggestions on information that would be beneficial to include in future newsletters. In that regard, please feel free to send any comments or suggestions to me by email at rtruan@tbpge.texas.gov

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