



Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists

The mission of the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists is to protect public health, safety, welfare, and the state's natural resources by ensuring only qualified persons carry out the public practice of geoscience and enforcing the Code of Professional Conduct the Board has established for its licensees.

TBPG Newsletter - Winter 2021

The Chair's Report

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



I had the opportunity to participate in the ASBOG Annual Meeting as a voting member for TBPG. That experience was well worth it! While it was their first virtual annual meeting, it went smoothly and was very informative, so kudos to all those at ASBOG that made it happen! Perhaps the most exciting news is that ASBOG is moving to computer-based testing, with multiple testing centers around the country. These changes won't affect the content of the exams, the application process or the qualifications required to take them, but it will make the exam more accessible, since Texas (and the entire U.S.) will have multiple testing locations. The earliest likely deployment is for the Spring 2022 exams, and we'll do our best to

keep Texas licensees up to date on the new process. ASBOG will also complete a new task analysis in 2022 (the current one is 2015), so the percentages for topics covered on the FG may change when the task analysis is complete. So, it's important for our prospective licensees to keep up with ASBOG, TBPG, and the changes coming for licensure in 2022!

One of the things I've been working toward (with much help and support from all of TBPG) this past year is paths to licensure. We've had some unusual applicants over the past few months that have caused us to think about creative ways to remove barriers and get licenses to those truly qualified to practice Geoscience in Texas. We have known that during this upcoming legislative session that we want to pursue an emeritus status for our retired licensees. In a recent ethics presentation, I was asked if "old retired licensees would get to keep their license or just fade away" and it broke my heart. Perhaps that's because I'm approaching retirement myself in a few years, and I can't imagine that something we fought so hard to get would NOT have a way to honor those that are no longer practicing. To that end, we are actively pursuing a change to our statute (which can only happen during a legislative session) that would enable an emeritus status for us. Of course, that requires a representative that is willing to sponsor the change for us, so don't hesitate to reach out to your representatives so we can make this change a reality. I hope that we will be successful in making this change to our statute, which in turn allows us to write new rules about this types of license. So be on the lookout for these changes! We NEVER want a PG to fade away.

Lastly, I'd like to take a few moments to thank our staff and our executive director for rising to ALL of the challenges that 2020 has presented. Their dedication is what's brought us through these challenges; from figuring out Zoom, to onboarding new staff when you can't be face-to-face, to virtual meetings that comply with state public meeting requirements, to successfully

running the largest group of applicants ever for ASBOG exams (over 200 applicants) with social distancing and other COVID procedures, allowing the exam to take place without a COVID outbreak! I think I speak for the entire board and all of our licensees when I express my gratitude for all that each and every one of you have done for us, not just on exam days, but every day. I know every one of those applicants was grateful to you for making the fall exam possible.

I hope everyone has safe and happy holidays, and I wish you all prosperity in the new year!

Becky L. Johnson, P.G., Chair
Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists

Continuing Education Policy and COVID-19

The 9-hour credit (tied to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions) issued for all P.G. licenses has been extended to apply to all licenses that expire between March 1, 2020, and February 28, 2021. This action relieves 9 of the 15 required continuing education hours. Of the remaining 6 hours, one of those hours must be ethics (TBPG offers an online video called Ethics in Geoscience). For licensees who earn/have earned more than 6 hours of CE credit, any hours earned in excess of six may be carried over (up to the maximum 30 carryover hours allowed). To show this on your continuing education log, please add "TBPG COVID Credit" and "9 hours" as an entry.

Usage of Digital P.G. Seals

I've received several calls and emails about digital seals as people continue to work from home. If you are interested in using a digital seal, TBPG has a digital seal template that we can share with current P.G.s. Please contact compliance@tbpq.texas.gov to request the template. If you are going to use a digital seal, please be aware of the rules regarding digital seals. The full rules can be found in [§851.156\(g\)](#), but here are some highlights: Electronically conveyed geoscience documents requiring a seal must contain an electronic seal and electronic signature. This digital seal can be a few different formats: 1) it may be an electronic copy (ex. scanned copy) of the original hard copy of the document that bears the seal, signature, and date and transmit the document in a secure electronic form. 2) You may also create an electronic seal (contact us if you need a template) and electronic signature. For the electronic signature please make sure that it is an image of your original signature, not an electronically generated signature or a different font that looks like handwriting. An example of an acceptable jpeg with a seal and signature is below.

Figure: 22 TAC §851.156(g)(2)(B)



If you have questions about digital seals or any compliance topic, please reach out to me at rfunderburg@tbpq.texas.gov or (512) 936-4410. I'm always happy to talk or offer guidance! I

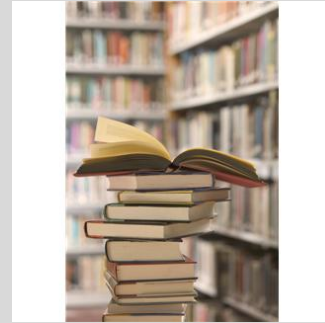
Four Year Review of TBPG Rules

TBPG is starting its four year rule review and will be reviewing its entire set of rules to see whether the reasons for the rules continues to exist.

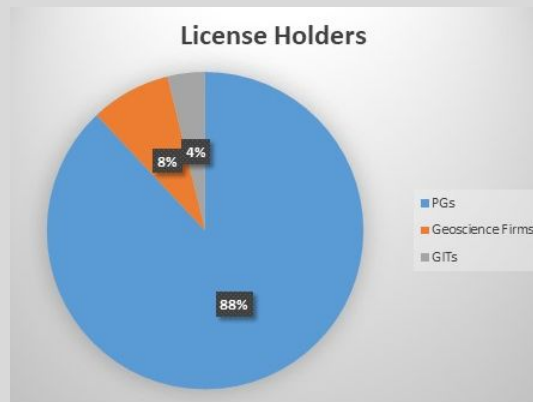
If you would like to suggest changes to TBPG's rules, please send written suggestions by February 8, 2021 to:

TBPG Executive Director Rene Truan
Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists
P.O. Box 13225, Austin TX 78711

Or by e-mail to: rtruan@tbpg.texas.gov



TBPG Licensing Numbers



Current Licensing Numbers

December 1, 2020

Professional Geoscientists - 3397

Registered Firms - 338

Geoscientists-in-Training - 150

P.G. in the Spotlight

An interview with Alysa Suydam, P.G.

How long have you been a PG in Texas?

I very recently received licensure and have been a PG since November 25, 2020. However, I was a GIT since May 2016 prior to receiving licensure, and I've been working since August 2015.

Why did you pursue a career in the geosciences? What initially interested you?

I've always had an interest in the natural world and science like physics, so geology sits in that sweet spot. I specifically chose to pursue a career in groundwater geology after an internship with the Brackish Resources Aquifers Characterization System

(BRACS) team at the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). Water is so essential, and the BRACS team is doing some neat work mapping brackish groundwater.

What is your favorite part of working as a geoscientist?

There are a few things that I quite enjoy: learning about Texas geology, scientific research, and learning how to code to support my projects and work. However, I think my favorite part is the people. I've had quite a few people more or less mentor me in college, during my first job in Houston out of college, and while currently working at the TWDB. I've found folks have been very generous with their time and I've been allowed many opportunities for professional growth.



What are your hopes for the geoscience industry in Texas and what advice do you have for someone interested in a career in geoscience?

I am too green to discuss hopes for the geoscience industry in Texas as a whole, but I think there are some exciting things going on in my corner of the groundwater realm of Texas geosciences. The Texas Legislature has prioritized researching non-traditional water supplies like brackish groundwater and Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) by funding these programs at the TWDB, and new knowledge should be coming out of these studies. Not only will it be new knowledge, but information from these studies will directly benefit Texans and their future water supply. Additionally, considering the quality of researchers and academics at universities in Texas, I think there is room for collaboration to help answer some important and technical questions.

My advice relates to things that were helpful for me right out of school, like having internship experience. From my internships, I got to see what geoscientists did on a day-to-day basis, but more importantly I got to see what kinds of skills would be useful to develop. My internship experience solidified two things for me:

1. I needed to pursue licensure. This wasn't really discussed at school, so I may not have realized the importance of licensure if I hadn't done an internship. I think that because I already knew I needed to pursue licensure and that I had plans to obtain my GIT certificate, potential employers saw that as a plus.
2. GIS skills are essential, and coding skills are useful. Map making and spatial analysis are essential to geoscience, and much of that happens in various GIS software. We use large datasets in our studies, and having some basic coding skills has made it much easier handling the data. Coding makes spatial analysis easier in GIS software, and data-driven approaches like machine learning will probably become more common.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like to camp and hike but don't get to as much as I'd like. I do regularly volunteer at the Austin Animal Center. I work with dogs there, and one of my favorite volunteering activities there is to be a runner for a thing called playgroups. Essentially, I help staff by walking dogs that like to play with other dogs to a big yard for supervised play time. It's a ton of fun watching the goofy dogs romp around, but it's rewarding watching a dog who was previously shut-down and scared open up after a couple of good playgroup outings. I also help out the Orange Dot Crew with some of the dogs that have a hard time in a shelter environment.

P.G. in the Spotlight

An interview with Kenneth Tramm, PhD, PG, CHMM

How long have you been a PG in Texas?

I have been a PG in Texas since 2003, right after the license was available.

Why did you pursue a career in the geosciences? What initially interested you?

I have always enjoyed natural sciences and how all the processes interact together. In seventh grade I had a fantastic earth science teacher (Mr. Lynwood Rayford) who had such passion for all the engineering and science



on display wherever you look. It gave me a whole new way to look at the world. To me it was magical. I am still learning new things on how it all fits together.

What is your favorite part of working as a geoscientist?

My favorite part is getting to develop data that solves problems for my clients. Each project is unique, and a new opportunity to apply and grow your skills. Whether it is a forgotten urban landfill being assessed for the first time, dry cleaner releases, heavy metal remediation, forensic work, or real-time air monitoring programs, each requires a mix of skills and a solid team to

successfully accomplish the project.

What are your hopes for the geoscience industry in Texas and what advice do you have for someone interested in a career in geoscience?

I hope we will see Professional Geoscientists play a leadership role in the evaluation of geoscientific risk areas like vapor intrusion and remediation-related air quality, in addition to our traditional soil and groundwater issues. There are many disciplines that intersect in the geosciences; it is an exciting place to start a career. My advice is to first find your passion. From there, discover how you can make a difference and get the education you need to further our field.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Spare time? What's that? I am honored to serve on boards at Texas A&M University and the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), which focus on helping our new graduates prepare for a professional career. I also serve as an adjunct professor at UTA in their Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences. I am working on an advisory committee for the TBPG right now too, to help provide input to future decision making. That is a big honor. Beyond that I am the founder of Modern Geosciences, a Texas-based engineering and geoscience firm, with a fantastic team and projects across Texas and the southeast United States. I am working on an update to my 2007 textbook *Environmental Due Diligence: A Professional Handbook* so when our new Phase I ESA standard comes out in 2021, the information will be accessible to everyone. But above all this I am a proud father of three with a wife who loves to go hiking with me. And yes... I do play a little guitar from time to time. If interested, look up *Kenneth S. Tramm and the Maps* on your favorite streaming service. There you go.

TBPG will continue to highlight individual Professional Geoscientists that make up our valued licensed geoscience community. Do you know someone you would like to nominate to be in the Spotlight? Let us know at licensing@tbpg.texas.gov.



TBPG Board Meeting Highlights

November 20, 2020

Requests for Waiver of a licensing requirement.

- One applicant for P.G. licensure requested a waiver of the ASBOG Fundamentals of Geology exam. The applicant met the Board policy requirements for this waiver. The Board unanimously approved the request for a waiver in a unanimous vote of 8-0.
- Two applicants for P.G. licensure requested waivers of the ASBOG Fundamentals

and Practice of Geology examinations. The applicants both met the Board policy requirements for the waivers. The Board unanimously approved the requests for waivers in a vote of 8-0.

- One applicant requested a waiver of the ASBOG Fundamentals and Practice of Geology examinations and a waiver of the education requirement. The applicant did not meet the Board's waiver policy requirements. The Board did not grant the waivers of the exams or the education requirement.
- One P.G. license holder requested a waiver of the continuing education requirements to renew their P.G. license. The Board considered this request. The Board determined that there are currently no rules that would provide for a waiver of this requirement, and did not grant this waiver.

COVID-19 pandemic; TBPG responses and actions.

In recent months due to the pandemic, the Executive Director has taken certain actions in cooperation with TBPG's Board Chair: 1) enacted a temporary CE policy for PG licensees whose licenses expire in the months of March 2020 through January 1, 2021; and 2) on a case by case basis has extended certain license expiration dates to defer licensing renewal payments on a case by case basis, as authorized by 22 TAC 851.85. The Board reviewed these actions and unanimously approved to continue the actions taken by the Executive Director. The Executive Director has extended the COVID related actions to February 28, 2021.

Overview of upcoming TBPG four year rule review of 22 TAC 850 and 851.

TBPG is starting its four year rule review in coming months to review its entire set of rules to ensure the reason for them still exists.

