



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 - Spring 2021

The Chair's Report

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

Hi folks. We have a lot to discuss this time!

First, congratulations to all our newest licensees and GITs! Thanks to our staff for successfully running another very large ASBOG exam and having zero COVID transmissions as a result!

Second, it's been an interesting legislative session for sure! One of the surprises was that Representative Cason from Bedford introduced a bill to defund TBPG! For as much as we thought we were "safe" until the next sunset process, this is clearly not the case. Our licensees must remain vigilant, and continue to reach out to their representatives about why licensure is crucial! If you need descriptions of who geoscientists are and what we do, just reach out to TBPG. We have great descriptions for all three disciplines and are happy to share!

Third, please be watching for some proposed changes to the current firm registration rules. TBPG is trying to simplify some definitions and make it easier for sole practitioners. Please remember that the only mechanism we have to gather your vital feedback is to publish proposed rules and receive your comments! We want to hear your thoughts on these proposed changes!

Fourth, I'd like to update you on the results from the Advisory Committee on Firm Registration. Committee members Kenneth S. Tramm, PhD, PG, CHMM, Allen Shane Estep, PG, and Joseph M. Reilly, MSc, PG were prepared to present their findings at the February meeting which was, of course, derailed by Snowmageddon! They graciously agreed to present at the April meeting instead.

As you may remember, the Sunset Advisory Commission (SAC) Review of TBPG (June 2019; 86th Texas Legislature) produced a Staff Report that recommended abolishing TBPG, stating that licensure does not protect the public. Your action and testimony before the SAC were successful (see House Bill 1311) and we continue as a standalone board until the next Sunset review that coincides with the Texas Board of Professional Engineers (Sept. 2025) Sunset review.

If not abolished, the Staff Report then recommended to discontinue geoscience firm registration. When TBPG staff evaluated that recommendation, they identified an annual estimated revenue loss of about \$100,200 if firm registration was eliminated – a significant hit to our operating budget. But more importantly, firm registration protects the public from the incompetent practice of geoscience. The Advisory Committee was formed to prepare a response to the SAC for this specific recommendation and consisted of 12 volunteer PGs licensed in Geology, Geophysics, and Soil



Science disciplines, with diverse professional expertise and 9 Registered Firms (ranging from small to large). It is important to note that TBPG board members cannot participate in Advisory Committees and that TBPG staff are limited to providing support services for the committee. In other words, Advisory Committees act as independent entities with no contact with Board members until they present their findings. The Firm Registration Advisory Committee (FRAC) identified two main scope items for the committee to address: 1) the need for Firm Registration, and 2) the role that firm registration plays in Public Safety.

I. The Committee unanimously recommends that Professional Geoscience Firm Registration be continued. Justifications include:

1. No cost burden - A PG operating as a sole proprietor is not required to register.
2. Large projects typically require multiple disciplines and firms rather than sole-proprietors.
3. Firm registration allows for verification of firm status.
4. Public entities, regulatory entities, and private entities have required Firm Registration as part of contracting criteria.
5. Public Trust – Public Practice REQUIRES a firm to be registered, to AFFIRM AND DEMONSTRATE that the firm practices geoscience, and identify an AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL who ensures all geoscience services performed under a RESPONSIBLE PG.
6. The requirement of an Authorized Official in responsible charge of all work completed by the firm ensures an additional layer of oversight of the geoscience work.
7. Registered Geoscience Firms also serve a pivotal role in mentoring Geoscientists-in-Training (GIT) since firms will often have multiple PG disciplines performing a variety of work.

II. Role in Public Safety and Health Determinations by Professional Geoscientists. The FRAC searched through the SAC Report and related State Legislature documents as well as posted comments for reasons to support their finding, but found none. Further,

1. The FRAC could not find the supporting rationale nor comments from entities who require PG licenses on submitted reports (i.e., TCEQ, RRC). TCEQ and RRC did not present during House or Senate Hearings, and there was no formal response to the SAC Review in Record (or referenced by SAC).
2. Public Comments also did not support the SAC opinion. Of the 496 comments submitted to SAC, 87% support keeping firm registration. (Comments came from a wide range of entities including firms, persons, regulatory staff, public entities, and academia.)
3. Comments also enumerated reasons to keep TBPG including public safety, environmental protection, ethics, ensuring competent work, and market requirements.
4. Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP)/Brownfields Program Coordinator for the RRC estimated “that 95% of reports that I have received are from PGs.”
5. Communication with TCEQ and RRC for this effort confirmed that many areas of geoscientific evaluation are outside typical PE areas of expertise. Hence, PGs play a more significant role in performance of this work – assessing environmental risk to human health and the environment.

III. Recommendations include:

1. Appointing a Regulatory Liaison who can work with the TCEQ, RRC, and other interested entities concerning the role PGs play in regulatory submissions, provide comment on regulatory guidance, and solicit input on TBPG efforts to enhance the license.
2. TBPG should also review current outreach efforts to regulatory entities, governmental entities, legislative bodies, and educational institutions to ensure the licensed PG's vital role is communicated.
3. Lastly, TBPG should evaluate Additional Practice Areas – While the Texas Geoscience Practice Act is a clear example of how expansive the Professional Geoscience area of practice is with Geology, Soil Science, and Geophysics as defined practice areas (disciplines), as the field has matured, more areas may merit individual definition and licensure. One possible practice area the Committee would like to be considered is an “Environmental” or similar discipline. While this will require the TBPG (e.g., Regulatory Liaison) to work with regulators on the areas of demonstrated knowledge and experience, it would likely serve both the public and regulatory community to clearly include these skill sets as a valued part of Professional Geoscience.

Here are the links to their [full report](#) with the list of committee members, and the [PowerPoint presentation](#). I'd like to express my sincerest thanks to the entire committee for their thorough and thoughtful research of this topic and their service to TBPG!

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

The Board has adopted a temporary CE policy that gives license holders a 9-hour credit toward their continuing education requirement for renewal of their license. This temporary policy has been extended to apply to all licenses that expire between March 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021. This action gives a credit of 9 hours of the 15 required continuing education hours needed for the renewal of the license. Of the remaining 6 hours needed, one of those hours must be ethics (TBPG offers online videos related to Ethics in Geoscience). For licensees who earn or have earned more than 6 hours of CE credit, any hours earned in excess of six may be carried over into the next renewal period (up to a maximum of 30 carryover hours is allowed). To show this on your continuing education log, please add "TBPG COVID Credit" and "9 hours" as an entry.

***PLEASE NOTE: Due to the continued opening of business operations in Texas, TBPG's temporary COVID policies will expire on June 30, 2021.**

Are you needing some options for continuing education activity?

TBPG does not endorse any specific trainings, but provides links to some available options.

See the full list on the [CE Opportunities](#) web page.

Upcoming Events:

- June 30-July 1, 2021 [Texas Groundwater Conference Program](#), American Ground Water Trust
- Sept 16, 2021 [Pollution Prevention Waste Management Workshop](#), Virtual Workshop from TCEQ and UTA

Other online and virtual options:

- [AIPG Geosciences Online Learning Initiative](#)
- [AIPG-TX Section](#)
- [American Society of Agronomy](#)
- [Association of Environmental and Engineering Geoscientists \(AEG\)](#)
- [Discount PDH.com](#)
- [Geological Society of America \(GSA\)](#)
- [HalfMoon Education Inc.](#)
- [Industry Council on the Environment \(ICE\)](#)
- [Midwest GeoSciences Group Education and Training](#)
- [National Groundwater Association \(NGA\)](#)
- [Northwest Environmental Training Center \(NWETC\)](#)
- [PDH Express](#)
- [Petroleum Technology Transfer Council \(PTTC\)](#)
- [Society of Exploration Geophysicists \(SEG\)](#)
- [Soil Science Society of America \(SSSA\)](#)
- [Texas Commission on Environmental Quality \(TCEQ\)](#)
- [Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service \(TEEX\)](#)
- [US EPA Courses and Conferences](#)
- [US EPA archived webinars](#)

See [Ethics Video Options](#) for a choice of three different ethics videos.

P.G. in the Spotlight

An interview with Vince J. Nacewski, P.G.

How long have you been a PG in Texas? I have been a PG in Texas since 2003 when the license became available.

Why did you pursue a career in the geosciences? What initially interested you? Having grown up in Hill County, I have always had an interest in geology, natural resources and urban development and how the three impact each other. We lived very close to several limestone quarries along the Balcones Escarpment and I spent many hours exploring the quarries and transition zone between the Hill County and Gulf Coastal Plain. I also



had an interest in development activities around urban centers, real estate and why certain developments took place. This led me to find a career where I could study, understand, and participate in projects at the intersection of geosciences, urban development, commercial and regulatory programs.

What is your favorite part of working as a geoscientist? My favorite part is being part of an organization that provides viable solutions to a wide range of clients, sometimes during very stressful conditions. Since beginning my career over 30 years ago, I have always enjoyed the adrenalin rush of supporting clients on train derailments, pipeline release, and large complex projects where decisions need to be made in a compressed period. It is always rewarding when clients look to your expertise and ability to explain the geosciences to various stakeholders on complex projects. Over the past few years, it has been exciting to be part of a team that is supporting

clients as they transition from carbon-intensive developments to renewable developments and providing guidance on how the geosciences affect and influence these developments.

I have also enjoyed being one of the "seasoned" professionals within our organization, GHD, and providing career and project guidance to younger professionals in the industry. It is also really fulfilling to look out within the industry and see how many professionals have worked in the three organizations I have founded or been part of over the past 30 years (BNC Environmental Services, Conestoga-Rovers & Associates, and GHD) and the experience of growing from a firm of 3 professionals in one office to being part of an organization with 200 offices and 10,000 professionals worldwide. I have made many new friends across all parts of the globe and have had the opportunity to be part of teams that executed projects in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico and the Middle East.

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 and the registrations (both individual and company) be recognized similar to the Professional Engineers and Engineering Firms by various stakeholders. I believe the geoscience industry has played a major role in economic development across the state of Texas since the program was developed in the early 1900s. I hope for the continued recognition of the profession by other professionals as we continue to support our clients and the communities through hazard recognition and mitigation, and sustainable development.

I would recommend finding a career that allows you to chase your passion and lets you have the opportunity to bring the geosciences to different economic sectors. I have seen this first-hand within our organization, GHD, as we support our clients operating in the public and private sectors focus more on environmental, social governance (ESG) projects. I would recommend reaching out to organizations that employ professional geoscientist, engineers, and accounts who work on teams to support them as they scope, plan, and develop new programs and facilities. In addition, I believe individuals should strive to complete an internship in the industry in order to participate on teams with seasoned professionals, work on actual projects and get an understanding of additional skill sets required to perform well in the industry.

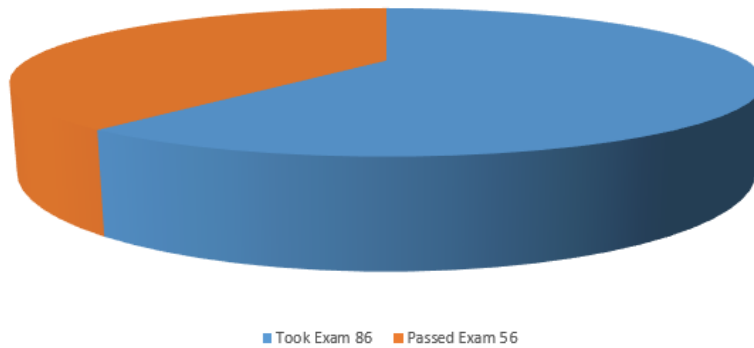
What do you like to do in your spare time? I enjoy the outdoors where there is some sort of game involved; golf, tennis, pickleball, etc. Also, I am passionate about yard work, gardening and growing various plants from seeds or transplants. I am currently participating on an advisory committee for the TBPG with a number of other Professional Geoscientist, providing guidance and ideas on elevating the awareness for both individuals and organizations. This has allowed me to discuss the profession with a wide range of individuals from those having individual practices in the field to professionals like myself who are part of large, diverse organizations.

I have been married to my wife, Susie for almost 30 years, and we have two wonderful children, Morgan, who works on Wall Street in New York City and Joseph who is a CPA in Houston.

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.

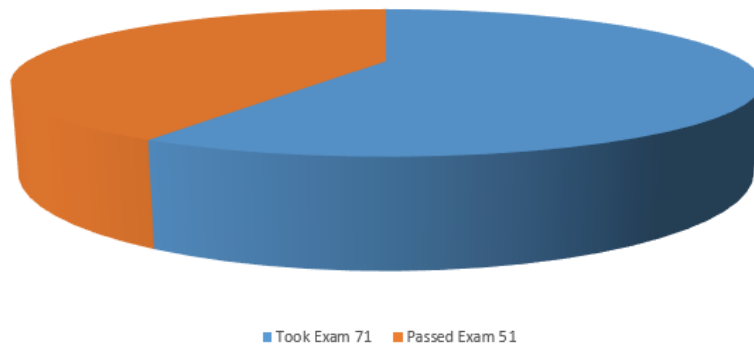
The March 19, 2021 ASBOG exam was a success, and the results have been sent out to all who sat for the examinations.

ASBOG FG exam in Texas
Passing Rate 65%



FG Exam Results in Texas: Out of 86 individuals that took the FG exam, 56 individuals passed the exam for a passing rate of 65%.

ASBOG PG exam in Texas
Passing Rate 72%



PG Exam Results in Texas: Out of 71 individuals that took the PG exam, 51 individuals passed the exam for a passing rate of 72%.

The next ASBOG examination is October 1, 2021.
The deadline for submitting exam requests to TBPG is 5:00 p.m. on August 3, 2021.

TBPG Licensing Numbers



Current Licensing Numbers

May 1, 2021

Professional Geoscientists - 3356

Registered Firms - 337

Geoscientists-in-Training - 182

In Memoriam

James Sansom, P.G. was a Professional Geoscientist in Texas for many years. One of the highlights of Jim's career was the discovery of Inner Space Cavern when he worked at the Texas Highway Department.

January 15, 1937 - February 27, 2021

[More information](#)



James W. Sansom, Jr. P.G.



Board Meeting Highlights

April 28, 2021

Requests For Waiver of a Licensing Requirement

- 7 applicants for licensure requested a waiver of the ASBOG Fundamentals of Geology exam. These applicants all met the Board's policy requirements for this waiver. The Board unanimously approved these requests for waiver.
- 6 applicants for licensure requested waivers of the ASBOG Fundamentals and Practice of Geology examinations. These applicants all met the Board's policy requirements for waivers of both exams. The Board unanimously approved these requests for waivers.
- 2 applicants for licensure requested a substitution of work experience for the education requirement. The Board unanimously granted the substitution for one of the applicants. The other applicant's request was tabled.

Resolution of Complaints

- The Board unanimously approved the dismissal of complaint 2021-00006 in a vote of 7-0, with Members Janak and Stowers abstaining.
- The Board unanimously adopted an Agreed Board Order for complaint 2021-00005, in a vote of 7-0, with Members Janak and Stowers abstaining.

Texas Fundamentals of Geophysics Exam

The Board unanimously approved amendments to rules 22 TAC 851.40, 851.41, and 851.80 to add language about a new fundamentals exam for GIT certification in the discipline of geophysics. These proposed amendments will be posted in the Texas Register for public comment.

COVID-19 Pandemic and TBPG's Response/Actions

Since March 2020, TBPG has taken these actions to assist licensees during the pandemic: 1) enacted a temporary CE policy for PG licensees whose licenses were expiring beginning in March 2020; and 2) Upon request due to an economic hardship related to the pandemic, has extended certain license expiration dates to defer payments on a case by case basis, as authorized by 22 TAC 851.85. The Board reviewed these actions and unanimously approved to grant the Executive Director authority to extend the COVID related actions as needed. ***PLEASE NOTE: Due to the continued**

opening of business operations in Texas, TBPG's temporary COVID policies will expire on June 30, 2021.

Officer Elections and Committee Assignments

TBPG Executive Board elections are held every two years. The Board unanimously elected Member W. David Prescott, II, P.G. to serve as Vice-Chair and Member Mark N. Varhaug, P.G., CPG to serve as Secretary/Treasurer. The Board Chair is appointed by the Governor. Board Chair Becky Johnson, P.G., announced committee assignments and named Committee Chairs.

Four Year Rule Review

TBPG has adopted its rule review for Chapters 850 and 851. The reasons for these rules continues to exist, with the exception of rule 851.154, which the Board will propose to repeal at its next Board meeting.

The Board may propose amendments or repeals of its rules at upcoming TBPG meetings. Any proposed rule-making actions will be posted to the Texas Register for public comment. These proposed actions will also appear on the TBPG website.

Send any questions to: licensing@tbpq.texas.gov.

