

# FAPG FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL GEOLOGISTS

WINTER 2004

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

### FAPG Takes Bold Step

by **Robert Skrob, CAE**

I am proud to have served the Florida Association of Professional Geologists since its founding in 1995. Working together with a group of geologists concerned about the deregulation of the profession, we united the PG community. It was a true grass-roots effort. I remember spending Saturday mornings labeling postcards that urged members to phone their legislators before the Thursday committee meetings. Our members made those calls, and together we won!

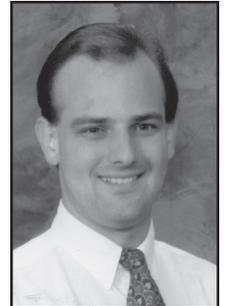
As you already know, the FAPG continues to diligently protect professional geologists against attacks that would weaken or deregulate your profession. Without the support of the FAPG and its members, it is likely that geologists would no longer be licensed. This would mean reduced wages for you and increased risk to the public.

However, the FAPG is not content to merely hold its ground. After years of wishing our profession had the representation of a professional lobbyist, we have taken a bold step; we hired one. Laura McLeod and Missy Timmons are spectacular. I wish you could

have been in Tallahassee to meet them yourself. You would be as excited as I am about our chances for success in 2004 and beyond. They have energy, charisma and the inside connections we need to succeed with our legislative agenda.

The strong financial support of our members has enabled the FAPG to take this step. A huge thank you goes to them. When called upon by their profession, they were the first to step forward and participate. Those first contributors are important, because they lead the way by example.

If you haven't contributed to the FAPG's legislative defense fund, please consider a financial commitment. You spent years working to achieve your PG license, hours studying for the exam and money in bi-annual fees. Professional representation before the



*Robert Skrob,*

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### FAPG Legislative Defense Fund Contributions

#### **\$1,000 - RUBY**

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Anonymous  
Golder Associates

#### **\$500 - TOPAZ**

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## Florida's Sinkhole Law May Change

Florida is the only state that requires coverage for sinkhole losses on homeowner's insurance policies. Chapter 627.706 Florida Statutes defines a sinkhole loss as damage to the insured structure as a result of "sudden settlement or collapse of the earth" into "voids created by the action of water on a limestone or similar rock formation." If there is reason to suspect that damage is a result of sinkhole activity, Chapter 627.707 requires that the insurance carrier retain "an individual qualified to determine the existence of sinkhole activity." The industry's standard investigation protocols include geophysical exploration of the site, standard penetration testing and other procedures. The "sinkhole expert" must certify and sign/seal the results of the sinkhole investigation. Both engineers and geologists presently conduct these investigations and certify the results. If the consultant finds that the damage is a sinkhole loss, many insurance carriers require that the consultant also provide a fix recommendation, such as grouting or underpinning of the structure, as part of the report. An engineer typically signs and seals any designs associated with the fix recommendation.

Many geological/geotechnical firms have become involved in this process, and numerous law firms specialize in sinkhole claims. As a result, the process has become litigious, and the insurance industry

has had to pay many controversial claims. Because of the complexity and magnitude of sinkhole losses, combined with added risks for wind damage and other factors, some carriers have either ceased writing homeowner's insurance in Florida, or they have restricted their markets to avoid sinkhole-prone and other high-risk areas.

To address losses and issues concerning controversial claims, several initiatives are underway to alter the statutes. The changes include altering the method of underwriting a sinkhole loss, tightening the definition of a sinkhole loss and revising standards for those who can provide a certified sinkhole investigation. One such effort, which to our knowledge has not been assigned a bill number or found a legislative sponsor, includes language that the investigation must be done by a civil engineer with a "specialty in the geophysical field." Needless to say, many engineers are highly qualified to identify sinkhole activity, but they are not typically trained to recognize sinkholes, and few have a background in geophysics. In contrast, many geologists have these qualifications. We think this is a simple mistake that will be corrected in future drafts of the proposed bill, **but we must watch the legislative process to identify and correct any bills that exclude qualified geologists** from conducting sinkhole investigations.

### BOLD STEP continued from page 1

Florida Legislature is an investment that will multiply, many times, the value of your license. Our legislative efforts will increase opportunities for PGs and improve administrative functions. Even if you are not in the private sector, it won't be long before you feel the effects of these changes.

I'm proud to have served you for these eight years. I'm proud of the FAPG's giant step of securing a lobbyist. I'm excited about the new victories and accomplishments our profession will experience over the next several months. Thank you for your help!

### Calendar of Events

**January 13 - 16, 2004**

North American Environmental Field Conference & Expo (NAEFCon) and 6th Annual GAS Expo

**January 16, 2004**

4th Annual University of South Florida Geology Alumni Society Banquet

**January 27 - 28, 2004**

Board of Professional Geologists Northwood Centre Tallahassee, Florida

**March 2, 2004**

2004 Florida Legislative Session Begins

**April 30, 2004**

2004 Florida Legislative Session Ends

# Meet Your FAPG Lobbyists

The FAPG has hired a lobbying firm to represent PGs before the Florida Legislature. The FAPG circulated a request for proposals to over 57 lobbyists, reviewed 12 proposals and selected three for interviews. At our meeting, we identified Laura McLeod & Associates, Governmental & Management Consultants, as the best lobbyist to meet our profession's needs.

McLeod & Associates is a full-service firm with a track record of success in providing legislative strategy, building solid working relationships with regulatory agencies, managing media relations and conducting campaigns tailored to meet each organization's needs. McLeod & Associates tailors each legislative initiative with the long view in mind and reacts with exper-

tise to any crisis that may arise. The firm is recognized as one of the most effective legislative and consulting organizations in the state.

The firm's principal, Laura McLeod, has worked in the legislative process since her days as an association manager for a statewide nonprofit association. During that time, Laura honed her public relations, organizational and leadership skills to implement a national award-winning drug prevention and education program in Florida. In the early 1990s, Laura worked in the Florida Senate, building the relationships and gaining the knowledge that make her so successful as she represents clients in the governmental process. She began governmental consulting in 1993 and opened her own firm in 1998.

Assisting Laura is Missy Timmins, a former legislative assistant with the Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security and former chief of staff for state Senator Jack Latvala. Missy uses her inside knowledge of the legislative and executive branches of government to assist clients in navigating the political process. In addition, Missy maintains excellent working relationships within the Legislature by working throughout the state on House and Senate campaigns.



Laura McLeod

## Building a Presence in the Capitol

by **Laura McLeod, President, McLeod & Associates FAPG Lobbyist**

McLeod & Associates is pleased to have the opportunity to assist the Florida Association of Professional Geologists in creating a presence of education and knowledge of your profession within the Florida governmental process.

We have a two-pronged approach to build this presence: first, to work with the 2004 Legislature to pass the FAPG's legislative priorities; and second, to begin educating legislators, their staffs and committee staff about the geologist profession and the benefits you bring to the state of Florida. We want to become a resource for the expertise you can bring to the varied issues facing the state. Our goal is to build a foundation so your input is naturally requested as issues are raised and considered by the Legislature.

We have much to do before the 2004 session begins on March 2. Below is a broad overview of the task ahead:

- Secure sponsors for our legislation
- Create material for lobbying tools for all of the membership to use
- Plan our FAPG day at the Capitol
- Determine and answer questions and concerns that may be raised

- Meet with Department of Environmental Protection staff
- Meet with Department of Business and Professional Regulation staff
- Meet with professional engineers
- Meet with all legislators on Natural Resources committees and Business Regulation committees
- Create and implement an e-mail and letter-writing campaign
- Prepare for testimony before committees
- Educate the governor's office

We need all the members of the FAPG to be a part of these efforts. We look forward to working with each of you.

## View FAPG Legislative Info Online

Do you know the details about the FAPG's legislative efforts? Check them out online at [www.FAPG.org](http://www.FAPG.org). Review a summary of the issues and the actions we're taking, and then if you haven't contributed already, complete the contribution form and send it in with your payment.

## SEGS Seeks Officers

The Southeastern Geological Society (SEGS) is once again looking for people to serve as officers. Please visit the SEGS website at [www.segs.org](http://www.segs.org) and take a look at what the society does. The group is particularly interested in having some "new blood" to serve as officers. The duties of vice president include putting together and running the society's annual field trip. The vice president is automatically the incoming president for the next year. Please use the nomination form on the website ([www.segs.org](http://www.segs.org)) if you wish to have your name included in the upcoming election (January).

### Don't Miss Your Opportunity to Make Contact!

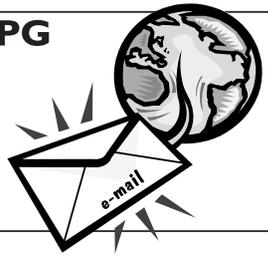
By popular request the FAPG has made select space within its newsletter available for advertisers. The goals of this effort are to keep membership dues low by allowing advertisers to underwrite the cost of the newsletter and provide an avenue for vendors to communicate with professional geologists throughout Florida. Get all of the details and requirements by contacting the FAPG office today at 850/222-6000 or sending an e-mail to [Michelle@FAPG.org](mailto:Michelle@FAPG.org).

P.O. Box 14629, Tallahassee, FL 32317-4629  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## Subscribe to the FAPG e-mail listserv!

*The e-mail communication forum for the Florida geologist profession*

Simply send an e-mail message to:  
fla\_geologists-subscribe@yahoo.com



## FAPG INDUSTRY SUPPORTERS

These companies have supported the Florida Association of Professional Geologists and the geology industry by becoming Associate Members.

Company	Contact	Phone #
A2L Technologies, Inc.	Daniel Corey Dobson	813/248-8558
Advanced Environmental Technologies, LLC	William A. Webster Heidi Rossell Ellion	229/430-9120
Aerostar E.S.I.	Geoff Reichold	904/565-2820
CH2MHILL	Donna M. Roraback	904/733-8150
Andreyev Engineering, Inc.	Jennifer Nicholls	352/751-2478
CBM Environmental Services	Claire Dempsey	813/287-1828
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Earth Tech, Inc.	Christopher Marshall	407/331-5937
Earthworks Geotechnical, Inc.	J. Drew Robertson	850/385-5288
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PBS&J	Giulio Italo Scarzella	813/282-7275
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St. Johns River Water Management District	Deborah L. Moore Gary T. Foster	904/329-4224 386/329-4421
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