

September 28, 2012

## CalGeo Accomplishments - Looking Back and Looking Ahead

*Greg Silver*

*CalGeo President 2008-2009*



Greg Silver, CalGeo  
Past President

CalGeo was started as SAFEA (Soils and Foundation Engineers Association) back in the 1970s primarily to address the issue of unionization. SAFEA then went on to convince the California Legislature to create the Title Authority for Geotechnical Engineers. Both of these actions were huge successes and propelled CalGeo to its status as a highly valued and important

organization. Since that time CalGeo has gone on to achieve many more accomplishments including:

- The development of loss prevention seminars and the annual Geotechnical Salary Survey – both of which are unique to CalGeo,
- The publication of several white papers and memos establishing the standard of practice,
- The hiring of an legislative advocate to inform our membership as to bills and actions that may influence the geotechnical engineering profession and to serve as our liaison in Sacramento,
- The development of vibrant and active student chapters at key universities that link future leaders to our members and profession, and
- The funding of applied research.

In addition, all of CalGeo's information is passed on to our members through our user-friendly and constantly updated website and e.Geo newsletter.

To keep our tasks in perspective, CalGeo's Board of Directors held a long-overdue strategic planning session in 2008 to guide the organization's efforts moving forward. This planning session established six goals with associated tactics that included: 1) define and broaden membership, 2) strengthen affiliations with key audiences, 3) expand regional presence, 4) strengthen/expand technical training, 5) improve effectiveness of lobbying and 6) communicate professional standards. Since 2008, many of these goals have been substantially completed. Others are still works in progress.

In September of this year, the CalGeo Board held another strategic planning session to re-evaluate the 2008 goals and examine ways to make sure we continue to meet the needs of our members. To start the process, CalGeo solicited comments from past presidents as well as our current members.

The results of this planning session revealed that increasing membership was a key driving issue. Essentially, it was determined that if membership increased, a number of other goals would either follow in line or be much easier to implement. Consequently, the skeleton of an unprecedented plan to increase membership was developed.

Other key items that will likely be emphasized in the coming year include: 1) creating more exposure for CalGeo

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through bigger, higher-profile events and meetings, 2) strengthening CalGeo's relationship with BPELSG with the hope of influencing BPELSG in key areas such as legal reporting requirements and enforcement review, 3) combating commodization, and 4) developing a professional loss prevention seminar centering on reducing exposure and loss due to post-construction litigation. In the next few months CalGeo will be finalizing our new direction and pursuing the associated goals and tactics with new vigor. We look forward to keeping you updated through future editions of the e.Geo.

## CalGeo Recommends Support of Prop 32 - "Stop Special Interest Group Money"

*By Rick Keene*

*CalGeo Legislative Advocate*

The CalGeo Board voted unanimously yesterday to support Proposition 32 on the November ballot, and encourages all CalGeo members to lend a hand in its passage at whatever level they can.

Groups like CalGeo face strong headwinds in our efforts to address issues such as prevailing wage problems, forced unionization and benefit-imposition efforts. Unions and other special interest groups have mountains of money at their disposal to stymie reform. Most of that money comes from dues involuntarily collected from union members.

Prop 32 would ban the practice of businesses and unions mandating their employees and members contribute their dues money to these political activities without first getting their permission. Currently, if a union member objects to financing these political objectives, they have to go through an extremely arduous process to decline. If Prop 32 passes, it would be a real game changer.

If you would like more information, to get involved or to contribute to the effort, visit [Yes on Prop 32](#)

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## Legislation Update

*By Rick Keene*

*CalGeo Legislative Advocate*



The legislative session ended at the close of August. For now, we're all safe. That's not to say folks at the capitol weren't trying to tackle some very plaguing problems with equally questionable solutions right down to the wire.

The Governor passed what is generously being cast as "modest" pension reform. It scaled back the percentage of contributions made by governments to public employee pensions to no more than 50 percent, increased the retirement age and curbed some abuses, such as pension spiking. The public pressure for reform forced the legislature to act before an initiative did it for them, but their efforts amount to little more than window dressing.

Governor Brown also pushed for a broader CEQA reform. Unfortunately, it stalled in the Senate but a promise was made for action next year. We'll see.

On the bright side, CalGeo was active in the passage of SB863, which cut many cost drivers in the workers' compensation system in exchange for increased permanent disability benefits. The bill is conservatively expected to generate a savings of more than \$1 billion to employers during the first year and up to \$400 million in following years.

The Governor is hoping these combined efforts will show enough progress to justify his tax increase on the November ballot. Like all things in Sacramento, time will tell.

**Next month:** Make sure to read the October e.Geo for an overview of CalGeo's 2013 legislative objectives and a recap of the successes we've achieved on members' behalf so far.

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## Member News

### With Much Appreciation!

On behalf of CalGeo and our Board of Directors, we would like to extend our thanks to the following firms and individuals for their generosity in contributing to the CalGeo General Fund and/or Student Outreach Program:

Acacia Consultants & Engineers

American Geotechnical, Inc.

BSK Associates

Cal Engineering & Geology, Inc.

Cyril "Bud" McRae

David Turner

Dugald Campbell

Earth Systems, Inc.

Geo Focus

GeoConcepts

Geotechnical Professionals, Inc.

Group Delta Consultants, Inc.

Haro Kasunich & Associates

Irvine Geotechnical

Jack Rolston

NMG Geotechnical, Inc.

Professor William Kitch

SPC Geotechnical, Inc.

Stoney-Miller Consultants/Geofirm

The Sutton Group

Tom Wallace

Twining, Inc.

Thank you all for your continued support of this organization and the aspiring geotechnical students throughout California.

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## Landslide of the Month

### Torrential Rain Cause Flooding and Landslides

*By Rex Upp*

Team USA may have won a landslide of medals at the 2012 London Olympics, but just weeks prior, it was Great Britain that was plagued with landslides - theirs, unfortunately, of the geotechnical type.

During the last week of June, a set of unusually intense thunderstorms passed across the north of England and Scotland, bringing short, but very intense rainfall across a wide area.



Perhaps the greatest impact came on the railways, where a series of landslides blocked the two main lines north from England to Scotland. Both of these lines have old alignments - much more than a century old (the East Coast line was completed in 1850). One landslide caused a freight train to derail, blocking the West Highland line. The 24-wagon train came off the West Highland line between Corroun and Tulloch. The driver was badly shaken but not injured. Click [here](#) to read more on this landslide.



A 24-wagon freight train derailed at Tulloch on the West Highland line

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## Job Board

Visit our [website](#) for the latest information on current available positions throughout the industry, including:

- Senior Tunnel Engineer with Condor Earth Technologies, Inc.
- Water Resources Control Engineer - Geotechnical with the State of California

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## Safety First

### Stopping Falls

*Courtesy of the Cal/OSHA Consultation Service*

Have you ever wondered what Cal/OSHA's fall prevention guidelines and requirements are? Click [here](#) to find out more.

If you would like to read Cal/OSHA's fact sheet on stopping falls, click [here](#).



### State Compensation Fund of California Contact

CalGeo members interested in becoming a member in CalGeo's "Safety First" group can contact Patty Amaya at (323) 327-5773 or [pattyamaya@scif.com](mailto:pattyamaya@scif.com) at State Compensation Insurance Fund for more information and an application. Click [here](#) for a form you can complete and send to Patty Amaya to receive information about becoming a member of CalGeo's "Safety First" group.



### Cal/OSHA Consultation

If you are an employer who wishes to obtain FREE assistance from Cal/OSHA Consultation, or want to learn more about what services are available, you can do so by calling the toll-free assistance number, 1 (800) 963-9424. If you want to arrange an on-site visit or obtain technical information, you can contact the Cal/OSHA Consultation area office nearest your workplace by clicking [here](#), or you can email



them at [InfoCons@dir.ca.gov](mailto:InfoCons@dir.ca.gov).

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