

Reflection on the 2011 Structures Congress

There were many winners at the 2011 Structures Congress held April 14-16, 2011 at the magnificent Green Valley Ranch in Las Vegas, Nevada. Attendees had the choice of over 100 sessions offered by SEI and CASE, in addition to the lively exhibit hall.

The Congress opened with a packed Plenary and Awards Luncheon on Thursday. Theodore L. Dressler, P.E., M.ASCE, one of the 2011 Structures Congress Co-Chairs, welcomed the attendees and recognized the local planning committee, cooperating organizations, and major sponsors. Following lunch, SEI Vice-President Sam Rihani, P.E., F.ASCE, opened the annual SEI Business Meeting. Jennifer Goupil, P.E., M.ASCE, incoming SEI Director, then provided updates on membership growth and financial performance, and highlighted key reminders and future conferences.

Andrew Herrmann, P.E., F.ASCE, President-Elect of ASCE, gave a presentation called “ASCE Infrastructure Report Card: The Next Steps”, offering ASCE’s vision for building on the recommendations of the ASCE Infrastructure Report Card of 2009. Mr. Herrmann discussed the upcoming Infrastructure Vision Summit which is designed to include many diverse stakeholders. In addition he talked about the economic and societal costs of underfunding the infrastructure and challenged members to become more involved in the public policy debate.



F. Dave Zanetell, P.E, PMP, M.ASCE, Project Manager, Central Federal Lands Highway Division of FHWA presented the Plenary Address, “Delivering the Hoover Dam Bypass, Cradle-to-Grave Project Management Strategies”. Throughout his well-received presentation Zanetell described the successful steps taken to ensure that the Hoover Dam Bypass project was successful despite the challenges of multiple stakeholders and unprecedented engineering obstacles.

Later that evening, the poolside Grand Opening Reception set an elegant tone to the start of the Congress. Set amid the infinity-edge pool and sand beach of the Green Valley Ranch, attendees enjoyed networking with colleagues and anticipating the information packed days ahead.



Within earshot of the bustling casino, concurrent technical and poster sessions were offered in 10 tracks including Bridges, Buildings, Extreme Loads, Forensic, Las Vegas Structures, New Research and Novel Applications, Business and Professional Practice, Energy Structures and Non-Structural Components, Non-Building Structures, Education, Special Structures, and the CASE Spring Risk Management Convocation.

Participants could submit their ballots for the Best of the Best Presentation and Poster. The best presentation, as chosen by the voters, was “Construction Collapse Case Study – What Engineers Should Know” by Jon Magnusson, P.E., S.E., Hon.AIA, Magnusson Klemencic Associates, Seattle, WA. The Best Poster was “Effect of Structure, Soil, and Ground Motion Parameters on Structure-Soil-Structure Interaction of Large-Scale Nuclear Structures”, by Lisa Anderson, P.E., Bechtel National Inc., Frederick, MD, Jayprakash Amin, Shawn Carey, Ph.D., P.E., Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, Inc., Aiken, SC.

More than 70 SEI committees from all divisions held meetings at the Structures Congress. Many discussed plans for special projects, webinar proposals, upcoming publications, and planning for future Congress sessions.

One of the highlights of the Congress was an exclusive Night at the Hoover Dam. The rare opportunity to view the dam at night was greatly enjoyed by the capacity crowd of Congress attendees. Guided tours of the Hoover Dam Powerhouse by extremely knowledgeable docents gave the participants insight into the construction and operation of the dam. A reception overlooking a spectacular view of the dam and the new Mike O’Callaghan-Pat Tillman Memorial Bridge as day slipped into night made a lasting impression on all who were there.



The last event of the 2011 Structures Congress was a new feature this year, a Closing Session. SEI was fortunate to host Ronald L. Lynn, Director/Building Official of the Clark County Department of Development Services. Mr. Lynn spoke on the topic of “Unique Challenges of the Built Environment of Las Vegas”, highlighting many of the special structures that give the city its singular character. Structures Congress participants left Las Vegas richer in knowledge and luckier for having attended.

We invite you to join us at the 2012 Structures Congress, March 29-31, 2012 in Chicago, Illinois. With its wealth of innovative and landmark structures, bustling Chicago will be an appropriate setting for three days of informative sessions, workshops, and special events.