

Tucker-Talk

by L. Scott Tucker

Timely Comment from the District's Executive Director



The District will celebrate its 35th year anniversary in June 2004. The legislation creating the District was passed on June 7, 1969 and Governor Love signed the bill into law on June 14, 1969. A lot of water has flowed by, so to speak, since June 1969.

The District can trace its creation to the June 1965 flood on the South Platte River. It was a flood of colossal proportions never before experienced in recorded history. It roared through the metro area sweeping away everything in its path and causing enormous damage. The flood brought home the message to the community that flooding and drainage do not respect city and county boundaries. An intergovernmental cooperative approach was needed.

Out of this realization a group of concerned engineers called the Five-County Engineers Group with Ted Dieffenderfer from Boulder as chairman began addressing the problem in 1967. The group transitioned into the Urban Drainage Advisory Committee of the Denver Regional Council of Governments. One of their first activities was to develop the *Urban Storm Drainage Criteria Manual* that was made possible with a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The resulting Criteria Manual was the first of its kind and became a model for other similar documents that have been prepared throughout the United States and the world.

The group recognized the need for an institutional structure to address drainage and flood control on a regional basis. Senator Joe Shoemaker who was an attorney as well as an engineer worked with the group. Joe also had been Manager of Public Works for

Denver and he had an appreciation for drainage and flooding problems. In 1969 Senator Shoemaker sponsored legislation that would be adopted that year as the Urban Drainage and Flood Control Act and would create the District. The population of the metro area has more than doubled from 1969, growing from about 1.2 million to a present day population of about 2.5 million.

The first meeting of the Board of Directors was convened on July 28, 1969. Commissioner John Nichols of Arapahoe County was elected as the first Chairman of the Board of Directors. The first Board consisted of 13 local government elected officials and two registered professional engineers appointed by the Board. The first Executive Director, James Quinn, was hired and started with the District in February 1970. The Urban Drainage and Flood Control District was off and running, and as they say the rest is history.

The 35 years have gone by so fast we have not taken time to have a birthday party along the way. Consequently, we have decided to take time in 2004 to recognize the District's 35 years of service to the community. Some of our thoughts are to prepare a video documenting the creation and evolution of the District, having a celebration near the South Platte River in June of 2004, and modifying our stationery next year to reflect the 35th year. We will send invitations to those with whom we work, locally elected officials, state legislators, and others, of the details of the celebration as June 2004 approaches.

A lot has changed since I joined the District in March 1972. There was just

the secretary and myself as staff and the Board of Directors outnumbered the staff by 15 to 2 at that time. We now have 21 permanent employees with 19 being fulltime and two part time. In addition we have eight part time student interns. The Board has also grown to 20 members. so permanent staff and the Board now number about the same. Our basic approach has been to contract with the private sector for most of our activities, thus keeping our staff size at a minimum. We contract for just about everything including drainageway maintenance, planning projects, design work, maintenance of the library, construction work, meteorological services, floodplain delineation, and personnel support services.

The issues and attitudes have changed a lot since 1969. Stormwater quality was just beginning to be discussed, but was generally not a consideration. Due in large part to Federal regulations stormwater quality has become a concern of most urban communities in the US. Grass lined trapaziodal channels with a maintenance trail that could also be used as hiker/biker trails were considered "green" in the early 1970's. We now restore channels to look natural; and wildlife, riparian habitat, trail corridors, and open space uses make our drainageways popular with the public. The world of regulation has changed dramatically. There were not many regulations 35 years ago. Now there are 404 permits, municipal stormwater quality permits, construction stormwater quality permits, endangered species issues, and environmental impact statements. The regulatory environment now drives much of the

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cost, timing and design of our projects.

Regulation of floodplains by local governments was usually a battle in the early 1970's. Developers typically wanted to channel the creeks into underground conduits or concrete channels, do as little as possible, reclaim as much developable land as possible. Drainaways were viewed as liabilities. Now floodplain regulation is accepted by the development community and many developers see creeks as assets and preserve and enhance them as

amenities to their projects. In the early days we relied almost entirely on floodplain regulation to control development in floodplains. With the support of the public through the financing of open space programs many floodplains have been purchased and preserved. The District since the mid 1980's has set aside monies each year for floodplain purchases.

And we cannot forget the computer. It has had a tremendous impact on the way we do business. I remember the analog hydrology/hydraulic models that required monster computers that

required large investments in hardware, programming, and space. We can now do more on a PC than we could do 35 years ago on one of those huge machines.

So next year, 2004, we want to celebrate 35 years of drainage and flood control work. After all if we don't do it who will. We hope that our friends, partners, contractors, elected officials, etc. will join us in this celebration. See you in June.

Scott Tucker named Top Ten Leader

Scott Tucker, District Executive Director since 1972, was named one of the Top Ten Public Works Leaders of the Year by the American Public Works Association (APWA) at its International Public Works Congress and Exposition in San Diego in August. The purpose of the award is "to inspire excellence and dedication in public service by recognizing the outstanding achievements of individual public works professionals." Following is the awards program description of Scott's achievements.

Since 1972, L. Scott Tucker has been the Executive Director of the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, which encompasses 12,200 square miles consisting of six counties and 28 cities and towns. During his 31-year tenure as Executive Director, he has seen the District grow from a relatively small agency focused on the planning of flood control improvements to a major force in the design and construction of flood control projects throughout the Denver metro area's numerous urban waterways.

Tucker facilitated the District and FEMA in executing the first Cooperating Technical Partnership agreement in the U.S. in May 1999. He believed that because of the continuing growth of the Denver region it was important to work with FEMA to create and maintain accurate, up-to-date flood hazard data for the 32 communities

participating in the National Flood Insurance Program, which are served by the District.

Tucker has been a member of APWA since 1972. His involvement with the association includes President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Chapter Delegate of the Colorado Chapter (1976-1980), Executive Council Member, Institute for Water Resources (President 1984-1985), and the Product Users and Suppliers Council (1990-1993). He is also a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, Denver Regional Council of Governments, EPA Federal Advisory Committee on Phase II Stormwater Sources, and the Metro Wastewater Reclamation District.

Governor Owens Reappoints Ben Urbonas to the CCBWQA Board

Governor Bill Owens reappointed Ben Urbonas to the Board of Directors of the Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority to a term expiring July, 2007. Ben was originally appointed by the Governor to serve on this board in 2001 after the State legislature redefined the board's structure. As redefined at that time, the board has to have one elected official from each of the five municipalities within the Cherry Creek watershed, one representative from the special districts operating within the watershed and six citizens appointed by the Governor. The latter have to have two members with water quality expertise, two to represent recreational interests and two to represent

environmental interests. Ben was appointed as one of the two with water quality expertise.

District Conference Scheduled

Mark your calendars now for the District's "Stormwater Planning and Design: Current Issues and Guidelines" conference to be held April 28, 2004, at the Holiday Inn, Northglenn.

The tentative agenda includes:

- Recent Developments in Drainage Law
- Maintenance Eligibility and Master Plan Implementation
- Common Mistakes made during CLOMR/LOMR Submittals
- Design of Drainageway Structures for New Development
- Inspection Procedures at Drainageway Construction Sites
- West Nile Virus Update
- Design Considerations for Water-Quality BMPs
- Report on Field Testing and Design of Structural BMPs
- New Development Programs under Municipal Stormwater Permits

Watch your mail or our web site for more information.