

Roadmap to Relief



Last year was a demanding one in many senses, and the storm water industry was no exception to the economic downturn felt around the world. The challenges facing the industry—many unfamiliar and unanticipated—have required its professionals to flex some creative muscle in order to keep business afloat. With advocates stepping up to the plate and signs of hope beginning to take shape, the question on everyone's mind moving into 2010 is, "Will we find relief?"

Although no one can answer this for certain, let's paint a clearer picture first by recapping some of the positive developments 2009 brought.

Stronger legislation, including new effluent limitations for construction sites, has prompted improved oversight. Though stricter rules and enforcement are sure to stir some public grumbling, ultimately this shift continues to heighten storm water awareness, necessitate the industry's products and services and strengthen technological growth—especially that of sustainable products and methods.

February 2009 also brought the granting of \$12 billion for water projects and \$48 billion for transportation initiatives via the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. For better or worse, the vast majority of the Obama administration's economic stimulus dollars have yet to be distributed, with most forecasts pointing to increased allocation in 2010.

For all its forward strides this past year, the industry also has experienced some roadblocks. Funding difficulties have caused development

to slow significantly, especially in the commercial sector, and related job markets have felt the effect. Some career boards have estimated a recent 50% decline in storm water-related jobs. In terms of construction employment, research analysis by the Bureau of Labor Statistics calculated 1.1 million jobs lost between October 2008 and October 2009, with only five of 337 metropolitan areas seeing related job growth.

Clearly it is a challenging time to be a part of this fast-developing industry, but it also is an exciting one. To delve further into these issues and introduce fresh perspective on where the industry is headed in 2010, SWS turned to experts in a variety of roles—from engineer to U.S. Green Building Council advisor to recruiter.

You can find the information and insight they have to offer in this issue's Industry Forecast, Workforce Planning section and Q&A. The SWS editorial staff has compiled these resources in hopes that they help you and your group achieve professional success as we embark on this new year.

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