

PNW Reunion a Great Success

Contributed by Rick Luebbers



L to R: Pat Klampe, Karren Wiermelt, Mike Anglea, Randy Ni, Pam Klampe

The Pacific Northwest (PNW) Alumni Event was held in Tri-Cities, Washington, on October 1-3, 2015, and was judged to be very successful by the retirees, alumni, and spouses/guests in attendance. Post evaluations indicated ratings above 5 (out of a possible 6) for nearly all activities. Comments included one that said that it was “about as perfect as an event can be.”

The PNW Alumni Event 2015 was organized in response to a survey sent to more than 800 CH2M retirees and alumni in Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Survey results showed a strong interest in some type of alumni event in 2015 and a more formal reunion in 2016. Although time was short, the PNW Alumni Committee organized the 2015 event as a way to kick off regional

CH2M alumni activities. It was the first such event to be held under the new CH2M alumni program that focuses on regional, rather than global, activities. Things were moving so fast that the PNW Alumni Event 2015 never got a formal title and simply lived on with that name.

The Tri-Cities location was chosen because it is a smaller venue, within driving distance of Seattle, Portland/Corvallis, and Boise and seemed to be a good place to try out the new alumni approach. It is also a place where CH2M has provided a variety of project services for decades without a lot of exposure to the rest of the firm. Additionally, the area has many interesting geological features, historical sites, and wineries.

Planning included close coordination with the CH2M Richland office. Tom Helgeson, Randy Ni, Robbin Duncan, and Ginny Jenkins provided invaluable support that continued from early planning right into active participation in event activities. The Tri-Cities Visitor Center helped in finding a nice hotel and provided information on a wide array of interesting things to do in the area.



Attendees enjoyed the presentation at Hanford B Reactor

A total of 39 retirees, alumni, spouses, and guests attended. They all had an affinity with the PNW through previous assignments and project work. However, it was mostly personal relationships developed over the years that brought them together at this event. The closest folks came from the Tri-Cities area, Walla Walla, and Spokane. Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Alaska were all represented. Attendees also came from Florida, Pennsylvania, Texas, Nevada, and California.

The agenda included tours of the Hanford B Reactor and Ice Harbor Lock and Dam. Other activities included visits to local wineries, dinner with local CH2M staff, and a jet boat tour of the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River. The keynote speaker at the Friday dinner described the Ice Age floods that shaped the topography of the Tri-Cities area. See the following [link for more information](#) on the Ice Harbor Dam and Snake River. The Thursday evening discussion session with Mark Fallon from CH2M Corporate was a highlight.

The story behind the design and construction of the Hanford B Reactor was fascinating. The intricate detail in the B Reactor is hard to conceive while the extent of the overall Hanford site (more than 500 square miles) stretches the imagination. Amazingly, the B Reactor was designed, constructed, and operational in only 11 months. It produced the plutonium that helped end World War II. A presentation by Karen Wiemelt, VP and local CH2M program manager, provided an overview of the firm’s role in the decontamination and cleanup of the Hanford site. The work they are doing is complex, highly varied, and will make a significant difference to the long-term safety of the site.



Ice Harbor Dam

The attendees also gave high marks to the Ice Harbor Dam tour (maybe because many are engineers?) although watching the fish swim up the ladders was pretty cool. Several people also enjoyed a tour of a wetland treatment project near Ice Harbor Dam – a lucky opportunity.

[Bruce Bjornstad](#), a geologist and expert on Ice Age floods of the area, presented a slide show and videos of the unique landscape of eastern Washington. Bruce provided a fascinating look at how 100 huge floods carved out canyons, potholes, and coulees and deposited enormous amounts of sediment in layers that contain the geologic history of the region.

A jet boat tour of the Hanford Reach, the last free-flowing, non-tidal section of the Columbia River, was an optional activity enjoyed by 10 attendees. This section of the river was the water source for the Hanford reactors and is now being restored to its natural condition. The white bluffs along the river provide a unique look at the geologic history of the area. More photos from the event may be viewed at the [end of this newsletter](#) and on [this website](#), thanks to Frank Jenes and Rick Luebbers.

Evaluations completed by the attendees at the end of the event included comments such as:



Enjoying award session. L to R: John Lee, Don Marske, Mike Anglea, Art Storbo, Bernie Miller, Sharon Storbo

- Great time for fellowship and conversation with old friends and new acquaintances
- Good opportunities to mix with others
- The variety of interesting tours and activities, with some optional activities
- About the right mix of planned events and free time
- The event was successful given the challenges of limited time
- “I loved every minute of it. Count me in anytime.”
Mark Fallon



Rick and John Lee at the awards

The final activity was to talk about an alumni event in 2016. Many alternatives and locations were discussed. In the end, it was enthusiastically decided to begin planning for a CH2M PNW Alumni Reunion in the second half of September 2016. The location will be somewhere near Portland, Oregon, with tentative dates of September 21-23. All CH2M retirees and alumni are welcome to attend. The Southwest Region has joined the planning process and the event has become known as the Western ReUnion. Watch your email for updates over the next few months. The formal invitation is

scheduled to be released in May to the NW and SW contact lists by our service provider, Greenvelope. Check your junk mail folder if you don't see it. We are looking forward to another great CH2M Alumni Reunion!

PNW Reunion in Tri-Cities, WA



Bob and Meredith Chapman on the winery tour



L to R: John Lee, Mark Fallon, and Rick Luebbers at reception



L to R: Ken Williams, Mary Koblitz, Judy Lasswell, Sid Lasswell, and Gretchen Williams



L to R: Pat Klampe, Bernie Miller, Don Markse, and Rick



B Reactor Building at Hanford



50th Anniversary plaque



Reactor B and massive number of reactor tubes



Left side of group at Reactor B presentation



Group outside Hanford B Reactor



L to R: Michelle Girts, Heather Geertsen (guide), Rick, and Gordon Koblitz, at Ice Harbor Dam



*Committee thank-you awards from Rick to Pat Klampe.
L-R, Ed Thomas and Bob Chapman in foreground*



Jory Abrams and Michelle Girts receiving their awards



Howard Thomas receiving his award



*Sid Lasswell receiving a special recognition award;
L to R: Dave Evans, Bob Pailthorp, Judy Lasswell,
Jimmy Crossley (with Ginny Jenkins), and Carol Evans*



*On group's behalf, Michelle gives Rick a token
of appreciation*



Rick hosting closing breakfast debrief and 2016 planning session