

Safety first

The first Bruce Tschantz Public Safety at Dams Award was presented recently at the 2017 Association of State Dam Safety Officials Awards Luncheon. The award recognises and celebrates Bruce's lifetime achievements in dam safety, his contributions to ASDSO, and his efforts to improve public safety around dams. Worthy recipients will have taken on the role of "local champion" and work to improve safety at dams – especially when no action would often be taken without their efforts.

No individual has meant more to the formation of the Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) and to the development of a national dam safety effort than Dr. Bruce Tschantz.

Bruce passed away on 28 June 2017 in Knoxville, Tennessee. An Ohio native, Bruce received his undergraduate degree in civil engineering from Ohio Northern University in 1960, and MS and ScD degrees in Civil Engineering from New Mexico State University in 1962 and 1965. He had a 37-year career teaching water resources engineering at the University of Tennessee, where he was named a Distinguished Professor Emeritus.

From 1977-1979, Bruce served as a dam

safety consultant to the Executive Office of the President during the Carter Administration, developing and coordinating policies and programmes for federal and non-federal dam safety, including the 1979 Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety. He established the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Office of Federal Dam Safety, serving as the first Chief of Federal Dam Safety in 1980, and served on the National Academy of Sciences National Research Council Committee on Dam Safety. He was instrumental in bringing national attention to the issue of non-federal dam safety, providing testimony in the late 1970s before committees of the US House and Senate. He authored FEMA's 1983 landmark Report on Review of State Non-



(Left to Right) Immediate Past President of ASDSO and Award Presenter Dusty Myers, Paul Schweiger, Ken Smith, ASDSO President Jon Garton.



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Federal Dam Safety Programmes, which revealed that more than half of all states either had no dam safety law or no dam safety programmes. He also worked extensively with journalist Gaylord Shaw of the Los Angeles Times, who wrote a series of syndicated articles on dam safety for which he won the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting.

Dr. Tschantz was instrumental in the formation of ASDSO. His research on state non-federal dam safety programmes revealed a serious lack of adequate dam safety oversight on the state level; accordingly, in January 1983, he met with a few individuals at the Council of State Governments (CSG) in Lexington, Kentucky, to explore the possibility of having CSG assist the states in putting together a national association of dam safety officials. The outcome of this meeting was the first national meeting of state dam safety officials, held in February 1983 in Orlando, Florida, and supported by FEMA. At this meeting, Dr. Tschantz reviewed the results of his research, and meeting participants indicated support for organising a committee to form what is now the Association of State Dam Safety Officials.

Dr. Tschantz continued his professional contributions throughout his tenure at the University of Tennessee (UT), teaching and mentoring many students who became dam safety professionals. Following his retirement, he continued developing and nurturing future dam safety professionals by chairing ASDSO's Committee on Education Outreach for six years, beginning with its inception in 2004, and remaining an active committee member thereafter.

With his UT students, Dr. Tschantz carried out research on the effects of woody vegetation on dams. Their 1989 survey, *Tree Growth on Earthen Dams: A Survey on State Policy and Practice*, was a landmark effort in technology transfer among state dam safety programmes, leading to a 1999 research workshop which Dr. Tschantz hosted at



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UT, and the 2003 publication of the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency Technical Manual on the Effects of Tree and Woody Vegetation Root Penetrations on the Safety of Earthen Dams, which Dr. Tschantz co-authored.

Bruce was an Honorary Member of ASDSO and an ASCE Fellow. In 2016, he was honored with ASDSO's National Award of Merit. He was a true leader within the dam safety community, sharing his expertise through teaching, writing, committee work, and initiating industry efforts to raise awareness of safety around dams. His legacy to dam safety will live on through his ground-breaking contributions to professional knowledge and the many people who benefitted from his selfless example of service, kindness, and generosity.

In a note to ASDSO, Bruce's wife, Penny Tschantz, wrote: "In his fifteen years of retirement from teaching, Bruce became increasingly focused on low-head dams, and he worked with many members of ASDSO and other organisations to develop an inventory of these dams and a database of associated accidents and fatalities around the nation. His goal was to educate the public about the dangers inherent in low-head dams and to encourage owners and agencies to take more responsibility. By establishing an informational website, publishing articles, and giving talks, he hoped to decrease and perhaps eventually eliminate the danger."

Worthy recipients

The ASDSO Board of Directors agreed that two individuals, Paul Schweiger and Ken Smith, were deserving of this award. These two have spearheaded efforts to carry on the work Bruce's wife describes and have already made a significant effort to protect the lives of people who live near or find themselves in proximity to dangerous situations involving dams.

Paul, who is the vice president of Gannett Fleming, has taken on the role of maintaining Bruce's website (safedam.com). He worked with Bruce to host a two-hour webinar called 'Identifying Hazards and Improving Public Safety at Low Head Dams' and has also written an awareness piece for the Journal of Dam Safety. Paul continues to educate engineers and stakeholders about the importance of dam safety including recently at the 2017 Dam Safety Conference in San Antonio. In addition, Paul is the chair of the ASDSO Public Safety Around Dams Committee.

Ken, the assistant director of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, has taken on the role of 'local champion' in Indiana. He has partnered with the Indiana departments of Child Services, Natural Resources, and Homeland Security on a variety of public outreach efforts including the creation and promotion of the low-head dam documentary *Over, Under, Gone – The Killer in Our Rivers* (<https://www.wfyi.org/>

programs/over-under-gone/television/over-under-gone-the-killer-in-our-rivers). The documentary aims to educate youth about waterway safety and the deceptive safety risks of low head dams. It has been repeatedly aired and shared across both the state and the region.

He has also been instrumental in the inclusion of information on safety at dams in the "Stay Afloat" Flood Awareness Campaign, a children's activity book from the Indiana DHS, and in the 2017 Indiana Recreation Guide, the most widely circulated publication of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Smith has also made numerous presentations on safety around dams at public, professional, and media events, and works with university staff and other local municipalities to find funding to remove or retrofit unsafe dams and prevent drownings. He is an active member of the ASDSO Public Safety Around Dams Committee.

In reaction to the new award Penny, Bruce's wife, said: "I know that he would have been humbled and immensely pleased by the recognition you're giving him today, and he would have agreed that the first two recipients are eminently worthy of the award. I thank both of them for doing so much to advance the cause, and I hope that the Tschantz award will encourage many others to carry on Bruce's work." ■

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