

North Carolina Board for Licensing of Geologists  
**NEWSLETTER**

January 2006 • P.O. Box 41225 • Raleigh, North Carolina 27629-0399 • 919-850-9669 Fax 919-872-1598

## **ASBOG; What it is, What it does**

**By Richard Spruill**

North Carolina is an active member of the National Association of State Boards of Geology (ASBOG) which includes some 28 States and Puerto Rico. ASBOG's stated purpose is "to provide an organization through which Member Boards may act and counsel together to better discharge their responsibilities in administering the practice of geology".

The NC Board for Licensing of Geologists is a very active member of the ASBOG organization. We have routinely sent board member representatives to bi-annual meetings held by ASBOG. The most recent meeting was the Annual Meeting held in Portland, Maine in November of 2005, and I had the privilege of attending that meeting as your representative.

The major purpose of this brief article is to share with you some of the highlights of the annual meeting. I attended the meeting and served in two capacities. First, I represented the NC Board as a Subject Matter Expert to the Council of Examiners. Second, I represented  
See ASBOG report, page 3

## **Corp. registration project continues**

The North Carolina Board for Licensing of Geologists continues its work to identify and register corporations doing work in North Carolina without proper registration.

In 2004 the Board mailed letters to licensees who appeared to work for unregistered corporations. Since that mailing, some 450 replies have been received and a number of new corporate registrations issued.

By law, corporations who perform geological services for the public in North Carolina, or offer to perform such services, must be registered with the Board. Any licensed geologist who performs work for an unregistered corporation is subject to disciplinary action for violating the Board's Code of Professional Conduct.

The Board will continue to review files at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to determine if non-registered corporations are performing geology work for the public in North Carolina.

The task of reviewing the DENR files was given to former board chairman Macklin Armstrong. He was appointed a peer reviewer at the August meeting of the Geology Board in Greenville.

## **Early licensee passes**

Dr. Roy Ingram died on October 3 after a lengthy illness. Dr. Ingram was a long time geology professor at UNC Chapel Hill, retiring about 1991.

Dr. Ingram was one of the first geologists to be registered by the North Carolina Board. He held license number 10 issued in June, 1986.

## **Keep your address current with Board**

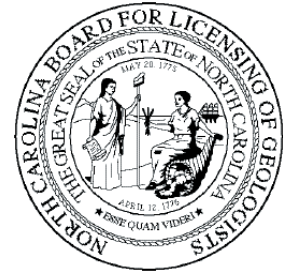
From the rules of the Geology Board, Chapter 21 NCAC 21 .0203

"Every individual licensee has the continuing responsibility of keeping the Board currently advised of the licensee's proper and current mailing address and the name or names under which the licensee is practicing. Each licensee shall immediately notify the Board of any and all changes of association or address."

Currently you may check the information on your address at the board's web site, [ncblg.org](http://ncblg.org).

Work is now underway to establish online renewal of registrations. When this is up and running it will be possible to renew online, paying with a credit card.

Contact the board at [ncblg@bellsouth.net](mailto:ncblg@bellsouth.net) for an easy change in your address.



## **Chair's Message**

Responsible charge is defined by our statutes as "the independent control and direction by the use of initiative, skill and independent judgment of geological work or the supervision of such work."

The Engineering Board has addressed the responsibilities in several articles in their newsletter, the most recent being the December 2004 Fall issue authored by Mr. David L. Peeler. Mr. Peeler referenced an article that was written by Mr. Al Bass, PE, PLS, in 1988. These articles are very pertinent to the practice of Geology as well, and are the source of the information provided in this article.

If you are signing and sealing a report, then you are acting in responsible charge of that work. What activities constitute responsible charge? The attributes of responsible charge can best be demonstrated by asking yourself if you meet the following questions.

Do you supervise the individuals performing the work?

See Who's in charge?, page 2

## **Board meeting schedule set**

At its October 20, 2005, meeting the Geology Board set its meeting schedule for 2006.

The following schedule was approved:

January 5, Raleigh at the education building

April 13, Ann Borden's office, Raleigh

August 3, NCA&T University, Greensboro

October 26, ECU, Greenville

# Does the ASBOG exam violate AIPG Ethics?

The September/October 2005 issue of the *The Professional Geologist* included a column that questioned the ethics of ASBOG's examination.

The column quoted Canon 4 of the AIPG Code of Ethics which says: "Members should respect the rights, interests and contributions of their professional colleagues.

The column argued that ASBOG's exam concentrates too much on geologists in the environmental sector, making it more difficult for geologists in other specialties to pass the exam.

The argument concludes, "Any test purportedly covering all of geologic fundamentals and practice must recognize and allow for minorities just as much for the majority if it is to comply with AIPG Ethics Canon 4."

The argument was answered in a detailed letter from Andrews L. Tolman, PG, CPG, president of ASBOG. It is excerpted and quoted here.

"As your column indicates, our profession undergoes periodic shifts in areas of employment opportunity for geologists. For that reason, the ASBOG® examination is updated to reflect current geologic practice conditions every five years.

"ASBOG® believes that, rather than being potentially un-ethical, the task analysis process supports both our own Code of Ethics (copy enclosed) and that of the American Institute of Professional Geologists (AIPG) — particularly CANON 2. 'Obligations To The Public: Members should uphold the public health, safety, and welfare in the performance of professional services, and avoid even the appearance of impropriety.'

## Competent geologist can pass

"As one who has participated in the ASBOG® examination development process for the last ten years, I am personally convinced that any competent geologist, no matter what his or her area of practice, has the fundamental core knowledge of geology to succeed on the ASBOG® examination.

"Since most states license/register geologists without reference to any particular specialty, and since more than two thirds of practicing geologists are involved in environmental and hydrogeologic projects (Wamer & Wamer, 2005), it would be unethical for ASBOG" not to assess the knowledge of professionals newly entering the field of geology in those areas. The Member Board states that make up ASBOG® exist to provide public protection from incompetent geologic practice. The ASBOG® examination is intended to assist them in that task.

## Exceptions to requirements

"The practice of Petroleum Geology is often not a "public" practice, and, in many states, is exempt from licensure/registration. There is a similar instance in portions of the Mineral Exploration industry. Most Academic geologists are also not required to be licensed/registered. Thus, those geologists need not be part of the licensed/registered community, and the composition of the examination does not affect their work. If and when individuals move between areas of practice, and into an area that involves public practice, it is their ethical duty to develop knowledge and skills adequate to succeed in that area of practice. Many Petroleum Geologists have successfully re-trained and transformed into Environmental Geologists or Hydrogeologists after the downturn in domestic exploration.

"Although the core knowledge of geology is stable, the applications of that knowledge

continue to evolve. A significant portion of the ASBOG® examination tests that core knowledge. The remaining portions test the application of those principles in various fields. ASBOG sees no ethical dilemma in this approach to the examination."

## Who's in charge?

Continued from Page 1

Do you determine the project parameters or criteria?

Can you require changes to the work and dictate the manner and methods by which the work is performed or the scope of involvement by the individual over the individual's objections without negative impact on your job status, advancement, or compensation?

Are you involved from start to finish as the individual performs the work?

Are there procedures for quality control and authority over the work that assure that you, as the professional licensee, are in control of the work and the individual performing the work?

Is the extent of time spent with the individual during the course of the performance of the work sufficient for you to be familiar with the details of the work?

How familiar are you with the capabilities and methods of the individual performing the work and over what period of time? (This relates to the question of how closely you must directly supervise the details of the individual's work).

Did you train the individuals?

Are you in close proximity or do you have a readily accessible contact with the individuals, whether by physical location or by frequent, clear and full communication in verbal and visual form of the work being performed (electronic contact is equivalent of personal contact for the exchange of information).

Are you competent by training and experience in the area of expertise that is represented by the work in question?

Not all of these activities are necessary to exercise responsible charge, but there would be no question that the statute was satisfied if all applied to your project.

— William Lyke, Board Chairman

## North Carolina Board for Licensing of Geologists

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# ASBOG report; its varied functions explained

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the NC Board as a Voting Delegate at the Annual Business Meeting.

ASBOG conducts a Task Analysis Survey (TAS) every five years.

The TAS and associated research defines the practice of geology by identifying the specific tasks that are routinely performed by practicing geologists. The results of this rigorous analysis are used to create test blueprints for the ASBOG Exams.

Our blueprints list the geologic tasks and the number of questions for each task to be included in the Fundamentals of Geology (FG) and the Practice of Geology (PG) Exams that are administered twice each year. The test blueprints are based on the importance of the geologic tasks to practicing members of the geologic profession. The results form the basis for the exams until there is a need to update the research to keep abreast of recent advances and/or changes in the practice of the profession. The next TAS is scheduled for year 2010.

The FG and PG exams are utilized as “licensing assessment tools” by Member Boards, and this is true of NC. Most of my energy at the recent annual meeting was expended on our attempts to: 1) evaluate the most recent exams and make improvements on the “scoring” of the exam, 2) evaluate the content of the upcoming exams, and 3) write and evaluate new questions for future exams that are supported or needed by the TAS.

Two very full days are required to complete these exam evaluation programs.

I particularly enjoy this process, and I think that it is one of the most valuable things that we can do as a Board Member, mainly because our efforts make it possible for us to have direct input into the exam evaluation and construction process.

The entire process is closely monitored by professional psychometricians, whose direct involvement and oversight helps to provide a high degree of statistical validity to the testing process.

The annual business meeting is an opportunity for our Board to keep abreast of recent developments in the profession and to have input into future ASBOG endeavors. Several issues are particularly noteworthy:

1) ASBOG recognizes that several groups of practicing Geologists are not participating in their individual State licensing programs. Individual boards should do more to encourage geologists in Academia and in the regulatory community to become licensed geologists. Academic geologists

should participate more in the development of the test blueprint by participating in the TAS.

2) There is some interest in developing the concept of use of the ASBOG Fundamental Exam as an “exit exam” for undergraduate Geology Programs. I am particularly interested in this concept, and I will try to present the idea to various Geology Departments throughout the State if they are willing to discuss the idea. “Assessment” of the quality and effective of undergraduate and graduate degree programs is a topic of great interest throughout the nation, and the

ASBOG Exam should be considered as a high quality assessment tool.

3) There was a lot of discussion about mechanisms for cost savings and improved Member Board participation in the Council of Examiners test evaluation program. Our Board will make every effort to participate in ASBOG meetings, and we are committed to reducing costs by having one Board Member serve as both the Subject Matter Expert and the Voting Delegate whenever possible.

4) Finally, it is clear from the statistical analysis provided in response to test evaluation, that test takers have an improved chance of passing the Fundamental Exam when they take it very soon after (or even during) their educational experience!!

Of course, no meeting with real Geologists would be complete without an all-day field trip, and the Portland meeting was no exception. We participated in a wonderful trip to the coast of Maine to observe bedrock exposures at the East Point Wildlife Sanctuary. Rocks exposed in this area illustrate the nature of sedimentation in an older Paleozoic ocean which was followed by deformation, uplift, and granitic intrusive activity that accompanied the ocean closing and collision stages in the building of the Appalachians.

The afternoon field trip was quite interesting, mainly because we observed coastal erosion and sedimentation processes along Saco Bay, which is a 10 kilometer arcuate sandy shoreline bounded north and south by impressive bedrock headlands.

Please contact me at [spruillr@ecu.edu](mailto:spruillr@ecu.edu) or call me at 252-328-4399 if you would like to hear more about ASBOG and/or our participation in the organization.

*Submitted by Richard K. Spruill, Associate Professor of Geology, East Carolina University, and Member of the NC Board for Licensing of Geologists.*

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