

NACE 2021 ANNUAL STATE REPORT

Wyoming State Affiliate



State Association Name:

Wyoming Association of County Engineers & Road & Bridge Superintendents (WACERS)

For year of: 2021

Number of Counties: 23

Number of State Assoc. Members: WACERS = 30 Individuals (13 Counties)

Number NACE Members: 2 Counties

State Annual Meeting/Conferences held at: 2020 WACERS Meetings and annual conferences were cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic. Several online seminars and workshops were organized to support local County governmental entities. These are noted below.

Notable achievements of State Association and/or Individual members:

1. WACERS and NACE members were actively involved and successful in development of Wyoming State legislation changes involving notifications for utilities related to routine county road maintenance.
2. WACERS and NACE members were actively involved with legislative committee groups involving changes to Wyoming State statutes involving funding for public capital improvement projects and associated procurement procedures.

Important Events in which State Association participated during year:

The following events were coordinated and organized through WACERS, NACE, and University of Wyoming Technology Transfer (T2) Center:

1. 2020 Annual Safety Congress cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic;
2. 2020 Spring and Fall WACERS meetings cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic;
3. 26th Annual Safety Congress scheduled for April 2021 –Virtual Conference;
4. WACERS Spring 2021 Meeting scheduled for April 12, 2021;
5. Wyoming Technology Transfer Center – Local Public Authority Certification Training – Casper, Wyoming on July 15, 2020;
6. First online offering of Work Zone Safety and Flagger Certification Course – T2 Center- June 2020;
7. Online Workshop- Unmanned Aerial Systems for Wyoming's Roads- July 8, 2020;
8. OSHA Training Online – September 23 & 24, 2020;
9. T2 Center – Online Workshop – Asphalt Paving and Patching for Local Agencies – October 27 & 29, 2020;

Issues and topics of particular importance for which action and efforts of State Association were directed during the year:

State Issues:

1. In August of 2020 Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon called for the first round of cuts to the State budget to the tune of \$250 million with an additional \$80 million in cuts to maintenance of state buildings and those at the university and community colleges. The 10% cuts to State agencies, boards and commissions will have significant effects on Wyoming communities and citizens. The cuts will impact important services that people depend on and will reduce general fund dollars that enter the private sector. The budget cuts are considered the first of more proposed cuts as the Governor and legislature continue to consider options for addressing the remaining \$500 million shortfall. State agencies have already developed proposals on further cuts to services and the Governor is working with the legislators on other options as the legislative session is now in progress. The impact of the State budget deficit is already being felt at the local and County levels. The budget shortfall in Wyoming is being driven in large part by impacts resulting from the global pandemic as well as huge reductions in revenues from the coal, oil, and gas industries.

National Issues:

1. It is difficult to discuss national issues over the past year without at least mentioning the devastating impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The pandemic has adversely impacted social interaction, the way we conduct business, travel, meetings, and economic growth. The impacts have devastated many businesses and industries while also putting a squeeze on local economies and governmental operations. County government budgets have not been immune to the impacts while seeing reductions in State, Federal, and local sales tax revenues. The long-term impacts are uncertain. Will the push for international vaccinations prove effective in slowing the spread of the virus? Will mutations of the virus prove unpredictable while causing further health hazards and shutdowns moving forward? Americans are resilient and County governments will continue to find new ways to effectively manage and maintain public infrastructure while navigating ongoing budget challenges.
2. Most County Engineers and Road & Bridge superintendents will agree that the nations road & bridge infrastructure is falling further behind in regard to necessary improvements, rehabilitation, replacement, and repairs. The Biden Administration is proposing a 3 trillion-dollar infrastructure spending program. Early reports seem to indicate that the proposed legislation is filled with pork that has little to do with public infrastructure (ie, Roads, bridges, railways, airports, etc.). NACE will likely play a very important role in helping to shape and focus this legislation on projects that are truly necessary and important to bolster the nations road and bridge infrastructure. The nation's national debt is reaching astonishing and terrifying levels. Although spending on infrastructure is critical to County governments, it is vital that every dollar that is allocated through legislation be focused towards projects that provide the maximum value and importance for the greater public good.

3. Under the Biden Administration, there is a renewed focus on environmental responsibility and programs. The impacts to County governments in relation to new and expanded regulations remains uncertain. Again, NACE should and will be actively involved in these discussions moving forward.
4. There has been discussions over the past few years about the possibility of retiring certain funding programs involving County's with an abundance of federal lands. These programs include the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) programs, Federal Lands Access Programs (FLAP), and Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT). Rural Counties that have an abundance of federal land rely on funding from these programs to help compensate for a lower property tax basis. As federal budgets are assessed and cuts are made, the importance of federal programs to rural counties must be kept in focus. Again, hopefully NACE will participate and continue to support rural counties which likely make up the majority of NACE membership nationally.

Ideas/concerns to share with other NACE Members:

1. The global pandemic has forced us to utilize and refocus remote interaction for meetings, training, workshops, etc. The related impacts also have financial implications which do not seem to be going away any time soon (ie, cost of travel). NACE together with our local affiliates need to continue to foster virtual infrastructure and opportunities for counties to stay connected to our peers and partners throughout the Country. One of the most important aspects of professional organizations such as NACE is the ability to network and compare ideas, methods, strategies, and opportunities with other counties. I hope NACE continues to work on ways to promote this interaction and development.

Report Submitted By:

Brian Edwards, P.E. – County Engineer
Park County, Wyoming
Wyoming Representative to NACE

Date: 04/12/21

Signed – Brian Edwards, P.E.
Park County Public Works Department
1131 11th Street
Cody, WY 82414
(307) 527-8523
bedwards@parkcounty.us