

# COP CHRONICLE

Visit us on the web  
[copconstruction.com](http://copconstruction.com)

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

- Letter from the President 2
- Faces of COP 3
- Current Projects 6

**COP Construction LLC**

P. O. Box 20913  
 Billings MT 59104  
 406-656-4632  
 406-656-4808 fax

840 N. 700 W.  
 North Salt Lake UT 84054  
 801-298-9556  
 801-298-9725 fax

Ed Bedell  
 President

Bruce Rost  
 Operations Manager  
 Montana

Jasen Bennie  
 Operations Manager  
 Utah

Rich King  
 Estimating Manager

Rick Morrison  
 Chief Financial Officer

Don Hayes  
 Human Resources Manager

COP Wyoming LLC  
 P. O. Box 1479  
 Rock Springs, WY 82902  
 307-382-2812  
 307-382-2835 fax

Dennis McPherson  
 Operations Manager

Joe Troester  
 Manager

Co-Editors: Kimberly Hope  
 Teresa Milligan  
 Betty Warner

## HIGHWAY 191 — GALLATIN CANYON Big Sky, Montana

The Highway 191 – Gallatin Canyon Project was a \$12.8 million dollar project for the Montana Department of Transportation that began in June 2008 and consisted of improvements that enhanced public safety at Big Sky, Big Sky Spur, Jack Smith Bridge Area, Swan Creek Campground Area and the Spanish Creek Area. It began on Highway 191 at the mouth of the Gallatin Canyon to Big Sky, a total of 15 miles.

Improvements included replacing two bridges – the Big Sky Bridge and the Swan Creek Bridge; widening road shoulders; improving site distance for drivers; installing new and upgraded guardrails; and adding right and left turn lanes of Highway 64 going to Big Sky.

The project consisted of asphalt pulverization, grading, and installing 45,000 metric tons of crushed base course. Additionally, 55,000 metric tons of embankment were supplied along with 30,000 metric tons of asphalt pavement.

A large portion of the work was completed at night to minimize impact on the traveling public. Weather was also a factor. Crews had to remove snow from the bridges to complete the decking in May. In fact, weather was such a factor that July, August and September were the only months without snow.



Cofferdam—W. Fork Gallatin River

Photo by George Werhonig



Crew building bridge forms—W. Fork Gallatin River Photo by George Werhonig



Bridge beams—Swan Creek

Photo by Bruce Rost

## *From the desk of the President –*



With 2009 behind us and 2010 upon us, I thought it appropriate to reflect on where we have been and where we are going. 2009 was a challenging year, but I believe that we have weathered the storm and have a reasonable amount of backlog going into 2010. The beginning of 2010 will be much the same as 2009, but I believe that in the latter half we will see the start of a rebound. Here are some of my thoughts regarding what I think we will see in 2010.

### **Utah Market**

It appears that the construction market in Utah is starting to rebound. We presently see more opportunities to pursue than we do in Montana and Wyoming at this time. Prequalification of bidders is much more common in Utah than in Montana and Wyoming which is an advantage to a quality company like COP. Design-build is becoming more common, and we are adapting to take advantage of these opportunities. There are larger projects available in Utah, so we are evaluating joint venture options in order to be able to prequalify for these larger project opportunities.

### **Montana and Wyoming Markets**

There appears to be fewer opportunities and more out-of-state contractors competing for the reduced amount of available work. We are seeing 10-15 contractors bidding on projects resulting in extremely low pricing. We believe that in many instances the low contractor is “buying” the work at below cost to keep his equipment and crews busy, with the idea that he will make up for the shortfall on the next job. This business approach takes the available work away from the qualified responsive contractors and puts the low bidder at financial risk. We believe that 2010 will see a large number of defaults as a result of this approach.

### **General**

It appears that the general economy has bottomed out and is starting to recover. While the prediction is that the recovery will be slow and long, I feel the private sector will start to rebound and provide opportunities. In the past, the construction industry recovery has followed the general economy recovery by 12-18 months. I think that this delay behind the general economy recovery will be shorter, and that by the third quarter, the construction industry will start to recover. But as you have seen watching the news, no one really knows the exact timing, and if you put the three “experts” around a table, you will get four opinions on what the economy will do.

Our approach is to estimate the new work as accurately and competitively as possible. We are evaluating each job as critically as possible and looking at more economical ways that the project can be built. We will not “buy” a job with the idea that the next project will make us whole as some of the competition appears to be doing. I believe that the first quarter and part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter will be challenging regarding obtaining new work, but we have the staying power to be positioned to take the new work when it becomes available with a reasonable profit margin.

When we are the low responsible bidder and selected to perform the work, it is critical that we evaluate the project from all directions and determine the best plan of action to construct it. Generally, the most successful projects are those that are evaluated, dissected, and rescheduled in the planning stage. This combination of accurate bidding and pre-planned construction will result in successful projects.

In summary, we believe that while 2010 will have challenges, COP is positioned to ride out the tough times in order to take advantage of the opportunities that will avail themselves in the latter part of 2010.

# MEET THE FACES of COP

R  
o  
b



C  
h  
a  
d



C  
h  
r  
i  
s



Rob Smith, Project Engineer, started with COP in 2007. Prior to COP, he worked in estimating, equipment management, and project management, as well as a laborer and equipment operator. Rob is a graduate of MSU-Bozeman. Chad Peterson began at COP in 1996 as a Superintendent, moved to Assistant Project Manager, and currently is a Project Manager. He also has experience as a Project Engineer. Chad graduated from MSU-Northern. He enjoys 4-wheeling and is a NASCAR fan. Chris Skorupa, Project Engineer, is a 2006 graduate of MSU-Bozeman. He started at COP in 2007. Chris enjoys hunting, snowmobiling, and spending time with family, especially his daughters.

The primary challenge our crews faced, other than weather, was the lack of space for a lay-down area near the bridges being constructed. This lack of space required most of the form material and supplies to be stored off site and moved in and out of the area as needed. Another challenge was controlling the heavy seasonal traffic in the canyon. The Big Sky Bridge, in particular, had to be built in two phases as there was no room to construct a detour for the flow of traffic.

The Project team included Project Manager Chad Peterson, Superintendent George Werhonig and COP Engineers Rob Smith and Chris Skorupa. The crew size was approximately 10 employees for both the bridge work and road improvements. The project was estimated by Dan Feldman. Matt Collingwood was the Engineering Project Manager for the Montana Department of Transportation, with whom COP Construction maintained an excellent working relationship throughout the project.

The project was substantially completed on November 13<sup>th</sup> with the exception of chip sealing which will occur in the spring of 2010.



Decking being built—Swan Creek

Photo by Bruce Rost



New bridge over Swan Creek

Photo by Don Hayes



Road work along Hwy 191 near Big Sky

Photo by Rob Smith



Finishing up Hwy 191 improvements near Big Sky

Photo by Rob Smith

~~~ YEARS OF SERVICE ~~~  
 HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO THE FOLLOWING EMPLOYEES

| COP CONSTRUCTION LLC |    |                  |    | COP WYOMING LLC |    |
|----------------------|----|------------------|----|-----------------|----|
| <u>JULY</u>          |    | <u>SEPTEMBER</u> |    | <u>NOVEMBER</u> |    |
| Ryan Stansfield      | 11 | Joel Hoagland    | 7  | Ed Bedell       | 12 |
| Harold Stewart       | 7  | Dan Vogt         | 7  | Celso Holguin   | 4  |
| Larry Riddle         | 6  | Teresa Milligan  | 2  | Sam Vaitai      | 4  |
| Debby Holmes         | 3  |                  |    | Kelly Newman    | 2  |
| Chris Reed           | 1  | <u>OCTOBER</u>   |    |                 |    |
| Nick Brauer          | 1  | Tom Kittson      | 18 | <u>DECEMBER</u> |    |
|                      |    | George Werhonig  | 10 | Betty Warner    | 11 |
| <u>AUGUST</u>        |    | Justin Biehl     | 7  | Barry Benke     | 2  |
| Ed Allen             | 36 | Kathy Thorson    | 6  |                 |    |
| Mark Rieker          | 18 | Jasen Bennie     | 4  |                 |    |
| Kim Hope             | 6  | Jade Lee         | 4  |                 |    |
| Josh Pearson         | 4  | Jeff Monaco      | 1  |                 |    |
| Dan Feldman          | 4  | Don Hayes        | 1  |                 |    |
| Ed Decker            | 3  |                  |    |                 |    |
| Jeff LaBard          | 2  |                  |    |                 |    |
| Lee Meyer            | 2  |                  |    |                 |    |



Editors' Note: In the last edition of the CHRONICLE, photo credits were omitted. The Tree Street photos were taken by Joe Troester. Teresa Milligan captured the Relay for Life photos.

**INSIDE THE SUPERINTENDENT'S SAFETY BOX**

In an effort to make sure that all of the safety forms and procedures are readily available on the job site, each Superintendent has a "Safety Box" provided by the Safety Department. The forms and procedures in the Safety Box are the "tools" needed in the field to ensure compliance with applicable safety rules and requirements. In the last issue, we looked at two of these "tools" – let's look at a couple more.

A confined space can be very scary – they change frequently and without warning. There are numerous hazards found in or around confined spaces. Why should that be a concern of ours? Because our employees must enter confined spaces, such as manholes, lift stations, vaults, etc., as part of their normal job. Whenever there is the possibility of entry into a confined space, the Safety Department makes sure the project has at least one air monitor and other equipment (retrieval systems, air movers, etc.) to make confined space entry as safe as possible. There is also a form for this activity – the Confined Space Entry Check List – found in the Superintendent's Safety Box. This form must be completed before entry into any confined space and is intended to help our employees evaluate the space before and during an entry.

At least once a week, usually every Monday morning, all of our projects hold a Safety Meeting. Yes, there is a form for that, too! Because the work we do can be dangerous, it is important that our employees all have "their heads in the game" from start to finish. And that is the purpose of the Monday morning Safety Meeting – put the weekend behind us and pay attention to the work ahead. The form we use gives the Superintendent or Foreman a chance to review last week's safety concerns and discuss the days to come. The form can also be used to give employees an opportunity to offer ideas and suggestions to improve safety on the job. You should take advantage of this opportunity cuz I'd like to hear from you!

What's the difference between a "near miss" and a "near hit?" We'll look at this in the next issue.



*Chris Cull, Safety Manager*

# WOW!! 114 YEARS AND COUNTING....



Dennis McPherson, Sr. Project Manager, works out of the Billings, Salt Lake, and Rock Springs offices. Since starting with COP in May of 1971 as a Laborer, Dennis has worked as an Operator, Foreman, Superintendent, Lead Estimator, Equipment Manager, Vice President, Marketing Director, and a Project Manager. Guess one could say Dennis has done it all!

Born in Sidney, Montana, his family moved to a ranch in the Paradise Valley area south of Livingston where Dennis grew up. Married in 1973, he and wife, Sue, have celebrated 36 years of marriage. They have a son, Mike, 31 and a grandson, Declan, who is 11. Fishing, hunting, and shooting — these are the activities Dennis most enjoys with Mike and Declan.

“Having been with COP 38+ years, I have seen many changes during the success of COP.” As Charles Darwin stated, “It is not the strongest of species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.”

Ed Allen, Estimating Department, Billings, was raised on a ranch near Drummond, Montana. After returning from Viet Nam in 1973, Ed began his career as a Heavy Equipment Operator in Yellowstone Park. It was during this time that he met Dennis and Gary who encouraged him to apply at COP. Other hats Ed has worn in his 36+ years with COP are Foreman, General Superintendent, and since 1991, Estimator.

High school classmates, Ed and wife, Mary, have co-owned Express Employment Professionals since 1990. In addition to being a BIG Denver Broncos fan, Ed enjoys playing golf, traveling, and spending time with his three grandchildren.



Gary Erickson, Project Manager, Billings, grew up on the family farm and ranch at Saco, Montana which is located near the Canadian border. His early years in construction as a Laborer quickly turned to Carpenter on numerous bridge projects which continues to be his area of expertise. During winter lay-offs in 1967-68, Gary worked for the U.S. Forest Service and also worked on a seismic crew in Alaska. In 1970, he came to COP as a Carpenter, moving to a Carpenter Foreman, Superintendent, and Project Manager.

Between hunting, fishing, and football (Go Broncos! Go Griz!), Gary enjoys spending time with his six children and 12 grandchildren.

**TRAINING**

Mike Huff and Clarence Weber successfully completed a “Rigging Train-the-Trainer Course” in California in October. Congratulations, Mike and Clarence!

Internal rigging training will be available throughout the COP Construction companies soon.

.....AND THE AWARD GOES TO -

Raffles Insurance Ltd. presented the “2008-2009 Fleet Safety Award” to COP Construction in recognition of driving 1 million to 4 million miles with zero fleet accidents.

Congratulations for a job well done!



PO Box 20913 Billings MT 59104

**PROJECTS CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

**COP CONSTRUCTION LLC**

**COP WYOMING LLC**

**EXXON CIVIL PROJECTS**  
Billings, Montana

**LOCKWOOD SEWER PHASE 1, Part 2**  
Lockwood, Montana  
\$3,443,000  
Estimator: Ed Allen

**BOAT HARBOR LIFT STATION**  
American Fork, Utah  
\$2,900,000  
Estimator: Ron Batt

**COLLEGE DR.-GRANT ST. EXTENSION**  
Rock Springs, Wyoming  
\$2,069,000  
Estimator: Dustin Dennison

**THOMPSON FALLS FISH LADDER**  
Thompson Falls, Montana  
\$5,900,000  
Estimator: Darci DeBuff

**NEIHART WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS**  
Neihart, Montana  
\$418,224  
Estimator: Darci DeBuff

**SPANISH FORK-SPRINGVILLE REACH PIPELINE**  
Springville, Utah  
\$28,510,000  
Estimator: Rod Braegger

**STORY FISH HATCHERY**  
Story, Wyoming  
\$2,285,000  
Estimator: Dustin Dennison

**GIBBON RIVER BRIDGE**  
(Sub-quote to HK Contractors, Inc.)  
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming  
\$3,889,000  
Estimator: Dan Feldman

**PHASE 1A: COLLECTION SYSTEM REHAB**  
Hardin, MT  
\$1,523,000  
Estimator: Ed Allen

**SWGTP BY-PRODUCT PIPELINE, PHASE 1**  
West Jordan, UT  
\$8,384,000  
Estimator: Rod Braegger

**LOCKWOOD SEWER PHASE 1, Part 1**  
Lockwood, Montana  
\$2,662,000  
Estimator: Ed Allen

**TO ALL OF OUR FRIENDS,  
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND  
HAPPY NEW YEAR!!**

