

# NTA Continues Rapid Growth

by Jeff Griffin ■ Senior Editor

**T**he rocky ground of New England isn't the best place in the country for horizontal directional drilling (HDD), and yet perhaps surprisingly New England is home to the nation's most active and visible regional trenchless association.

Established in 2004 with a handful of members, the Northeast Trenchless Association (NTA) has almost tripled its membership, and 2006 has been its busiest, most-productive year, said Tod Cote, the current NTA president. Cote is vice president of ECI Directional Drilling, South Burlington, VT. While contractor membership is composed primarily of HDD specialists, the association does not limit its scope to directional drilling.

When the organization was formed, its primary goals were to advance the professionalism of its members and to increase awareness of the benefits of trenchless construction among owners and operators of utilities, general contractors and the public.

Those goals are unchanged, said Cote, and as membership has grown and key industry suppliers added their support, the NTA has been able to expand its programs and is using a variety of methods to implement their programs:

- Six meetings per year are held at various locations throughout the region.

- The association moved quickly to establish its identity, developing a logo, establishing an informative, easy-to-navigate web site, [www.northeasttrenchless.com](http://www.northeasttrenchless.com), containing information about current activities and an overview of trenchless construction for utility personnel, general contractors not familiar with the benefits to contractors and the general public.

- Continuing education is an important part of each meeting with representatives of industry suppliers and associations conducting training seminars. Topics have included HDD good practices, trenchless water and sewer construction, safety roundtable discussions, consideration of problems encountered on projects and how they can be addressed.

- NTA activities are communicated through advertising and public relations, including keeping the regional and national trade press informed about association programs.



*Despite stormy weather that forced some of the NTA's Demo Day activities inside, the event was still deemed a success.*

- In May, the first NTA Demo Day was held at the Topsfield Fairgrounds, Topsfield, MA. Despite being forced indoors by heavy rains that deluged the region, the event is considered a success and a significant milestone for the association.

## Plans

Our focus this year is on organization and paying close attention to detail, said Cote. We have grown fast and we want to make sure our members receive what they are looking for from our organization. For example, we are planning dates and locations of our regular meetings for the whole year, so members can arrange their schedules. We believe that will encourage attendance.

As are other markets, trenchless construction is affected by the state of the general economy and several specialized market segments. NTA helps members be aware of economic trends and how they may affect their businesses.

In our area, said Cote, there are large projects that were designed more than a year ago, that went out to bid but were canceled because they went over budget due to pipe and fuel costs and poor project design. The continuing need for improved technology to keep up with challenging applications is a must to keep our industry thriving.

The organization's annual meeting has become an important event for members, packed with two days of classes, but with plenty of networking time, and a banquet with professional entertainment.

## Demo Day

Unexpected heavy rains did affect the first NTA Demo Day, but a workable Plan B was in place, and equipment and exhibits were

moved into the fairground arena.

This was our first field day, and we didn't know what to expect, Cote said. We didn't know how many people would show up – 200 or 25. We put a lot of time and effort into planning and promoting, and we had everything set up for the outdoor event when the rain arrived. Fortunately, we had a contingency plan and moved everything inside.

Although the weather likely reduced attendance, Cote said the turnout was impressive, and those attending represented those the association had targeted.

Demo day he added, was a huge success in my mind, not because of the turnout and the weather, but because the membership pulled together to make it happen. It proved we have the ability to work as a team to promote the industry. We had generous support from associate members who were willing to take a chance and help put the NTA out there to get this young industry utilized to its fullest potential.

This spirit of cooperation among contractors in a very specialized field, many of them competing for available work, may be the primary reason for the NTA's success, and it is a development that not everyone anticipated.

We actually shared a contract with another member company that has been one of our biggest competitors for years, said Cote. Indeed, shared experiences and networking are one of the biggest attractions of NTA events, and members get along so well a family outing has become a regular summer event.

As NTA continues to move forward, Cote said one immediate goal is to reach more consulting engineering firms to help project planners better understand the benefits

trenchless construction offers to their projects.

We still find planners of projects in some areas such as water and sewer construction that do not understand how they can effectively use trenchless methods such as HDD, Cote said.

Dufresne-Henry, Westerfield, MA, has become the first engineering firm to become an associate member of NTA with Donald Wyse and Bill Edwards the company's representatives to NTA.

NTA, Cote concluded, is impacting the industry by acting as a resource for project owners, engineers and contractors, promoting education, integrity through good drilling practices, and influencing research and development whenever possible. The education amongst peers and the roundtable discussions we have are very valuable to the growth of our industry.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**Northeast Trenchless Association:**

President Tod Cote, ECI Directional Drilling,  
(802) 264-2263, [northeasttrenchless.com](http://northeasttrenchless.com)



*The new NTA Board of Directors*

## NTA board of directors

In addition to association president Tod Cote, NTA board members are:

Danielle Martin of Henniker Directional Drilling, Henniker, NH, first vice president; Norm Harris, Gilford Well, Gilford, NH, second vice president; Bruce Hubbard, ETTI, Lisbon Falls, ME, second vice president; and Ralph Edwards of Vermeer Northeast, Hopkinton, MA, secretary.

Said Cote: Dedication of board members is exemplary, and the core of the success of the association. They go beyond what anyone could expect, giving up many weekend days to plan and consult and attend meetings – all to raise the bar for quality within the association. Interest and support of past presidents remains strong and committed to the success of NTA efforts.