

**For the past 12 years,** the Gulf Coast Trenchless Association and *Underground Construction* magazine have recognized a deserving person as the trenchless industry's Most Valuable Professional (MVP), presenting the award at the annual Underground Construction Technology International Conference & Exhibition (UCT).

This year, two MVPs were honored – one from private industry, the other from the public sector.

Winners honored at the 2008 UCT in Atlanta were:

- Rafael Ortega, P.E., Houston consulting engineer; and
- Stephen P. Allbee, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Winners are chosen by a special GCTA committee from nominees submitted by members of the industry.

Among the judging criteria for the MVP:

- Active in construction or rehabilitation of underground piping infrastructure;
- Have demonstrated leadership or expertise contributing significantly to the improvement or professionalism of the industry;
- Benefits to the marketplace resulting from a nominee's professionalism;
- How a nominee's efforts reflect in a positive manner upon the industry; and
- Achievements that result in the invention, development or marketing of products or methods that significantly impact the industry.

The GCTA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the science and practice of trenchless technologies for installing, repairing, maintaining and replacing utility lines and related facilities through construction and rehabilitation, including water, sewer and waste water, gas distribution, oil-gas transmission and gathering, telecommunications, and electric systems. The GCTA also actively promotes education, training, research, development and information concerning trenchless technology and to promote its use.

*Underground Construction* is the established and recognized leader in its coverage of the construction and rehabilitation of North America's underground utility infrastructure.

## Public/Private MVP Winners Honored In Atlanta

### MVP Public Sector Honoree



**Stephen P. Allbee**  
Project Director  
United States Environmental  
Protection Agency  
Washington, DC

*2008 Public Sector MVP recipient Stephen Allbee (center) is congratulated by 2008 GCTA President Patrick Mann (left) and 2006-07 GCTA President Russ Ford.*

Stephen Allbee is a leading spokesman in the continuing national dialogue concerning challenges associated with sustaining water and sewer infrastructures. He has served with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for 28 years and currently is project director of the agency's Gap Analysis Program, a national policy review of spending and investment requirements for water and wastewater systems.

Allbee is a strong advocate of applying asset management techniques to utility infrastructure systems. He is also a strong proponent for considering trenchless construction and rehabilitation options when planning projects. He has earned the reputation for taking practical and realistic approaches in seeking solutions for complex issues.

Allbee's first experience in asset management occurred at the age of 17 when he had a job laying sewer pipe in St. Paul, MN. More than 40 years later, he describes himself a "collaborator" working on behalf of the EPA to get water and wastewater utilities on the path toward sustainability in the 21st century.

From Allbee's perspective, asset management is a way of thinking that recognizes that capital, operations, maintenance, repair, renewal and replacement are all investment decisions.

"The work of asset management encompasses the work of the utility," he explained. "Being really good at its implementation demands bringing new ways of thinking and problem solving to decision making on an hour-by-hour, task-by-task basis."

#### Job focus

Allbee said that he perceives his job as as-

sisting service providers to grow their capacity to foster efficiencies, streamline work processes and modernize management controls.

"As we look toward the future," he said, "protecting the gains of the last 30 years and addressing emerging environmental and public health objectives demands regular upgrades and reinvestments based on an ethic of sustainability. The bottom line is that reinvestment choices cannot be postponed indefinitely. The central focus of our mission is about the efficiency and effectiveness of how the work is done."

Reflecting on the GCTA award, Allbee said that he was pleasantly surprised by the honor. "It is a privilege to have the opportunity to be in a position where I can be of service for doing what I love to do," he added. "Energy use and climate changes are world issues we hear a lot about today. Water sustainability is on the same level of importance, and a big issue in water is infrastructure – it is very important for the public and private sectors to work together to get done what must be accomplished."

During his tenure at the EPA, Allbee has served as the director of the Planning and Analysis Division; acting director of the Municipal Construction Division; chief of the Municipal Assistance Branch; expert advisor to the Border Environment Cooperation Commission and the North American Development Bank; and he has also held several headquarters' staff assignments.

In addition, he had national leadership responsibility for establishing the innovative State Revolving Fund (SRF) Program as a means to provide federal financial assistance to wastewater infrastructure projects. He has also had the distinction of develop-

ing important special infrastructure assistance programs targeted to under-served and economically-disadvantaged communities, including Mexico border communities, tribes and Alaskan native villages. He also has managed a broad network of technical assistance services that provide operations, maintenance and related support to small communities. He frequently provides technical assistance to international organizations on issues concerning water and wastewater issues, project development, finance and management.

The EPA's mission is to protect human health and the environment. Since 1970, the EPA has been working for a cleaner, healthier environment for the American people. The agency employs 17,000 people across the country, including its headquarters offices in Washington, DC, 10 regional offices and more than a dozen labs. ■

## MVP Private Sector Honoree



2008 Private Sector MVP recipient Rafael Ortega (center) is congratulated by 2008 GCTA President Patrick Mann (left) and 2006-07 GCTA President Russ Ford.

### Rafael Ortega, P.E.

Vice President  
Lockwood, Andrews & Newnam Inc.  
Houston, TX

Rafael Ortega's achievements in the field of civil engineering have made significant contributions to a wide variety of projects, and he is perhaps most widely recognized for his involvement on major water projects.

"I am honored to receive this award and, like past recipients, I never thought of myself as promoting this technology – I focused on finding the most cost-effective solutions that minimized traffic disruptions and kept arriving at the same conclusion: trenchless," Ortega stressed.

In his present position with Lockwood, Andrews & Newnam (LAN), Ortega directs the company's Large Diameter Business Group. He plays a significant role in the

city of Houston's ongoing \$398 million Surface Water Transmission Program capital improvements work. He is responsible for design oversight of more than 200 miles of large-diameter water transmission mains which include almost 25 miles of tunnels.

Ortega's impressive portfolio includes many other large water projects that include pipeline infrastructure ranging in size from 24 to 96 inches, design of a 60-inch force main and a 72-inch raw water main for the Water and Sewer Department in Miami-Dade County, FL. He also has been responsible for rehabilitation designs for major sanitary sewer projects, and coordinated constructability and bid-ability reviews of programs for the Texas cities of San Antonio and Alvin.

Ortega has designed numerous soft ground tunnels ranging in size up to 120 inches in diameter, performed construction management, construction inspection, field engineering and wastewater facility design. His other assignments have included utility relocation, storm drainage improvement systems and water and utility district engineering.

### Other experience

In addition to his water system work, Ortega has performed sanitary sewer rehabilitation design including line replacement, grouting and sliplining for several municipalities.

"While I have designed projects since the 1980's using trenchless construction methods," said Ortega, "the majority of the work involved new construction using tunnels or directional drilling. The trenchless industry has also been heavily involved in the rehabilitation of sanitary sewers in the United States using cured-in-place pipe (CIPP), sliplining and pipebursting.

"What I envision for the future is a transfer of knowledge gained in those markets used to rehabilitate the miles of water transmission mains in this country that were installed from the 1970's onward. The EPA and ASCE predict that those lines will reach their life expectancy in the next 20 years. Simply put, we can not afford to remove and replace all of them using traditional installation techniques."

In addition to his active involvement in construction, Ortega has served on the

Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission's Underground Storage Tank Advisory Committee and as Harris County's representative on the Trans-Texas Water Project. He was appointed by then Governor George W. Bush to the Gulf Coast Waste Disposal Authority and served as a vice chairman and president of the authority's economic development agency, known as the Gulf Coast Industrial Development Board. Ortega also served as an Ambassador to Guam during the Republican National Convention in Houston in 1992.

Ortega was chairman of the 2008 UCT WaterWorks Conference in Atlanta and also was chairman for the 2007 UCT WaterWorks Conference in Houston. He has been a member of the American Water Works Association Steel Pipe Standards Committee for many years and served as chairman of the American Society of Civil Engineers' Pipelines 2005 Conference.

Lockwood, Andrews & Newnam is one of the nation's leading full-service engineering firms providing planning, engineering and program management services. ■