



## Editorial

>> Marc Cheves, PS

# What A(nother) Year!

**W**ho would have thought that, four years in, we'd still be in a recession? Any of you who have been around as long as I have have seen many down cycles in the construction economy. But always before, after six months, or a year at most, things would naturally pick back up. With the housing market we've dug ourselves quite a hole this time. Several years ago, I recall seeing a *USA Today* headline that said there was enough demand to last until 2030!

Traditionally, surveying companies have been small, 4-10 employee firms. As this recession continues, my very real fear is that small companies that have not diversified will continue to disappear, leaving only mid- and large-sized firms. The ultimate cost to the public if, say, a rural surveyor (who has been servicing several counties) closes up shop, will be that surveyors will have to come from farther distances, thereby increasing costs for the consumer. While it would be nice if surveyors had nothing to do but boundaries, we know that to make ends meet, we've always had to resort to construction design surveys and layout to pay the bills.

In many ways, *The American Surveyor* is like many "Mom & Pop" surveying companies: small, family-owned and operated, and passionate about surveying. We, too, have been affected by the downturn. As I've been encouraging surveyors for 15 years to diversify, we've done the same by launching new titles. Industry experts in GIS (Glenn Letham with GISuser.com), machine control (Randy Noland with machinecontrolonline.com), and LiDAR (Gene Roe with lidarnews.com) lead the pack with their knowledge and expertise.

In this issue, I have written about three companies and four surveyors in Atlanta. Starting out as a land development outfit, they branched out into a regional RTN, and then they launched a line of GNSS equipment. Each venture took a lot of hard work, but they are now poised to reap the benefits of their vision. History shows that when one economic sector is down, another is often up. And when all the sectors are up, then you can make money. While few surveyors get "rich" in terms of money, many love the work so much they're willing to do it for no profit. Obviously, when a job is lowballed, it hurts those who *are* trying to make a profit, but I'm sure you get my point.

I have no idea what next year will bring. Regardless of which side of the political fence you're on, one thing is certain: we need an administration that is pro-business and one that rewards entrepreneurs—like surveyors.

### Also in this issue

The cover feature is a cool story about monitoring for a giant subway project in the D.C. area. We spent time on *and* under the job-site, alongside the tunnel-boring machine. We've known one of the authors, Joe Betit, for many years, and Joe has a real grasp of how to apply technology, and where we surveyors need to get to with technology.

The story about ancient structures in Hawai'i is another in our continuing series from the folks at CyArk. CyArk is to be commended for its efforts to create digital models of the top 500 heritage sites around the world. The next issue of LiDAR Magazine will also contain a story from CyArk about their efforts in India.

Also of note is an article written by Dr. Javad Ashjaee about his role in bringing GLONASS to the precise community. Early on, mostly because of few satellites, GLONASS was pooh-poohed by some, but we can see today that RTK works better because of it. Russia just launched one of its next-gen M satellites, will launch two more satellites by the end of this year, and has finally achieved full-constellation capability.

LightSquared continues to occupy much of the GNSS news in our industry. The best way to stay up to date is to visit the LightSquared Watch area of our website. 

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