

ACEC

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES  
*of Mississippi*

WINTER 2026 EDITION

Engineering the Future of Mississippi

The  
ACEC  
CONNECTION





The ACEC 2025 Fall Conference was held October 5–8, 2025, at the Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina in San Diego, California, bringing together engineering leaders, firm executives, and industry innovators from across the country. The event featured an engaging lineup of education and partner sessions on topics such as workforce development, cybersecurity, and emerging technologies, as well as committee and coalition meetings, networking events, and a dynamic Exhibit Hall showcasing cutting-edge A/E solutions. Highlights included keynote presentations by thought leaders, special receptions, and opportunities for professionals to connect and share best practices. The conference also honored outstanding industry contributions with national awards recognizing excellence and leadership in engineering.





## Sarah McEwen wins National ACEC Award

**S**arah McEwen, PE, CFM, received the 2025 Young Professional of the Year Award from the American Council of Engineering Companies during the ACEC's Fall Conference in San Diego. Sarah is an engineer with Neel-Schaffer.

Sarah is a Water Resources Engineer and Manager who joined Neel-Schaffer in 2023 and has more than 12 years of experience. She is the youngest Vice President in Neel-Schaffer history and leads a multi-state water resources practice.

The ACEC selected five finalists for the award, representing engineering firms from across the country.

"This is a tremendous honor for Sarah, and I cannot think of a more deserving individual to win this award," said Joey Hudnall, PE, Neel-Schaffer's President and CEO. "In just a few years, Sarah has built a track record that stands out among her peers. She is a rare blend of technical talent, leadership, and drive. Her depth of knowledge in hydrology and hydraulics is matched only by her ability to lead. Her impact goes beyond just delivering solutions for our clients. She strengthens the entire team along the way, pairing great humility with service and a commitment to her community."

Sarah is the first nominee from ACEC Mississippi to be chosen as a finalist for the Young Professional of the Year Award. The award is open to engineers aged 35 younger and is intended to recognize the accomplishments of young professionals who have contributed to the engineering profession while making an impact on society.



## Teddy Roosevelt Award Winner

**C**ongratulations to Kyle Wallace of Shows, Dearman and Waits, Inc., who was the winner of the 2025 ACEC/MS Teddy Roosevelt Award! The award was voted on by ACEC/MS members and presented at this year's Fall Meeting. Wallace was recognized for exhibiting distinguished service to the engineering profession and going the extra mile to improve the profession as a whole.

# Firm celebrates 40 Years

Congrats to member firm Burns Cooley Dennis!  
The firm celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2025.



## ACEC/MS Fall Meeting

ACEC/MS held its annual Fall Meeting on the Mississippi Gulf Coast for the first time this year. The meeting took place in November at the Gulfport Yacht Club. As always, the meeting featured outstanding speakers including Senators Brice Wiggins and Jeremy England, Transportation Commissioner Charles Busby, and Gulfport Mayor Hugh Keating. Attendees received state and national ACEC updates, as well as information regarding the legislative session for 2026.



# SAVE THE DATE

This fall, Craig Carter attended HobNob 2025 and the Mississippi Government Affairs Committee Annual Legislative Breakfast. These events were opportunities for him to learn more about what is happening in the legislature for 2026 and make contacts with state leadership.

HobNob, held by the Mississippi Economic Council, is an event for business leaders to hear from state officials on the past year's accomplishments and what is on the agenda for the upcoming year. This year's HobNob was the last one, as the MEC is merging with the MMA and BIPEC to form one organization focused on promoting all sectors of the Mississippi economy.

The Legislative Breakfast is hosted by the Madison County Business League & Foundation Government Affairs Committee to announce the Madison County legislative priorities for the upcoming year.



February 25

## ACEC/MS Capitol Day

*Mississippi State Capitol*

*8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.*

April 21 - 22

## ACEC/MS Spring Meeting

*Mississippi State University*

May 3 - May 6

## ACEC National Convention & Legislative Summit

*Washington, DC*

July 22 - July 25

## ACEC Deep South Convention & Trade Show

*Sandestin, FL*

September (Date TBD)

## ACEC/MS Roosevelt Day

*Jackson, MS*

October 12-14

## ACEC/MS Fall Meeting

**In conjunction with the Mississippi Transportation Institute (MTI) Convention**

*Beau Rivage Resort & Casino - Biloxi, MS*

October 25 - October 28

## ACEC National Fall Conference

*Phoenix, AZ*



## 2025 NAECE Conference

In December, Craig Carter and ACEC state Executive Directors from around the country gathered in Hilton Head, South Carolina for the three-day annual NAECE Convention. The main goal was simple: share ideas and learn from one another. Directors exchanged strategies and insights, and those informal chats often sparked some of the best ideas. Networking turned out to be just as valuable as the official sessions. By the end of the convention, everyone walked away with practical takeaways and fresh ideas that could help ACEC Mississippi and other states approach their work in new ways





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