

**TOP** A standing-room-only crowd was on hand for the opening keynote by Scott Mensing, PE, PMP, and Colonel Travis Rayfield, PE, PMP, Army Corps of Engineers–Kansas City District. Their presentation detailed the reliability and resilience of the Kansas City Levees project.

**BOTTOM** Exhibit hall floor demonstrations are always a highlight of the Geosynthetics Conference.  
 Photos: Ian Gilhoolie

## Goin' to Kansas City for Geo '23

*Co-sponsored conference with IECA offers great show for happy and engaged attendees and exhibitors*

By Kevin Kerfoot

The 2023 Advanced Textiles Association's (ATA) Geosynthetics Conference, held in February in Kansas City, Mo., and co-hosted with the International Erosion Control Association (IECA) Annual Conference and Expo, brought together those from the geotechnical industry as well as the erosion, sediment control and stormwater industry. The combined conference attracted more than 1,800 combined attendees and 186 combined exhibits for double the exhibition area for both associations.

The workshops, short courses, special and technical sessions and panel roundtable discussions covered everything from AASHTO methods to zero-leak containment facilities. Subjects discussed this year included erosion and sediment control, dewatering tube systems, segmental retaining walls, alternative backfill materials, hydraulic and coastal applications, landfill covers and lining systems, water retention products and mining applications, and dozens of other geosynthetics-related topics.

"I appreciate that ATA conferences always seem to capture the past, present, and future of geosynthetics and Geosynthetics 2023 in Kansas City did not disappoint," said Melissa Beauregard, Ph.D., PE, ENV SP, Exponent, Inc. "The conference kicked off with Short Courses and wrapped up with Exhibitor Showcases on the exhibit hall floor, highlighting the range of geosynthetics-related content we've come to expect from these biennial conferences."

Attendee and exhibitor Russell Amidon with Industrial and Environmental Concepts Inc. (IEC) in Lakeville, Minn., not only was there to exhibit but was also interested in seeing the other trade show booths. "I just think it's great that we as a whole get together once a year to discuss the future of our industry," Amidon said. "I've been doing liners since 1988 and the technology just keeps changing and that's how we learn about it here first."

Tommy Richardson with JW Faircloth & Son Inc. in Hillsborough, N.C., was also attending the conference for the first time to learn about what people are doing in the industry on the IECA and erosion control side of things. "I just came on board with my company, so it's a learning curve to try and figure out what the industry is about and learn as much as I can while I'm here."


Trinette Ballard, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Local Aid Support program manager, Office of Innovation and Workforce Solutions, was on the exhibit floor to demonstrate the many functions of the FHWA's Geosynthetics Installation Notes Tracker mobile application and how it can assist with road construction and maintenance projects. "The enthusiasm around the app was exciting," Ballard said. "I heard from many of the attendees that this is something they felt was needed in the industry. We are working with several entities we met during the conference to provide even more information in the future using the mobile application. What we have available right now in the Apple Store and Google Play Store is just the beginning."

### Other highlights

Standout moments of the four-day conference included a standing-room-only crowd for the opening keynote by Scott Mensing, PE, PMP, and Colonel Travis Rayfield, PE, PMP,

Army Corps of Engineers—Kansas City District. Their presentation detailed the reliability and resilience of the Kansas City Levees project.

The Geosynthetic Materials Association's (GMA) biennial general membership meeting highlighted its current technical, educational and legislative activities with a detailed update on the federal, state and local lobby efforts. Sam Allen, president of the International Geosynthetic Society (IGS), was the featured speaker and provided an update on the IGS as well as a presentation entitled "Bringing Geosynthetic Contributions to Life."

Another popular portion of the conference was the Robert M. Koerner lecture, where J.P. Giroud, ECP, Ph.D., discussed zero leak at end of geomembrane installation and service. First-time attendee Joelle MacDonald, a senior civil engineer with Alberta Energy Regulator in Alberta, Canada, came down to the conference because she was really intrigued with learning about the geomembrane with zero leakage and the testing protocol. "I found both the lecture, as well as the workshops and exhibits to be really interesting," MacDonald said. "I did the virtual conference in 2021, but there's nothing like coming here physically to talk with people about actual projects. A highpoint was hearing J.P. Giroud talk because over the 30 years I've heard him do talks through the Fabricated Geomembrane Institute (FGI) and a lot of webinars, but actually coming in and hearing him speak—I was really impressed." 

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