

by Robert Carpenter Editor-In-Chief

UCTA Continues Growth

With Formation Of South Texas Chapter

The Underground Construction Technology Association (UCTA) has formed a new chapter covering the region from Austin through San Antonio and down to Laredo, TX.

The UCTA, a non-profit organization, was founded in 1992 to promote education, training, research, development and information concerning traditional, trenchless and rehabilitation technologies, and to promote the use of these technologies. The UCTA serves municipalities, contractors, engineers and manufacturers interested in learning more about the importance of best practices in the underground industry.

The new South Texas Chapter will serve the cities/surrounding areas of Austin, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, Laredo and New Braunfels. The original UCTA Gulf Coast chapter is centered in Houston and covers southeast Texas. The North Texas Chapter is based in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and covers the region from Waco north.

President of the newly-formed UCTA South

Texas Chapter is Jeff Haby, senior director of Sewer System Improvements for San Antonio Water Systems (SAWS). He serves as the program manager for the implementation of SAWS SSO Reduction Program as required by a recent EPA Region 6 Consent Decree.

Chapter needed

Haby said the decision to form a new chapter was based upon factors largely centered on needs of a booming market in this area of Texas.

"The workload for underground construction and support services is increasing rapidly in South Texas due to expansion in the oil and gas industries (Eagle Ford Shale), new population growth throughout Texas, industrial/manufacturing growth in the region and infrastructure growth/rehabilitation related to regulatory activities," he explained.

"The region needs a forum to efficiently exchange knowledge related to underground construction and other related services between key stakeholders including: public agencies, facility owners and developers, underground construction contractors, underground services companies, consulting engineers, vendors, manufacturers and universities," Haby stressed.

Haby and others in the South Texas region considered a variety of options but the format and opportunities presented by the UCTA organization seemed to best fit their needs. UCTA liaison for the Gulf Coast and North Texas Chapters Russell Ford of LAN Inc. reached out to other key industry personnel in the South Texas area and scheduled an exploratory/organizational meeting at SAWS headquarters in San Antonio. A large turn-out of highly interested and committed people made the formation of the South Texas Chapter an obvious path.

One of the hallmarks of UCTA chapter meetings is to have a featured presentation on topics of interest and importance to the area. At the UCTA South Texas' inaugural general membership luncheon on Oct. 3, 2014, Haby, along with Steve Clouse, COO and senior vice president of SAWS, provided a presentation on the Vista Ridge Pipeline, a game-changing water project proposed for San Antonio. More than 100 people attended the networking reception, lunch and presentation.

Goals

Haby says the new chapter has established several key goals:

- Improving technology transfer between

academia, vendors, owners, consultants and contractors;

- Create an open forum where contractors and/or vendors can display new technologies;
- Establish a forum to discuss solutions for challenging technical issues;
- Support major public improvement initiatives related to underground construction;
- Provide a forum for support of Eagle Ford Shale; and
- Improve awareness of upcoming underground construction services and contracting opportunities.

The next general membership meeting of the UCTA South Texas Chapter will be held Jan. 9, and the first Friday of every quarter following, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at SAWS Tower II, 2800 US Hwy 281 N, San Antonio, TX 78298. Future dates are April 3, July 3 and Oct. 2.

Members of the UCTA South Texas Chapter were also present and supported the Most Valuable Professional Award ceremony on Jan. 28 as part of the annual Underground Construction Technology International Conference & Exhibition. The award, presented to Rod Thornhill for 2015, is a joint venture between the UCTA and *Underground Construction* magazine.

Also during the conference, South Texas Chapter members and officers had the opportunity to network with other chapters.

Officers for the South Texas UCTA are:

President Jeff Haby, San Antonio Water Systems; Vice President Eric Wessels, HDR/SAWS; Secretary Mandi Segovia, HDR/SAWS; and Treasurer Jeremy Doege, LAN Inc.

Board members include: Travis Allen, IRP/PM Construction; Johnny Becker, Pipelayers Inc.; Robert Carpenter, *Underground Construction*/UCT; Scott Courtney, Premier Hydro; Casen Doepenschmidt, Gajeske Inc.; Eric Dupre, Southern Trenchless Infrastructure; Russell Ford, LAN; Alissa Lockett, SAWS; Tammy McNarie, SAWS; Riazul Mia, City of Laredo; Tim Naylor, Insituform Technologies; Gary Oradat, Oradat & Associates; Trino Pedraza, NBU; Gail Pigg, City of Austin; and Gopal Gunthikonda, CP&Y.

For more information, contact STC President Jeff Haby, jeff.haby@saws.org, (210) 233-3747; Vice President Eric Wessels, eric.wessels@saws.org; or Secretary Mandi Segovia, Mandi.segovia@saws.org.