Alaska has lost over 11,700 jobs since 2016 and 10,000 people have left the state. Currently Alaska has the highest unemployment in the nation, at over 7 percent. Unfortunately, most of those leaving are millennials, the youth that would be driving the future of Alaska.

The Alaska Society of Professional Surveyors (ASPLS) is seeing a decline in membership along with an increase in Life Members, who do not pay ASPLS dues.

This is concurrent with a decline in willing volunteers, and attendance in our conferences.

We are at the precipice of unsustainability and must reinvent the organization to survive and contribute to the success this state.

To this end, we are in the process rewriting our by-Laws to allow associate members to serve in an increased capacity and overhauling our web site to ensure its relevance.

One of the changes is to create an ex-officio member category. This category will include the NGS Adviser, the BLM Chief Cadastral Surveyor, The Department of Natural Resources Chief Surveyor, and a Surveyor from the Department of Transportation. Having the major players, and some of the major sources of surveying contracts, around the leadership table will strengthen our organization’s viability and influence.

As a State that is nearly 2 ½ times the size of Texas, meetings are problematic. We are using GoToMeeting to conduct meetings and are looking for other ways to facilitate remote participation.

To address the above issues, we have doubled the number of State association board meetings from 4 a year to 8 a year. This has driven more participation and change.

One of the bright spots in Alaska is the University of Alaska Anchorage Geomatics Student Association (GSA). The GSA is an affiliate Student Chapter of the ASPLS and currently serve as non-voting members of the Board. They participate in our conference and other activities. Their enthusiasm and dedication are an inspiration and a ray of hope for the future. The ASPLS Anchorage Chapter pays for the student’s lunch or dinner at chapter meetings. This has increased their attendance and participation. We also encourage licensed surveyors to attend GSA meetings. A great success has been a speed mentoring dinner. This is like speed dating, we have a student pair with a mentor. Each pair does one question/answer to each other within a set time restraint, then the student rotates to a new mentor.

Our conference in February 13-15, 2019 will be with the Western Federation of Professional Surveyors at the Hilton in Anchorage. We will be offering for credit classes for Certified Federal Surveyors. We invite you to take advantage of this opportunity and enjoy some excellent skiing within an hour of the Hilton and some Northern Lights viewing. Or be more adventurous and go skiing from a helicopter for a once in a life time experience within some of the most beautiful mountains on this planet.

Gary M Gervelis, PLS
2018 State President of the Alaska Society of Professional Surveyors.
Cliff’s additional report:

BLM has stopped pushing DPPS and the proposed drone surveying has not gained any footing. However, we are still in a battle getting proper monumentation. Below is some historical background. Alaska gave up a lot in agreeing to the 2-mile monumentation.

Historical Background

The obligation of the federal government to survey state entitlement lands is set in Section 6(g) of the Alaska Statehood Act (Act). The interpretation of what Section 6(g) requires was disputed by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) upon completion of the first state entitlement survey approved in December 1961. The DNR immediately protested and the disagreement continued until an agreement was reached in negotiations between Department of Interior (DOI) Assistant Secretary John Carver and DNR Commissioner Holdsworth in July 1963. The agreement is set out in several documents including a letter from DOI Secretary Udall to Governor Egan, as well as in the 88th Congress House Appropriations Committee Report No. 551. The agreement included concessions on both sides. Essentially, the DNR would make selections of full townships, and the BLM would survey the exterior boundary of each township placing monuments at an average of every two miles. The BLM agreed to go back and add additional monuments to the disputed surveys.

State entitlement surveys have been surveyed under the agreed interpretation of the Act for the entire period from 1963 to date, with the exception of surveys completed under the 1973 Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) (later codified in the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA)). Under the terms of the 1973 MOU, the state could request the BLM to convey lands by protraction. The state accepted patent to some 13 million acres based on protraction diagrams, but in 1981, DNR notified BLM that the State would no longer accept conveyances by protraction. Under ANILCA Section 906, the State still has the option to request patent by protraction.