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HDR Engineering's "Onions-to-Energy System" Wins Top Engineering Achievement Honor

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A groundbreaking waste-to-energy system fueled solely from onions has been named the year's most outstanding engineering achievement in the 44th Annual Engineering Excellence Awards—a juried national competition sponsored by the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC).

HDR Engineering worked with the Oxnard, Calif.-based Gills Onions—the world's largest processor of fresh-cut onions—to develop the Advanced Energy Recovery System (AERS). The system converts 200,000 pounds of daily onion waste (peels, stems, and tops) into biogas which powers 300 kilowatt fuel cells to supply plant operations.

The AERS satisfies 60 percent of Gills Onions' annual power needs—an estimated $1.1 million savings—and promises to alter how food processing waste is treated in the future.

More than 500 attended the black-tie Engineering Excellence Awards Gala on April 27 in Washington, D.C. which recognized 163 projects from throughout the world.

Other top award winners were:

- **Cowboys Stadium,** *Arlington, Texas,* by Walter P Moore —The $1.5 billion, 80,000-seat home to the NFL's Dallas Cowboys features the world's longest single span roof, the world's largest moving roof panels, and the world's largest moving glass doors.

- **Dee and Charles Wyly Theatre**, *Dallas, Texas,* by Magnusson Klemencic Associates—A new 12-story performing arts facility with a one-of-a-kind vertical stack structural design creates an unmatched level of facility flexibility. The stage, floors, seating structures, balconies and even walls all move—up, down, in, out and around —to produce and endless variety of performance configurations.

- **Sound Transit's Light Rail Beacon Hill Station and Tunnels,** *Seattle, Wash.,* by Hatch Mott MacDonald/Jacobs (Joint Venture)—Design and construction of one-mile-long twin transit tunnels, a deep-mined transit station, and a matrix of vehicle, pedestrian, and ventilation tunnels, all while overcoming unstable soils 200 feet below the surface.

- **Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge**, *Omaha, Neb.*, by HNTB Corporation**—**The 1,012-foot-long curvilinear cable-stayed bridge rising 200 feet above the Missouri River is one of the longest pedestrian spans in the world and the showpiece of a $2 billion downtown and riverfront development effort connecting Omaha and Council Bluffs, Iowa.

- **Littleton/Englewood Wastewater Treatment Plant**, *Englewood, Colo.*, by Brown and Caldwell—The $114-million facility upgrade features a patented process to reduce nitrate levels released into South Platte River, while substantially increasing treatment capacity and saving thousands of dollars in operating costs for Denver-area ratepayers.

- **Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement,** *Vancouver/Whistler, British Columbia***,** by Hatch Mott MacDonald**—**Major widening and upgrades of 40 miles of vital highway linking principal sites of the 2010 Winter Olympics included 40 bridge structures, 110 retaining walls and rock slope stabilization along extreme mountainous terrain.

- **TMI Steam Generator Transport Project**, *Middletown, Pa.*, by Michael Baker Jr. Corp.—Innovative highway and bridge design, construction management and municipal coordination to safely transport two generators—at a combined 1,650 tons—over 75 miles in 15 days to Three Mile Island—the largest loads ever transported on Pennsylvania and Maryland highways.

The American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) is the business association of America's engineering industry, representing nearly 5,700 independent engineering companies throughout the United States engaged in the development of America's transportation, water and energy infrastructure, along with environmental, industrial and other public and private facilities. Founded in 1909 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., ACEC is a national federation of 51 state and regional organizations.

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