



FGI Legacy and History: Celebrating Nearly 40 Years of Innovation in Geomembranes

Written by Brian Fraser & Pat Elliott – October 22, 2025

Geomembranes have played a vital role in environmental containment across North America for over six decades. Their journey began in 1957 when the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation conducted early tests on PVC geomembrane installations. A landmark moment came in 1968 with the first formally specified PVC geomembrane installation for Montana's Helena Valley Canal marking the beginning of a new era in engineered containment solutions.

Origins and Evolution of the Institute

The Fabricated Geomembrane Institute (FGI) traces its roots to the PVC Geomembrane Institute (PGI), founded in 1988. PGI was established to represent a growing community of manufacturers, fabricators, and installers dedicated to advancing geomembrane technology. In 2009, recognizing the expanding scope of factory-fabricated materials, PGI rebranded as FGI. This shift emphasized the advantages of controlled factory production over field fabrication, aligning with industry trends and technological advancements.

FGI is housed within the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. As an academic-industry consortium, it is committed to research, education, and technology transfer in the field of flexible geosynthetics. In June 2025, the institute adopted a new name—**Flexible Geomembrane Institute**—to reflect its broadened mission, which now includes both roll stock and field-fabricated liners.





Mission and Vision

FGI operates as a non-profit, industry-sponsored institute focused on advancing the use of flexible geomembranes. Through collaborative research, educational outreach, and technical guidance, FGI has become a cornerstone of innovation and knowledge-sharing in the geosynthetics community. Professor Tim Stark, Technical Director of the FGI, and the Board of Directors remain committed to

advancing and growing the association while providing a high level of support to our members.

Honoring the Pioneers & Contributors

As FGI approaches its 40th anniversary, we extend heartfelt gratitude to the many individuals who have shaped both the institute and the broader geomembrane industry. From early pioneers to long-standing supporters, your contributions have left a lasting legacy. While the list is extensive, we acknowledge that some names may be inadvertently omitted and offer our sincere apologies.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ◆ Fred Rowe – EPI | ◆ Andrew Mills – Layfield |
| ◆ Dan Rowe – EPI | ◆ John Heap – Colorado Lining |
| ◆ Stuart Lange – Lange Containment | ◆ Tim Stark – University of Illinois |
| ◆ Dave McLaury – Demtech / DMS | ◆ Jennifer Miller – FGI |
| ◆ Bill Shehane – Seaman Corp | ◆ John Goers – Firestone |
| ◆ Pat Elliot – Colorado Lining / ViaFlex | ◆ Paul Oliveira – Firestone |
| ◆ Edward Silva – E-Squared | ◆ Brian Fraser – Layfield |
| ◆ Andy Durham – Owens Corning | ◆ Ray Peebles – Cooley |
| ◆ Duff Simbeck – Simbeck & Assoc. | ◆ Steve Thaxton – Owens Corning |

