

Dr. Walt Schmidt (1951-2014)

Fifth State Geologist of Florida



Dr. Walt Schmidt, retired Director of the Florida Geological Survey, and the state's fifth State Geologist since 1907, passed away peacefully on March 29, 2014. Walt was born in Philadelphia and moved to Melbourne, Florida to attend Florida Institute of Technology where he met his devoted wife of forty-one years, Cheryl. He earned his Bachelor's Degree at the University of South Florida and both a Master's and Ph.D. in Geology at Florida State University. He retired from the FGS after 34 years of dedicated service.

Throughout Walt's distinguished professional career he was active in many organizations including the Geological Society of America, American Institute of Professional Geologists, Florida Academy of Sciences, Ground Water Protection Council, and the American Geosciences Institute. Walt was a founding member of the Florida Association of Professional Geologists and served on the Florida Board of Professional Geologists, where he holds Florida PG license #1. He served as president of the Southeastern Geological Society and the Association of American State Geologists (AASG). During his tenure with the AASG, Walt was instrumental in supporting the passage of the 1992 National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Act and in 1996, he gave testimony in support of reauthorization of the Act before a US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources.

Walt's professional dedication is exemplified by his service on numerous advisory and technical committees including the Florida Sinkhole Research Institute, Florida Geographic Information Advisory Council, Florida Governor's Outer Continental Shelf Advisory Committee, Big Cypress Swamp Advisory Committee, National Academy of Sciences, among many others.

Recipient of several honors and awards, Walt was elected a Fellow of the Geological Society of America, recognized as "Hero of the Industry" by the Florida Section, American Institute of Professional Geologists, and the given the Outstanding Alumni Award from the Geology Alumni Society, University of South Florida. In 2007, Walt was also recognized as the nation's longest sitting State Geologist. The Department of Environmental Protection Secretary at the time

stated "The stability, continuity and institutional knowledge that his uninterrupted service provides is an irreplaceable resource. Walt is a great public servant."

Walt's legacy is not only reflected in more than 100 written abstracts, reports, maps, publications, testimonies, and articles, but also in his exemplary leadership and mentorship, which has positively influenced so many and elevated the FGS to a highly valued and respected institution.

In Walt's own words: "... the sense of serving the public good [is] professionally and personally rewarding... I appreciate the opportunity to be a small part of such a diverse and exciting place to work, in a state so rich in natural resources and natural beauty."

Walt is survived by his wife Cheryl and his loving children Amber and David (Natalie) as well as his sister Marie Crowthers. He will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him.

Dr. Walt Schmidt was a true champion of the geosciences.

"We cannot approach any kind of sustainable living conditions with compatible ecosystem and natural resources conservation without adequate geoscience information." -- WS

Please see a more extended biography of Dr. Schmidt [here](#).

By Jonathan D. Arthur, State Geologist and Director, Florida Geological Survey