

Adapting with Purpose—and Moving Forward Together

If there's a common theme for this past year, it's adaptation. Across our industry, we've all been asked to rethink how we work, how we connect, and how we demonstrate value in a changing landscape. At the Expanded Shale, Clay, and Slate Institute, we've embraced that challenge—not as a disruption, but as an opportunity to become stronger, more focused, and more effective.

As I've stepped into the role of chairperson, I've had a front-row seat to some meaningful evolution within the Institute. With a new administration in place, ESCSI has welcomed fresh perspectives while staying firmly rooted in the technical expertise and collaboration that have long defined our organization. Change for the sake of change doesn't get us very far, but change with intention absolutely does.

One of the most noticeable shifts this year has been how we structure our meetings and engage as a group. Like many organizations, we took a hard look at how we spend our time together and asked some practical questions. Are our discussions focused? Are we making the best use of our collective experience? Are we creating space for productive participation?

The result has been a more streamlined, more purposeful approach. Meetings are clearer, agendas are tighter, and participation—whether in person or virtual—feels more engaged. The goal isn't fewer conversations; it's better ones. And that focus is already paying off in stronger alignment and clearer direction.

These internal improvements support something much bigger than governance—they help us advance lightweight aggregate as a sustainable solution for today's projects. As owners, designers, and specifiers place greater emphasis on resilience, durability, and environmental responsibility, lightweight aggregate continues to stand out. Its ability to reduce dead load, improve structural efficiency, enhance thermal performance, and deliver long-term lifecycle benefits aligns directly with modern sustainability goals.

The adaptations we've made as an Institute allow us to tell that story more clearly and more consistently. A more nimble organization can better support specifiers. A more engaged membership can share real-world experience. And a more focused ESCSI can continue to position lightweight aggregate not as a specialty option, but as a proven, versatile solution across a wide range of applications.

None of this happens without the dedication of our members. Your willingness to engage, share expertise, and adapt alongside the Institute is what keeps ESCSI relevant and effective.

Which brings me to a brief personal note. I don't like meatloaf. Like change, it's often served with good intentions, and some people genuinely love it. I tend to approach it cautiously. Thankfully, the changes we've made this year fall firmly into the *pleasant surprise* category—thoughtfully prepared, worthwhile, and something I'm happy to come back for again. No ketchup required.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. I look forward to what we'll accomplish together in the year ahead.