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ENR 2018 Top 25 Newsmakers

# Gerry Galloway: 'Superstar' at 83 Continues His Water Management Crusade With an Assist on Big Urban Flooding Study



Galloway (right), in one of his many roles, joins fellow engineers at Folsom Dam in California in 2015 to study dam stability in mountainous areas.

PHOTO COURTESY GERRY GALLOWAY

January 16, 2019  
Pam Radtke Russell

KEYWORDS Dam Construction / ENR Newsmakers / Flood Control Reprints

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When Texas A&M Professor Sam Brody had the chance to snag a “superstar” to join an academic team producing the first national study of urban flooding scope and consequences, he knew just who to ask: Gerry Galloway. “It’s not just his passion, it’s what he lives and breathes,” says Brody, who considers Galloway a mentor and a friend.



Galloway

Galloway—at 83, with an engineering teaching position at the University of Maryland and consulting jobs in Florence, Italy and China—could have easily said no, but he couldn’t resist yet another chance to chip away at America’s water management problems. “Water is the fabric that holds society together, and we have to figure out how we collectively solve” problems in managing it, he says.

That’s exactly what Galloway, a retired brigadier general in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has done for much of his career—as Corps district engineer in Vicksburg, Miss.; as leader of the presidential task force studying the 1993 Mississippi River flood; as a scholar analyzing lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina; and as a member of several water-related national and international commissions.

“My junior paper [at West Point] was on the management of the Missouri River,” says Galloway, whose father, Gerald Galloway Sr., was a Corps major general and served, like his son, as a member of the Mississippi River Commission. “It reminds me that these things take a while to work,” he says.

The report from the 1993 task force, known as the “Galloway Report,” encouraged governments and citizens at all levels to take responsibility for floodplain management. The urban flooding study, done by Texas A&M and the University of Maryland, recommends a similar approach outside of those floodplains.

While Galloway still grapples with the same water management issues he did decades ago, his experience now offers him the perspective that change takes time. “We just have to keep at it,” he says, noting that the biggest obstacle is inertia and many people’s belief that floods won’t happen where they live.

The study shows that belief is wrong. Floods can happen anywhere.

Brody involved Galloway in the urban flooding study as part of a yearlong fellowship through Texas A&M’s Hagler Institute for Advanced Study, which began months before Hurricane Harvey hit the state in 2017. Collaborating with the University of Maryland team, Galloway used his long-lens focus and his Rolodex to get 45 people associated with Congress to tune in to the announcement of the study’s findings in December. Numerous requests for briefings have followed.

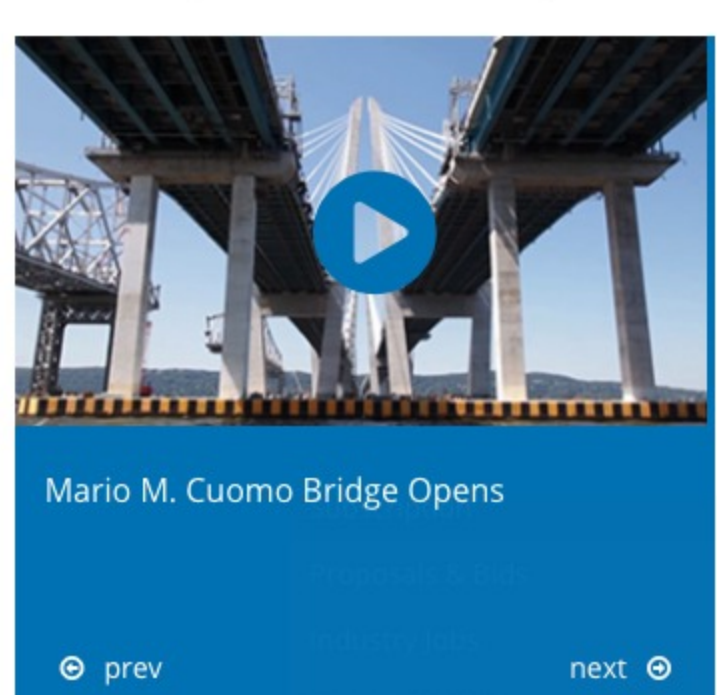
Galloway’s expertise “is in the ability to look at these issues from a bigger picture, considering all of the aspects,” says Ed Link, a fellow University of Maryland engineering faculty member and ENR’s 2007 Award of Excellence winner. “He’s a master at looking at policy and governance issues and integrating the physical aspects with the political and social aspects ... that’s a really rare talent.”

Changes are happening slowly, Galloway says, and he plans to keep pushing and helping in any way he can.

“Our mission in life,” he says, “is to keep banging the drum.”

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Senior Editor Pam Radtke Russell is a New Orleans-based journalist with more than a decade covering energy and environmental issues for ENR, Platts, CQ Roll Call in Washington D.C. and the Times-Picayune in New Orleans. She was part of the Times-Picayune team that worked from Baton Rouge after Hurricane Katrina and was awarded two Pulitzer Prizes for journalism in 2006 for public service and breaking news.

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