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## California Project Captures ACEC's Top Design Excellence Award

*HDR, Inc.'s innovative "energy from onions" facility in Oxnard, Calif. cements California's reputation as center for innovation and engineering excellence*

SACRAMENTO, April 29, 2010 — On Tuesday evening, the American Council of Engineering Companies awarded Omaha, Neb.-based **HDR Engineering, Inc.** its coveted Grand Conceptor Award for the Gills Onions Advanced Energy Recovery System Project in Oxnard, Calif. This is the second year in a row that an engineering design project in California has received the council's top award at the Engineering Excellence Awards, also known as the Academy Awards of the engineering industry. Last year's award was bestowed on Cambridge, Mass.-based CDM for its Groundwater Replenishment System designed for the Orange County Water and Sanitation Districts.

The Gills Onions project was one of eight projects considered for ACEC's top award. Other contestants included the new \$1.3 billion Dallas Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas and the Sea-to-Sky Highway project in British Columbia, Canada. The award was presented at ACEC's Engineering Excellence Award (EEA) gala in Washington, D.C.

HDR was selected by Gills Onions, the largest fresh-cut onion processor in the nation, as the lead engineering firm on this breakthrough \$9.5 million facility that converts onion waste to power. In the facility, juice is extracted from onion peels and treated in a high-rate anaerobic reactor to produce methane-rich biogas. The biogas is then treated and used to power two fuel cells that provide electricity for the processing plant. As a result of this project, the owner has achieved increased energy independence, elimination of a waste stream, reduced operational cost, and a smaller carbon footprint. The combination of the energy produced, cost savings generated, and grant funding achieved by the project will result in a full payback in less than six years.

The EEA Gala applauds the accomplishments of private engineering firms in an elegant celebration attended by industry leaders, members of Congress, federal agency officials and the media. This year's EEA competition featured 163 projects from throughout the world all vying for honors of excellence — culminating in the Grand Conceptor Award for best overall engineering achievement.

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**About ACEC California:** ACEC California is a statewide association representing more than 1,000 private consulting engineering and land-surveying firms that average 20 employees each. ACEC California is dedicated to enhancing the consulting engineering and land surveying professions, protecting the general public and promoting the use of the private sector in the growth and development of our state. Our members provide services for all phases of planning, designing and constructing projects. For more information, visit [www.acec-ca.org](http://www.acec-ca.org).