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I am happy to report that our vision of making a difference in Tallahassee is right on schedule. Outlined in the following paragraphs are some key elements to that success.

Florida Water Summit

The second Florida Water Summit was held at the FSAWWA Fall Conference in November. As you may recall, the Water Summit is part of our Florida 2030 process—an FSAWWA effort to bring the major stakeholder groups together each year to discuss the important water issues facing Florida in the future.

The attendance at November’s event was excellent, and the format of the session allowed everyone a chance to participate. Florida Section Past Chair Wendy Nero did the usual super job of facilitating, allowing many different perspectives and each table an opportunity to develop their recommendations.

I was pleased that we had strong utility representation. This outreach to other key players who play a big role in water policy sends a clear message that we are always willing to listen and cooperate.

One of the final steps in the Summit process is voting by participants on recommendations. The 2011 Water Summit recommendations are:

1. Recommend extending the water supply planning horizon beyond 20 years.
2. Recommend collaborative water supply planning between water management districts and utilities.
3. Recommend protecting the water allocations of wholesale water suppliers to prevent retail purchasers from “going it alone” and taking the allocation with them.
4. Recommend reclaimed water for indirect potable reuse and education.
5. Recommend protecting the water quality of those surface waters identified for future use as a potable water supply source.

The Florida 2030 team deserves a lot of credit for this summit’s success. They are Chair Chuck Carden, Matt Alvarez, Wendy Nero, Rick Lotspeich, Ana Maria Gonzalez, Richard Anderson, Doug Mann, and Peggy Guingona.

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Florida Water Forum

Another Florida 2030 initiative implemented last year was the Florida Water Forum. The FSAWWA partnered with a major state political force, Associated Industries of Florida (AIF), which represents over 10,000 private-sector employers in Florida. Through this partnership, we are working to develop water policy that both groups find beneficial.

The first Forum took place on June 4, 2010, in Orlando. The major political candidates for statewide office who deal with water issues were invited to give their views on water issues facing the state. The candidates provided the audience with their perspectives and gave the audience plenty to think about.

Chuck Carden of FSAWWA and Barney Bishop of AIF did a great job of introducing the candidates. John Shearer was our moderator and showed his skill in the Q&A part of the program. The Forum received significant press coverage from media outlets in the Orlando area.

Be sure to mark your calendar for Friday, June 3, 2011, when the next Forum comes to Orlando. Look for advertisements in upcoming issues of the Journal.

Legislative Action Team

The Legislative Action Team (LAT) did very well during the 2010 session. The LAT is led by Rick Lotspeich and includes Suzanne Goss, Edgar Fernandez, Lisa Wilson-Davis, Rob Teegarden, Doug Meurer, Matt Alvarez, Chip Merriam, and Doug Mann.

The team had two objectives for the 2010 session. The first was to pass a bill which created a new Part VII to Chapter 373. This new section would take all the various water supply provisions (policy, planning and production, and funding), and put them into one new section for easy reference. The team did a great job of working with the sponsors, Rep. Trudi Williams and Senator Mike Haridopolos, to pass this bill.

The second objective of revising the current goal-based water conservation language to provide utilities with flexibility in meeting the water management districts’ water conservation requirements did not fare as well and died in committee. But the LAT, with the help of Rep. Trudi Williams, did get the water management districts’ five-year compliance reports extended to every 10 years. This was a major victory.

The LAT is ready for 2011 with three items. The first is the creation of a statewide Water Supply Task Force. The next is a Sustainable Water Use Permit, and finally, inclusion of water storage projects as eligible for Senate Bill 444 funding.

House Speaker Dean Cannon created a Select Committee on Water two months ago, which really addresses our Water Supply Task Force plus other issues. Rep. Williams is the chair of the Select Committee, and AWWA’s Utility Council, under new Chair Pat Lehman, has been working with her on a variety of issues. Pat sees the Utility Council working closely with the legislative action team this session.

The Sustainable Water Use Permit is sponsored by Rep. Williams in the House and by Senator Jack Latvala in the Senate. Our permit language is in a larger bill, House Bill 1001, by Rep. Williams. We expect the bill will get attention this session. The funding for water storage should be part of a larger bill that is identified during session.

I would personally like to thank all those who have worked over the years to make the FSAWWA legislative effort a success. We are on our way, thanks to the vision of past chairs and the hard work and dedication of Florida Section members.