2011: A YEAR OF SUCCESS!

As I sit here writing my 12th and final “Speaking Out” column, my first thought is, “Whew, I made it!” Twelve deadlines were hit, admittedly some with only minutes to spare. My second thought is, “Where did the year go?” It seems like just yesterday my first article was due as I struggled to complete it.

Looking back on 2011, the Florida Section AWWA continues to have financial strength and strong leadership from the board of governors. I am honored to have had the opportunity to lead the section this year. The professionalism and spirit of cooperation that exists within the board, and among the volunteers and staff, were evidenced to me time and again. Everyone involved in making the section a success believes in our mission to serve the water industry.

A recap of 2011 successes, highlights, and awards is presented below.

Business Practices Workshop

Conducting our section business effectively and professionally with our volunteers continues to be one of our most important missions. To ensure our effectiveness, the third annual Business Practices Workshop was held on Feb. 10, 2011, at section headquarters in St. Cloud. This year’s event focused on our strategic business plan, specifically on developing action items and tasks that will help us meet and exceed our goals in the next few years.

2011 Legislative Day

Utility Council Chair Pat Lehman led an information-packed agenda on regulatory issues, pending legislation, and budget discussions. An excellent panel discussion of current key issues was presented by a diverse stakeholder group, consisting of Eric Draper, executive director, Audubon of Florida; Rich Budell, director, Office of Agricultural Water Policy; and Diane Salz, legislative affairs consultant for several Florida utilities. Discussion of new and creative funding sources, alternative water supply permitting, and collaboration among Florida’s various water stakeholders were discussed.

The AWWA/WEF Joint Washington Fly-In

The Fly-In was held April 4-5 in Washington D.C., with the purpose of presenting important water industry issues to federal lawmakers. Florida provided a strong contingent, with 12 delegates from seven different utilities and five different engineering, manufacturing, and construction firms. The Florida delegation was again organized this year by Suzanne Goss, past chair of the Utility Council. Enough cannot be said about the outstanding job Suzanne did to plan and coordinate all the meetings with our senators, members of Congress, and their staffs. Her hard work was evidenced by the Florida team’s effectiveness in delivering our message to promote safe water. This year, the Fly-In focused on three key legislative issues: chemical facility security, legislative standards for drinking water contaminants, and water infrastructure financing.

Outstanding Distribution System Awards

The FSAWWA had the privilege of recognizing utilities for their outstanding work treating and distributing water day in and day out, safely and efficiently to customers throughout the state. Our Outstanding Distribution System Awards were presented to the elected boards of eight deserving systems, listed here alphabetically:

- Charlotte County Utilities
- Collier County
- Town of Jupiter
- City of Leesburg
- City of Marco Island
- Orange County Utilities
- Ozello Water Association
- Palm Bay

Best Tasting Drinking Water State Champion

Cooper City Utilities won the statewide Best Tasting Drinking Water Contest May 3 at the Florida Water Resources Conference. Judges chose Cooper City from 10 regional winners to earn the title as Florida's best. “A lot of hard work goes into ensuring that only the best water comes out of Cooper City faucets,” said Michael Bailey, P.E., director of Cooper City Utilities. “But it’s a job we love to do. Receiving recognition like this is great, but providing the best water will always be our primary mission.”

Florida Water Forum

The section, along with Associated Industries of Florida (AIF), sponsored the second Florida Water Forum, which took place on June 3 in Orlando. The keynote speakers were Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam and Rep. Trudi Williams, who provided insight on water and water policy, issues that are of critical importance to the future of Florida.

Membership

Recruiting and retaining members in FSAWWA is critical to our success as an organization. The section’s Membership Committee, with staff assistance from Casey Cumiskey at section headquarters, is charged with recruiting new association members, broadening the membership, and retaining current members to increase the number of people who would benefit from AWWA and the section.

In 2011, the committee took part in and has implemented the following activities to enhance and retain membership:

1. Committee members attended the AWWA Membership Summit in January 2011 to share new ideas with other sections and learn about the latest membership initiatives.
2. Special “thank you” emails for renewing membership are being sent out to existing members.
3. Participation in the 2011 AWWA Presidential Challenge using a two-fold approach: adding new members as well as retaining existing members.
4. Hosted the 2011 Membership Telethon session this fall, with young professionals in each region contacting existing members to thank them for their AWWA membership.

AWWA 2011 Larson Aquatic Support Scholarship – Doctoral Level

Stephanie Ishii, a student from the University of Florida, was the recipient of the 2011 Lar-
son Aquatic Support Scholarship—Doctoral, for masters and doctoral students interested in careers in the fields of corrosion control, treatment, and distribution of domestic and industrial water supplies, aquatic chemistry, and/or environmental chemistry. For her efforts, Stephanie received a $7,000 one-time grant towards completion of her doctorate.

**ACE11 Top Ops**

Florida’s own Palm Coast Water Buoys took back the first-place Top Ops trophy at ACE11. Teammates Fred Greiner, Peter Roussell, and Tom Martens reclaimed their utility’s victory in the competition that tests the everyday knowledge of water treatment operators. The City of Palm Coast also reigned in the 2009 National Top Ops and has consistently placed third or better in the competition since 2005.

**ACE11 Student Poster Competition**

The annual student poster session was held on June 14, featuring college-level students from across the nation. This year, first place was awarded to Amy Borello of the University of Florida for her poster titled, “Photocatalytic Mercury Removal of Aqueous Mercury in the Presence of Humic Acid.” Congratulations to Amy on a job well done!

**Annual Section Education Award**

The FSAWWA was selected from among 13 AWWA sections for our Florida 2030 Initiative. The mission of the Initiative is to develop and communicate a focused message on Florida infrastructure needs to ensure a sustainable, reliable, safe, and affordable water supply. Congratulations to all the members of the Florida 2030 Committee who have worked hard over the past few years to make this a success.

**AWWA Volunteer of the Year: Dr. Fred Bloetscher**

As an active member of AWWA since 1989, Dr. Bloetscher, assistant professor of civil engineering at Florida Atlantic University in Hollywood, has given his time and expertise unconditionally to AWWA members and staff on many levels. Among other significant accomplishments, he authored the groundbreaking eLearning program, “Water Treatment Operator,” and the best-selling book, *Water Basics for Decision Makers*. He has also served on and chaired numerous committees. Fred contributes invaluable technical expertise that truly embodies the AWWA spirit as the ‘authoritative resource on safe water.’ The Florida Section is extremely lucky to have a talent like Fred in our state. Congratulations Fred, and thank you for all you do for the section and the water industry!

**Past Chairs Summit**

Our fourth annual Past Chairs Summit was held August 25-26 in downtown Orlando. Each year, this event turns out to be one of the most enjoyable and informative meetings we host. The primary purpose is to provide a platform for the current Executive Committee to inform the past chairs on the state of the section and its business and solicit input and advice on our future direction and priorities. It has also become a great venue for past chairs to reunite, see old friends, and swap stories. The summit is a great opportunity for today’s leadership to meet and connect with section leaders of the past. The knowledge and experiences the past chairs share are invaluable tools as we look to the future of the section.

It has been a true pleasure to be your FSAWWA chair and I want to thank everyone for a job well done and another successful year. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all!