Richard Anderson
Chair, FSAWWA

I am truly honored to have the privilege to lead the Florida Section of the AWWA in 2011. I would like to congratulate each member of the FSAWWA Executive Committee and board members on their elections. We are blessed with a strong and talented team for 2011, and I look forward to working with the board of governors and staff to have an awesome 2011.

As we enter the new year, the Florida Section has financial health, we have dedicated volunteers, and we have programs in place to serve and engage our membership. This is due to the outstanding leadership the Section has been blessed with over the years, and this year has been no exception. Chuck Carden continued this tradition of leadership in 2010 and the section is stronger than ever entering 2011 thanks to his efforts the past year. Thanks, Chuck.

Much time, energy, and effort have been focused on developing a business approach to running the section over the past three years, and much has been accomplished. We have positioned ourselves well to operate in a business-like manner. We have strategic business planning, more accurate budgeting, and a strong organizational structure. We have an administrative office with professional staff, we have a strong training program with increasing revenues, and we have financial security to allow us to focus on our mission of serving the membership.

Because we are well organized and financially strong, we have the freedom to focus on what is most important, that being membership and member services as our number-one priority of the Section for 2011, based on input from our past chairs and board of governors.

In August at this year’s Past Chair’s Summit, we discussed issues and asked past chairs to identify what they see as our top priorities. Membership, and more specifically, membership retention, was high on the list of priorities.

On October 14 we held our annual Strategic Business Planning Retreat in Fort Lauderdale to establish our Section goals and priorities for 2011. Once again, membership issues ranked high, as the number-one priority for us to focus on in 2011.

So what are we doing? Section staff have increased their efforts on member retention, providing more direct contact and communication such as welcome e-mails and thank-you e-mails for renewals, facilitating member-to-member contact, and inquiring about member interests.

Nationally, the Association is promoting recruitment, retention, and membership appreciation contests. AWWA President Joe Mantua has a video on the Web site touting membership benefits.

The Association also is offering more alternative memberships to increase value. A national YP membership contest is underway, and YP memberships are being offered at $99. A trial program was started offering discounted operator memberships with Pennsylvania and Florida leading the way. Right now Florida operators can join for $25.

So, what more can we do as a section? Membership drives and contests can only do so much to recruit members. To increase and retain members, we need to adapt to our circumstances: what members need, when they need it, and where they need it. This means increasing regional outreach and networking, especially to local utilities who aren’t involved now.

It also means increasing our local presence within the regions and more local training. What are we really trying to do as an organization is to increase participation within the industry, and encouraging utilities to participate is key. Maintaining relationships between utilities and vendors, manufacturers, and consultants is key to our success as an organization. Utilities need to buy goods and services, and business needs to deliver goods and services to remain profitable.

The Florida Section has the organization, staff, programs, and volunteers to deliver great member services. In fact, I believe we provide the best member services in the state of Florida right now. But status quo has never been our motto. The FSAWWA is known for being innovative, for being on the leading edge of new ideas and programs, for thinking out of the box.

What specifically can we do to increase participation of our members as well as non-members? Because non-members who get involved and participate eventually become members.

Examples of three innovative ideas which have grown to be extremely successful, integral parts of our Section life can be used as models for our future success. All are great examples of outstanding member participation.

In 2000-2001 the first Drinking Water Day was organized, and last year we celebrated the 10th annual event in Tallahassee. Utility participation in regional Taste Test events leading up to Drinking Water Day are the key that make it a success.

Utilities look forward each year to the local “Taste Test” as a way of bringing utilities together to see who is the “best” in their region. It works because the regions are free to create their own event to meet their needs. Some host a barbecue. Some put on a formal dinner night. Some use it as a fundraiser. Regardless, it’s a great networking experience.

In 1994 the first FSAWWA Fall Conference was held. The event started small and has...
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steadily grown to be a huge part of our section identity. Today, 17 years later, it’s hard to imagine not having a fall conference. It supports such great events such as the Backhoe Rodeo, Meter Madness, the Tapping Contest, Laws and Ethics, workshops, operator training and the Florida 2030 Summit. It provides tremendous financial support to the section, but more importantly, members come to participate. These are the kinds of ideas and events we need to continue developing for long-term success of the organization.

A strategic planning session has been scheduled for February 10 to develop specific action items for our Section priorities and goals. What can the FSAWWA do to increase member services and meet your needs? What will it take to increase your participation? What are your needs as a member? What does your region need? Your utility or your business? We would love to hear your input and ideas on how best to serve our membership in 2011 and beyond. Contact your region chair or the Section staff, listed on pages 10-11 of this issue of the Journal.