Richard T. Anderson
Chair, FSAWWA

The Florida Section has grown by leaps and bounds in the past few years thanks to sound planning and meeting the needs of our membership, which includes a variety of different water-related interest groups. Increasing our board to include representatives from both the Contractors Council and the Operators Council has given us a broader voice on industry issues and will create a more effective organization in the long term.

There is no doubt in my mind that the strength of this organization is due to the support and commitment of volunteer members. The drinking water community is facing exciting and challenging times. The FSAWWA is well organized and prepared to work with our members to meet both our current challenges and those in the future.

It’s not good enough to just be on the right track; to succeed we need to be sure the light at the end of the tunnel is not the train coming at us! To stay a vital and viable group, one of the section’s highest priorities is to increase the number of member volunteers. With more volunteers, there’s more experience and knowledge that are available to the section. New people bring new ideas, and new ideas strengthen any organization.

Unfortunately, the current economic climate is forcing employers to make tough financial decisions to survive. More and more companies are limiting the amount of volunteer participation, travel, and support of employees compared to past years. This trend is most disturbing when we think about the energy and enthusiasm of younger professionals or those new to the industry. In order to ensure the success of Florida’s drinking water industry in the future, strong support needs to be given to young professionals who want to get involved. Long-term industry success depends on it, and as industry managers we must continue to support and encourage new volunteers or the train will run us over!

If you’re a utility industry manager or leader, I encourage you to support your workers who have the interest, drive, and ambition to serve the section in any way they would like. Their involvement will benefit themselves and their companies, and make our water community a better place.

Fall Conference Highlights

The FSAWWA 2011 fall conference, “Protecting Florida’s Water Infrastructure,” to be held Nov. 27-Dec. 1 at the Rosen Shingle Creek Hotel in Orlando, is a great way for anyone to start “getting involved.” If you are interested in joining a committee or would just like more information about FSAWWA, stop by the section’s booth in the exhibit hall.

Technical sessions and workshops will be held throughout the conference, offering a variety of topics including utility management, energy efficiency, distribution, infrastructure assessment, and water supply issues.

The Florida 2030 Water Summit is an open opportunity for key water providers, managers, and other stakeholders to discuss the most significant and challenging water issues that we face and create a new set of action steps and priorities for the 2013 legislative session. We need your input, so please plan to attend!

The section will also host fun and lively competitions between municipalities to find the most skilled person or team in the Back Hoe Rodeo, Meter Madness, and Tapping Contest. Another contest is the Water Bowl, a Jeopardy!-like competition for students from Florida universities. Teams compete against each other to see who can answer the most questions correctly in the least amount of time.

The “Fresh Ideas” poster session encourages participation by young professionals at the conference, and the author of the winning poster will receive a free trip to ACE12 in Dallas, Texas.

Don’t Pass Up a Free Exhibit Hall Pass!

As I wrote last month, the Florida Section is increasing its efforts to make the conference and exhibit hall accessible to as many utility employees as possible. Complimentary exhibit hall passes will be provided to all utility staff simply by contacting our section office. If you are a utility manager or supervisor, this is great way to reward your key staff at virtually no cost, while at the same time providing them with the best technical and networking resources in our industry. For your complimentary passes, contact the FSAWWA administrative office at (407) 957-8448 or at fsawwa@gmail.com.