The Florida Section highlighted two key events at this year’s FWRC: our Top Ops Competition and our Best Tasting Drinking Water Contest. The FSAWWA sponsored the travel for both of these winners to compete at the AWWA Annual Conference and Exposition, ACE15, in Anaheim.

**Top Ops Competition**

The Top Ops Competition recognizes and promotes excellence and professionalism in all aspects of water operations by establishing a contest that gives operators the opportunity to showcase their talents against each other in a competitive, fast-paced, question-and-answer tournament. The excitement for this contest has really been gaining momentum over the past year and it showed this year with five teams entering to compete against each other for top honors. The tongue-in-cheek “smack talk” and fun-spirited competition ended with Palm Coast Water Buoys taking home the championship. They will be representing Florida as reigning champions at ACE15 at the Top Ops national competition. They are also part of the Top Ops Hall of Fame, winning five of the last nine AWWA competitions!

Mark Lehigh
Chair, FSAWWA
It was great to see five teams competing, which is two more than last year! And they came prepared to do battle, making each round highly competitive and fun to watch. Thanks to our Top Ops chair, Chris Welz, and dedicated sponsors, Dumont Chemicals and Odyssey, for working behind the scenes to make this a success. For the second year in a row we had a large turnout of spectators with bleacher-style seating for front-row enjoyment. This combination worked out well for both the spectators and teams.

We did have some challenges and opportunities to improve the contest. We listened to everyone’s feedback and promised the Top Ops Committee that FSAWWA will be more involved in the conference, and specifically these events, next year. The committee is already updating the rules to reflect the changes made at the AWWA level for consistency and clarity. They will also make some corrections to the current bank of questions based on the results from this year’s event. And, they will ensure that all teams competing fully understand the format of the competition at the FWRC precompetition meeting to avoid any confusion or controversy.

Overall this was a well-attended and exciting event and I fully appreciate all the teams who competed, the sponsors for their support, and the volunteers that made it all happen.

**Best Tasting Drinking Water Contest**

Now in its 13th year, the FSAWWA Best Tasting Drinking Water Contest helps draw attention to the importance of safe drinking water, conservation, and water utility services—not to mention, bragging rights across the state for the winner.

Each of the 12 FSAWWA regions throughout Florida had a public water system represented and competing for the top honor. The competition was fierce! Contest chair Mike Bailey did a great job of pulling this event together, and special thanks to emcee Greg Taylor and his booming voice.

I took the opportunity to look at the water samples from these "best of the best" utilities and the clarity and color were amazing. A panel of four environmental professionals was challenged with evaluating the unmarked water samples and judging them, on factors such as color, clarity, taste, and odor. The panel members had their work cut out for them, but in the end, they declared that the City of Tallahassee had the best tasting drinking water for 2015. This is Tallahassee’s second win in seven years and they will now take their award-winning water to the “Best of the Best” Tap Water Taste Test competition at ACE15 on June 9th. Congratulations to the City of Tallahassee!

Last year’s winner, Ave Maria Utility, was on hand to pass the traveling trophy on to the City of Tallahassee. Ave Maria Utility also received its permanent trophy to proudly display at headquarters.