The 138th American Water Works Association Annual Conference and Exposition (ACE19) was held June 9-12 in Denver. It was a success by all measures, with more than 12,000 water professionals in attendance, over 500 presenters, and a massive exhibit floor filled with interesting and innovative products and services from around the world.

**Opening General Session**

I find myself really excited and inspired by our profession every time I attend one of these conferences, and particularly with the keynote speakers at the opening general session. This year was no exception, with Auden Schendler, senior vice president of sustainability at Aspen Skiing Company, delivering the address about climate change and how it could affect our profession. Regarding the water industry, he noted that “the work you’re doing is the physical manifestation of loving your neighbor,” and I couldn’t agree more.

Of course, the Florida Section had front-row seats at the opening session, thanks to Peggy Guingona, our executive director, and because Florida will host next year’s ACE (more on that later).

**Competitions and Awards**

The Florida Section was well-represented at the conference and made its mark at the Top Ops competition and with other section recognitions.

Speaking of Top Ops, the City of Palm Coast team, Water Buoys, earned second...
place at the event. For those of you who haven’t seen it, the Top Ops competition is a fast-paced question-and-answer tournament for AWWA section teams of water operators and laboratory personnel. The teams compete by answering a broad range of technical questions and math problems, and the one scoring the most points in the championship round is awarded the Top Ops championship. The Water Buoys team has won this event so many times that they’re probably not satisfied with second place, but I still think it’s quite an achievement on the national stage, and they’re to be congratulated!

The Florida Section also came in strong by winning the Nicholas S. Hill Jr. Award for 2018. This award is earned by achieving the highest percentage of net membership growth among all of the sections, and a big round of applause goes out to the Membership Committee and Casey Cumeskey, FSAWWA training coordinator/membership specialist!

Mark Lehigh of the Hillsborough County Water Resources Services Department received the George Warren Fuller Award for his distinguished service to the water supply field in commemoration of the sound engineering skills, brilliant diplomatic talent, and constructive leadership that characterized the life of George Warren Fuller. Mark has a long history of dedicated service to FSAWWA, having served as section chair, and is currently the section’s general policy director. Thanks Mark, and congratulations!

Section Luncheon

The Florida Section hosted its annual luncheon at ACE on Monday, June 10, to welcome the Florida folks to Denver and encourage networking among the section members. The lunch was held at Earl’s Kitchen + Bar and 82 members and guests were in attendance, including past chairs Luis Aguiar, Pat Lehman, Jeff Nash, Richard Coates, Jackie Torbert, Rob Teegarden, Richard Anderson, and Mark Lehigh. A great time was had by all, and thanks again to Peggy Guingona for putting it all together.

ACE20 in Orlando

Hopefully, all the Florida members had a chance to stop by the ACE20 booth in the AWWA Pavilion area of the exhibit hall to check out the fun and tropical atmosphere that was created with six-foot palm trees, Florida-themed giveaways, and “Flash,” the resident flamingo.

As you probably know, the Florida Section is hosting ACE next year in Orlando, and the booth was set up to promote what will surely be a hugely successful national conference. The really adventurous attendees got their photographs taken with “Flash,” complemented by a frame provided by Visit Orlando, a company that helps people plan their visit. Thanks to everyone who stopped by, and thanks to Terri Holcomb, the Public Affairs Council chair, and all the volunteers who set up and hosted the booth!

So this seems like a good place to close by saying “well done” to AWWA and the Rocky Mountain Section for an excellent 138th ACE.

And look out Orlando—here comes FSAWWA and ACE20!