The Florida Section’s Annual Conference was held this past December at Shingle Creek Resort in Orlando. The theme of the conference was “Protecting Florida Water Infrastructure.” Richard Anderson, section chair, passed the gavel to me at the conclusion of the business luncheon.

I would like to thank Richard for all of his hard work, not only this year but in years past as well. Through his leadership, dedication, and teamwork, and by always being on call, we are a better organization today because of his efforts. A job well done!

The Florida Section was formed in 1926 and 85 years later is still as vibrant as it was when it began. What makes the section unique is the dedication of its members, who have a “can do” mentality. As I mentioned at the business luncheon, our mission statement reads, “AWWA unites the full spectrum of the water community to protect public health and to provide safe and sufficient water for all.” Through the efforts of our volunteers, we will continue to increase our membership during the coming year and we also plan to increase the training courses available to our members. The courses will be offered regionally, thus cutting down on travel for the participants. Peggy Guingona, the section office manager, and her staff would be more than happy to assist you in putting together a training course that will meet your needs.

One of highlights at the conference was a tribute to Dr. Edward Singley for his years of service to the section and to the water community. During the tribute, he received a gold-bound book with all of his published papers. I would like to once again thank Dr. Singley for his dedication to the industry.

Also held at the conference was the Florida Water 2030 Water Summit, with “A Vision for Sustainable Water Infrastructure” as its topic. The summit was very well attended and the following individuals were guest speakers: Ray Pilon, House District 69; Jason Brodeur, House District 33; Greg Munson, deputy secretary for water policy and ecosystem restoration, Florida Department of Environmental Protection; Rick Budell, director, office of agricultural water policy, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Dave Frisk, assistant executive director, St. Johns River Water Management District; Bevin Beaudet, director, Palm Beach County; and Doug Mansion, attorney, Manson Law Group. John Shearer served as moderator for the session, which was well received and had excellent participation.

As always, there were a number of excellent workshops presented during the conference and all were well attended. I would like to thank Fred Bloetscher for again organizing the technical program. I am pleased to report that he was also this year’s recipient of the Robert L. Claudy award, which is presented by the Manufacturers/Associates Council (MAC) to individuals for their dedication, devotion, determination, and professionalism in furthering the importance of water quality in the industry. Congratulations, Fred, for a job well done!

The 2011 winners of the water distribution system awards were Bay County, City of Leesburg Environmental Services, Bonita Springs Inc.– Distribution and Collection, City of Ft. Lauderdale’s Public Works Department, City of St. Petersburg, and Palm Beach County Water Utilities. We will be presenting the awards to these utilities at their respective city council meetings within the next ninety days. Congratulations to the winners.

Matt Alvarez was the recipient of this year’s Fuller Award, which is given to a qualified individual, selected by the section, for distinguished service in the water supply field. Accepted the award, Matt mentioned what it meant to him: getting involved, participating within the section, giving back to the industry, and the fellowship within the section and how it has turned into friendships for life. He also stressed his great love for his family.

I would like to thank everyone who had a hand in putting together this year’s conference: the section office, MAC, moderators, presenters, and exhibitors. And, of course, the registrants; the conference was successful because of your participation.

If you have not yet had a chance, please look at our updated website at www.fswawa.org. Thanks go to Peggy Guingona for the many dedicated hours she worked to update the site.

We are looking forward to 2012 and another great year for the section. If we can help you, please let us know.