



National Association of Environmental Professionals

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President's Letter to Members in the March/April 2012 issue of the NAEP National E-News

“Welcome Back My Friends, To the Show That Never Ends...”

By: Paul B. Looney, CEP, CSE, PWS

The planning is being finalized. We are determining the last minute details for presentations, who is where, and making sure that all of the attendees have a good time. Soon after we publish this newsletter the 2012 conference in Portland will begin. And the planning for the 2013 Conference in Los Angeles will be in full swing...and the 2014 Conference in St. Petersburg, Florida will be starting to gel. Within any single year there are people in NAEP working on future conferences. This is an amazing feat of prioritization and planning that still amazes me. For NAEP it really boils down to a continuous stream of future planning and teleconferences. The calls to plan the details of Portland ended the last week of April. The first planning calls for 2013 started almost immediately thereafter.

The planning and implementation of a conference is something that I had no experience with until the 2007 conference in Orlando. I was finishing my last term as President of FAEP and was part of the planning group that was responsible for getting interesting keynote speakers. I am still proud of the entertainment keynote with Mr. John Hankinson and Mr. Dale Crider playing guitar, harmonica and banjo while narrating a plethora of pictures of Florida's natural beauty. The music was great; they were funny; and the pictures were breathtaking. The overall planning of the conference, the tracks, the presentations and the hot topics had always been something I enjoyed without realizing what it took to put all of those parts into motion and create the entire conference experience.

Donna Carter is our staff planner who facilitates the completion of the dreams of the volunteers. She has been our planner for many years (more than I actually know about). She negotiates the hotel chosen by the local chapter. She works her magic to help the conference operate smoothly. Behind the scenes, she is a whirlwind of thought and action. For the 8 years I have been exposed to the conference planning, I do not know of a single incident that has stumped her. In every way, Donna is the consummate professional. No matter what it is, what the plan is, Donna helps make it all happen. For those of you who have not met Chip, you must get to know him. Mr. Fixit comes as part of the package deal that is Donna. The two of them are a real treat to work with. The volunteers, local and national, are singularly dedicated to the success of each conference. They are a good mix of leaders who focus on their individual strengths at the national and local levels. It must be recognized that even the local emphasis usually has national implications. These volunteers work together and many of them have never met. By the time the conference is in full swing, they are sharing beers and swearing they will never do it again...all the while wishing someone would just ask them to do the next one. The forming of a successful conference takes the vision and sweat of these dedicated volunteers.



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The local volunteers use their knowledge and their vision to develop a concept, to make each conference another unforgettable experience. The sights and sounds of the Native American dancers who opened the Albuquerque conference (2006) are still etched in my mind and my heart. It has been the rule that the local planners try to outdo the previous year in exciting guest speakers and exciting entertainment. I just learned last week that the band that played at the 2008 conference in San Diego have stayed together, gotten better, and will be our entertainment next year.

The volunteers who plan the sessions for each conference have one of the most important mental visions. They have a national perspective; they see the way that everything interacts and the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge and continuing education. For several years, the primary goal of the planners has been choosing presentations that have a common thread for a particular session. For those lucky enough to have multiple sessions, their tracks also reflect a theme or several related sessions. Their goal is to capture an audience and deliver it to a level of knowledge that is hard to find outside of a classroom. The great part about their goal is that the presenters are experienced national experts and well known practitioners.

I also want to make it clear that none of this would be possible without the expertise of those who seek funding and support for each conference. In many ways, the burden of meeting exhibitor and sponsorship goals for a national conference falls to the local volunteers. They do an amazing job of getting representation of nationally recognized suppliers, consultants, and educators. The cost of putting on one conference would be impossible without their hard work.

This year I am also particularly struck by the support that we have received from the affiliated chapters. The Northwest Chapter provided leadership in this endeavor, behind them came the FAEP (and one of their subchapters), and three other chapters. This support is the result of visionary leadership, an understanding of the mission of the national association, and a desire for all of us to have continued success. I thank them all and ask that you recognize them during your time at the conference.

I must also recognize the efforts of the Board of Directors. They were directly or indirectly responsible for bringing nearly 1/3 of the total sponsorships to this conference in particular. This is an active and committed Board. Things happen when they get involved. I am so grateful for having this level of support as President of NAEP. Anyone who watches politics realizes that a President cannot accomplish his goals and dreams without the support of the other governing personnel. These people are strong supporters. When you see a Director at the conference, thank that person personally for what they do.

The cool thing is that by this time next year, we will have finished our meeting in Los Angeles as well. It is already shaping up to be a beauty.

Last week Tim Bower (NAEP Managing Director) reminded me several times that Earth Day was coming up. I was struggling with several project deadlines as well as editing this newsletter and could not figure out how I was going to add one more writing assignment to my schedule. He provided me with the last two messages from Ron Deverman during his Presidency. I was inspired by his words and started to do a bit of homework. In the interest of full disclosure, I was of college age for the first celebration. Yet, I do not remember the first Earth Day. I started to wonder why I did not remember much from that important day in America. Those who really know me can speculate as to the reason, and you are partially right.



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Then I realized the reason was that I really was not involved. At that time I had just moved to Massachusetts and I was just starting my first career as a sailor. I was the messman on the Research Vessel (RV) Lulu sailing out of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI). I had no apartment or television; I had no radio. I lived on board the ship. I lived day to day and enjoyed the thrill of the open ocean. Our ship was the mother for the Deep Submersible Research Vessel (DSRV) Alvin. The ship and baby had just returned to sea after some years away while Alvin was sunk off the Spanish coast and then rebuilt. During my tenure on the vessel I was fortunate enough to dive in Alvin to 6,000 feet off Andros Island in the Bahamas. It was a life transforming experience.

WHOI is still there and still on the forefront of oceanographic science. Alvin is still carrying scientists to the bottom of the ocean. Lulu is gone and replaced in its successor, the RV Atlantis, the third vessel of that name at WHOI. I do miss those days, but am so glad I experienced them.

So, being at sea for the first Earth Day (April 22, 1970), I really had to get a perspective as to WHY it became so important. Yes, there are political spins that have been developed since 1970, but the real mindboggling fact about that first Earth Day is that it was a central focus of the entire earth for that particular day. Do yourself a favor and visit this web site (<http://www.earthday.org/earth-day-history-movement>).

Read the story and then watch the several videos available. In particular, watch Frank Blair read the amazing events that attended that day. Congress adjourned, 20 million people attended massive protests against pollution, and, as the story on the web stated, “Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, city slickers and farmers, tycoons and labor leaders. The first Earth Day led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the [Clean Air](#), [Clean Water](#), and [Endangered Species](#) Acts.”

Twenty million people!! That day was the birth of a movement, the start of our very livelihoods. I missed that day. I did not catch the fever directly, I was slowly inoculated as I watched our ship, sailing hundreds of miles off shore dump their garbage overboard at night when the scientists were mostly asleep. It was just how things were done. I saw in the middle of the Atlantic as we dredged the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and we pulled up trash. Trash floated throughout the ocean, it was obvious that something was wrong. The end of the Frank Blair video is a prediction of global warming...42 years ago. Much of that day is still with us. This Earth Day I found an anti Earth Day video that scared me (<http://now.msn.com/living/0422-anti-earth-day.aspx>). Solely by the misinformation it contains, it preys on fear while providing no answers for where we are and what needs to be done to have the US assume its leadership role in the world again (hint – better education in the sciences).

The amazing thing is that it was touted as “going viral” on the web. What does that mean these days? Thousands of people watched it. Does it mean people believed it? I certainly hope not. Does it mean as much as 20 million people joining together 42 years ago? Not hardly.

To me the concept of the video and the supporting organization represent the last gasp of a dying way of life that believes that we still have endless resources. That America can somehow become ascendant while still remaining stagnant in the old ways of life. The video represents those relics who buy into the half truths about energy and do not understand that petroleum-based energy is the way of the past.



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As you reflect on what we face these days, when you think that the relics are winning, just remember, thousands vs. millions. I think we have the number advantage. We just need to care like we did 42 years ago. Those of us who have been fortunate to be educated in the sciences need to help our progeny have the same advantages in education we had.

We also need to keep our side of the street clean. By that I mean we also need to educate the activists who rally without knowledge. There are “environmentalists” who see no problem with exaggeration and half truths to make their point. Environmental Professionals need to overshadow those misguided persons and be willing to tell the truth, unvarnished and complete.

We need to educate those sympathetic to the environmental cause in the truths of what we know and understand. We need to look at ourselves and not be afraid to make needed changes. We need to recognize that fear is not the way to convert people. Knowledge and education will provide us with the advantage of intelligent leaders and scientists. Those leaders of today and tomorrow can and should come from this “environmental movement.” They will provide the new inventions and businesses that will help us walk lighter on the earth and leave only our footprints. When it is all over for us and our successors take our place, I would hope that the legacy of Earth Day will be what we leave for our children. I pray that America finds that Earth Day Spirit and it once again proliferates like a wildfire.