

## APMS Annual Meeting Logistics & Events

The Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS) Annual Meeting involves considerable planning and scheduling to provide maximum learning and networking value to attendees. Following are steps toward organizing the Annual Meeting and a brief explanation of meeting events. APMS members are encouraged to review this information to better understand the reasoning behind meeting locations and the opportunities available at the Annual Meeting. Members are also encouraged to provide feedback to improve upon the Meeting. Please send your questions or suggestions to the APMS Secretary or the Meeting Planning Committee Chair.

The APMS organized as the Hyacinth Control Society in 1961 as a forum to exchange information related to water hyacinth and its management in Florida waters. The Society has since evolved to include aquatic and wetland plant species found across the country and internationally. Each July, APMS convenes an Annual Meeting with a focus on current research addressing topics like plant identification and physiology, control techniques, and management strategies from a national perspective. Seven Regional APMS Chapters have formed through the years. Each holds an annual conference that focuses on local operational issues and product updates.

*Note: The APMS Board has surveyed membership on several occasions regarding the best time of year to hold the Annual Meeting to accommodate the greatest number of members. Polls have not indicated specific preferences for a meeting month, with even percentages of preferences to meet throughout the year. The July meeting time has the fewest conflicts with other aquatic or weed management society meetings. July is also convenient for families to attend the Annual Meeting during school summer breaks.*

### Site Selection and Negotiation

The Meeting Planning Committee is the most active of the APMS 18 Standing Committees. This Committee is responsible for locating Annual Meeting sites and ensuring smooth operation during the meeting. APMS contracts with a Meeting Manager (Bill Torres – Florida Event Planning and Meeting Service) to solicit and assess meeting site venues, negotiate guest room, meal and meeting event costs, provide audio visual equipment, coordinate events during the meeting, and act as a liaison between meeting attendees and hotel staff.

The Annual Meeting site is on a seven-year rotational schedule to coincide with each of the APMS Regional Chapters. Delegates generally come from as many as 30-35 states and several foreign countries. The meeting is held in a different Region each year to highlight local aquatic plant management issues and to offer holding a joint meeting with the local Chapter if that suits their schedule or needs. The Meeting Manager solicits proposals from hotels in locations suggested by the APMS or Regional Chapter Board. Key site considerations include:

- guest room price;
- hotel availability during the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> week of July;
- convenience to transportation, especially airports and shuttle service;

- meeting, exhibit, and banquet hall size and proximity to hotel guest rooms;
- meal and beverage costs for the various functions during the meeting;
- walking distance to restaurants, parks, museums, and nightlife.

The Meeting Planning Committee evaluates proposals and creates a list of 3-4 sites for Board consideration and approval for the Meeting Manager to conduct an onsite visit. During the onsite visit, the Meeting Manager ensures the hotel meets APMS requirements and negotiates the best possible price for the above listed parameters. This process is conducted up to three years prior to the Annual Meeting date scheduled for that Region to negotiate the lowest prices and to get a better selection of preferred meeting dates.

*Note: APMS must guarantee that a minimum number of guest rooms will be occupied during the Annual Meeting to receive the negotiated lowest price and hotel concessions such as complimentary rooms and reduced food and beverage costs. While Annual Meeting attendees may find a lower room price at a nearby hotel, off-site lodging will not provide the meeting and event services available at the host hotel. Additionally, APMS must pay for the agreed upon number of guest rooms even if they are not occupied, and would lose negotiated concessions if the room minimum is not met.*

#### **Meeting Planning Committee (MPC) Venue Selection Timeline for Annual Meeting**

- Jul - MPC Chair seeks suggestions for venues in the next region at the post-Annual Meeting BOD meeting
- Sep/Oct - Meeting Manager requests proposals from venues in selected host cities
- Nov/Dec - MPC reviews venue proposals provided by Meeting Manager and selects best options
- Jan - MPC recommends venues at Midyear BOD meeting for on-site visits and requests travel cost approval for Meeting Manager
- Mar/Apr - Meeting Manager visits selected venues and recommends top choices to MPC
- Apr/May - MPC recommends Annual Meeting location to APMS President for email vote by the Board

#### **Meeting Costs and Sponsorship**

The APMS Annual Meeting generally runs from Sunday evening through noon on Wednesday. The meeting is occasionally extended through 5:00 pm on Wednesday when important local issues generate additional interest and discussion. The APMS Annual Meeting is the most important and most expensive educational event provided by the Society. It is also an important income source for the Society to pay annual operating costs and fund education and outreach initiatives like the [Graduate Student Research Grant](#) and Plant Camps. The average cost for the seven previous Annual Meetings is about \$93,000. This cost includes about \$12,000 in student incentives (described below) at the Annual Meeting.

*Note: There are also pre-conference and post-conference Board of Directors meetings associated with the Annual Meeting. The Board meets on Sunday to address last-minute issues prior to the Annual Meeting along with usual business of the Society. The Board meets again immediately after the Annual Meeting to introduce new Board members and to review all facets of the Annual Meeting to improve upon future conferences.*

The Annual Meeting is an education and outreach event. Therefore, the Board works to keep meeting registration as low as possible to increase attendance. This is especially important to retain government employees who have been facing increasing difficulty obtaining conference travel approval. With an average attendance of about 200 for the previous seven meetings, funding the meeting solely through registration costs would be cost-prohibitive to cover all expenses, let alone annual operation costs for the Society. Therefore, APMS solicits donations from Sponsors whose generous contributions provide about half of these necessary funds. An approximate breakdown of Annual Meeting income and expense for the seven previous Annual Meetings is listed below:

Year	Venue	Funding Source, Amount & Percentage for Meeting						Meeting Cost Analysis		
		Sponsor	%	Exhibitor	%	Registration	%	Income	Expense	Net
2016	Grand Rapids	45,360	52	15,400	17	27,021	31	87,781	64,406	23,375
2015	Myrtle Beach	47,712	43	18,200	16	45,620	41	111,532	121,644	-10,112
2014	Savannah	49,739	47	19,600	19	36,495	34	105,834	95,588	10,246
2013	San Antonio	52,472	48	18,900	18	37,180	34	108,552	85,598	22,954
2012	Salt Lake City	50,750	52	17,500	18	29,540	30	97,790	81,839	15,951
2011	Baltimore	59,652	55	16,800	15	32,860	30	109,312	97,009	12,303
2010	Bonita Springs	74,263	54	15,505	11	48,290	35	138,058	107,099	30,959
	<b>Average</b>	<b>\$54,278</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>\$17,415</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>\$36,715</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>\$110,926</b>	<b>\$93,312</b>	<b>\$15,097</b>

*Note: Annual Meeting early registration was increased in 2017 for the first time in eight years, from \$275 to \$300, to offset some of the costs to Sponsors. The lower rate is an incentive to register early so the Meeting Planning Committee can schedule appropriate meeting room sizes and seating, and prepare for sufficient food and beverage for each of the Annual Meeting events. Late or onsite registration increases to \$375.*

### **Student Incentives at the APMS Annual Meeting**

Education and outreach, especially student initiatives, are among the most important core values of the APMS. Students represent research ingenuity and future leadership of aquatic plant management. Several student incentives are available at the APMS Annual Meeting to: broaden university participation, provide opportunities to organize and present information in a public setting, interact with their peers, and observe first-hand research and operations from across the country. Following is a list of incentives for students who compete in the oral and poster presentations at the Annual Meeting:

- registration cost is waived

- one-year free membership to APMS
- lodging provided by APMS (share two per room)
- network with APMS guest speakers at the Student Luncheon (open to all students)
- cash awards for 1<sup>st</sup> (\$300), 2<sup>nd</sup> (\$200), and 3<sup>rd</sup> (\$100) place oral and poster presentations
- post-conference tour of local research facilities / management areas (open to all students)
- networking with potential employers (all students)

### **Annual Meeting Events and Rationale**

Each of the events scheduled during the Annual Meeting is planned to increase interactions and discussions among attendees. In addition to education, outreach, and business events for delegates, APMS schedules meeting site venues and events for families to enjoy the surroundings during the Annual Meeting.

### **Presidents' Reception – Sunday - 7:00 – 10:00 pm**

The Presidents' Reception begins the week's activities on Sunday evening before the Program commences on Monday morning. Heavy hors d'oeuvres and beverages are free to all registered delegates and guests in a setting selected to encourage attendees to stay and get reacquainted with friends and meet new colleagues. Local musicians are sometimes solicited to further enhance the social experience.

### **Guest Tour – Monday - 10:00 am – 3:00 pm**

Family members and other registered guests are invited to tour places of interest and sample local cuisine during a five-hour trip beginning Monday morning as delegates settle in for the opening session of the Program. Tours include museums, botanical gardens, and historic sites. There is a \$40 fee for each of the 15-25 guests that participate in the tour that is supplemented by Sponsor donations.

### **Program – Monday - 8:00 am through Wednesday Afternoon**

#### Program Content

The Annual Meeting Program is arranged to maximize learning and networking. Forty-five to fifty oral and 10-20 poster presentations are selected from abstract submissions. The Program focus is on current or recently completed research or government management program updates, usually with a special session addressing local issues. Oral presentations are limited to 15 minutes with an additional five minutes for questions and discussion.

#### Continental Breakfasts and Breaks

Each morning begins with a complimentary continental breakfast from 7:00-8:00 am held in the same room as the exhibits to facilitate discussions among delegates and vendors. Morning and afternoon sessions contain 4-5 presentations separated by 30-minute breaks, likewise held in the exhibit hall, allowing time to network and tend to business issues before returning on-time for the next presentation. Lunch breaks are scheduled for an-hour-and-half to accommodate the networking luncheons described below and provide more time for face-to-face interaction among meeting attendees. The hour-and-a-half format increases attendance for the first presentation after the lunch break.

### Student Oral and Poster Competitions

Students who compete in the oral presentation competition report Masters or PhD level research updates for their major professors. Student presenters are alternated among other speakers, scheduled from Monday afternoon through Tuesday at noon to allow enough time for judging between presentations and to tally scores prior to the Tuesday evening Awards Banquet. At least five different volunteer judges are sought every year to evaluate presentations. Both the oral and poster presentations are judged on factors such as; materials and methods, data organization and interpretation, visual and oral presentation, and ability to relate their research to current management issues.

### Annual Business Meeting

The APMS Annual Business meeting is scheduled after the last oral presentation on Monday afternoon. Business items include updates on Committee activities and voting to approve the Slate of Officers and Directors recommended by the Nominating Committee and tentatively accepted by the Board pending the Membership vote of approval. Members may also vote on Bylaws revisions drafted by the Board. All items proposed for Membership vote at the Annual Business Meeting are advertised and explained in the APMS [Newsletter](#) at least 30 days prior to the Annual Meeting.

Toward the end of the Program, a five-minute update is provided by a representative from each APMS Chapter on significant Regional aquatic plant management activities along with logistics for the Chapters' Annual Meetings.

### **Student Affairs Luncheon – Monday – 12:00 pm – 1:30pm**

Open to all students registered for the Annual Meeting, the Student Affairs Luncheon is an opportunity for students to get to know each other and to interact with key APMS members. The Student Affairs Committee Chair presides over the Luncheon. Guest speakers discuss research as well as career opportunities in aquatic plant management-related fields. Students elect a representative to serve a one-year term as the Student Director on the APMS Board of Directors. The Student Director attends all three BOD meetings providing insight on issues of concern among students.

### **Regional Chapters Luncheon – Monday – 12:00pm – 1:30pm**

Each Chapter President and a guest are invited to attend the Regional Chapter Luncheon directed by the Regional Chapters Committee Chair. Attendees discuss management-related issues within each region. Updates are also provided for Chapter attendees on APMS activities. The Chair petitions attendees for suggestions as to how APMS may assist Chapters, for example, in outreach or research matters, and reports back to the APMS Board at the post-conference BOD meeting.

### **Poster Reception – Monday Evening – 6:00 – 7:30pm**

The APMS Poster Reception is presented early on Monday evening with all poster presenters in attendance to explain their work and answer questions. The Poster Reception is held in the Exhibit hall to enhance networking among vendors and sponsors along with researchers. Light hors d'oeuvres and beverages are served to encourage and retain attendance. Afterwards, there is sufficient time for attendees to discuss research or business on site or at a local restaurant.

**Past President's Luncheon – Tuesday – 12:00 – 1:30pm**

All APMS Past Presidents in attendance at the Annual Meeting are invited to share experiences and comment on current issues before the Society. The Past Presidents Advisory Committee Chair leads discussion during the luncheon. The current President also attends to report findings and suggestions back to the Board at the Post-conference Board meeting on Wednesday afternoon.

**Women of Aquatics Luncheon – Tuesday – 12:00 – 1:30pm**

The Women of Aquatics is a newly established group that first met during the APMS Annual Meeting in 2015. This luncheon is open to women registered for the APMS Annual Meeting and is presided over by the Women of Aquatics Special Representative to the APMS Board.

Attendees discuss career opportunities and current issues facing women in aquatic fields.

**Awards Banquet – Tuesday – 6:00 – 10:00pm**

The Awards Banquet is the premier social event of the APMS Annual Meeting. The event is usually held in the hotel banquet hall, but occasionally in a nearby interesting venue. Local entertainment is sometimes booked. A dinner cruise may be scheduled when space is suitable for the 200-250 that may attend. Following a pre-banquet social hour, guests enjoy a sit-down meal with friends and colleagues until about 8:00 pm. Both short and long-term achievement [Awards](#) are presented to APMS members and others who have served in aquatic plant management.

All student presenters are introduced and 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> place cash awards are presented to the winners of the oral and poster presentation competitions. The Outstanding Graduate Student Award is presented, and the recipient of the Graduate Student Research Grant is announced (the GSRG is awarded during even numbered years- more often if sufficient funding or sponsors are available).

After outgoing Officers and Directors are acknowledged and new Board members are introduced, entertainment and fund raising activities for education and outreach programs begin. Silent auction winners are announced and a raffle drawing for grand prizes culminate the banquet. The auction and raffle generate about \$5,000-\$8,000 annually.

**Post-Conference Student Tour – Wednesday – Following the Annual Meeting**

Transportation is provided for students to see first-hand, aquatic plant infestations, management operations, and local research facilities. APMS rents a van or small bus for transportation. The Student Affairs Committee Chair leads the tour with support from several other Committee members in attendance. The group interacts with local researchers and managers at different stops along the tour to discuss plant issues and to review management strategies. The group may stay overnight at a remote site or return to the Annual Meeting Hotel for one last night prior to departing for home. APMS provides lunch and dinner for tour attendees in addition to lodging.