



### **Thinking of Proposing a Special Session? Act Now!**

The Program Committee has received several proposals for special sessions for the 2009 AWRA Annual Water Resources Conference in Seattle November 9-12. AWRA National has requested that we send them any known special session topics to facilitate keeping the abstract submittal process organized. *We are therefore asking people who are interested in organizing a special session for the 2009 Conference, but have not yet communicated their intent to do so, to submit a proposal to the Program Committee as soon as possible.* Proposals should be emailed to Program Committee Co-Chair Alan Black (ablack@hntb.com).

Below, we provide answers to several questions about special sessions that have been asked of us over the past couple of months.

### **What is a Special Session?**

The Planning Committee selects from approved abstracts and creates a balanced slate of sessions comprising presentations that appeal broadly to conference participants. Most sessions can be grouped under many of the general topic headings of the Call for Abstracts. A Special Session may or may not come under the general topics, but it already has an organizer, a theme and presenters lined up. The special session organizer is responsible for contacting the Program Chair to discuss the session contents, etc. The organizer may or may not be moderator of the session and can be a presenter in that session. They should have as many of the details worked out as possible (name of session, participants, theme/description) before they talk to the Chair. Unless prior arrangements are made with the Chair, each session should fit within the standard 90-minute time period allotted to all sessions.

A special session would typically be organized into one of two formats:

Coordinated presentations special sessions would comprise 4 topically linked presentations, each lasting 20 minutes, including time for questions and answers. The special session organizer would be responsible for ensuring that the abstracts and presentations are thematically appropriate and of high quality. After the list of special sessions is finalized, each special session will be assigned a unique code, which will be provided to special session organizers. Special session presenters will be asked to

identify the code when they submit their abstracts online. This will ensure that abstracts/presentations are correctly assigned to their respective sessions.

A panel discussion special session format allows for more expert/expert and expert/audience interaction. Typically the speakers would each have 10 minutes to provide an overview of their work, leaving 50 minutes for exchanges between panelists and audience members. Organizers of panel discussion special sessions are required to submit a single abstract by the May 22<sup>nd</sup> deadline that describes the entire session, including the names of the panelists. The panelists do not need to submit separate abstracts.

### **Why create a special session?**

Special sessions offer conference participants the opportunity to enjoy an in-depth and often provocative treatment of water-related issues that are of special interest to AWRA members. They are intended to facilitate the development, exchange and coordination of information among presenters/panelists before the conference so that specific technical and policy issues can be presented and discussed more effectively at the conference. Special sessions are among the most popular and well-attended sessions at AWRA conferences. This is an opportunity for you to make sure the topics you feel are most deserving are adequately represented on the program.

### **How do I get on the list of special sessions?**

If you are proposing a session made up of 4 speakers, please email a description of your proposed session to Program Co-Chair Alan Black ([ablack@hntb.com](mailto:ablack@hntb.com)) before those speakers submit their abstracts. It isn't necessary that you have a fully developed proposal at this time; you will have until May 22<sup>nd</sup> to submit abstracts. In your proposal, be sure to provide contact information for the proposed session organizer (presumably yourself), a recommended title for the special session, the proposed session format, and a brief overview of the topic and major points of discussion. In short, explain why the topic is relevant and would be compelling to AWRA conference attendees. Although desirable, it isn't necessary that you name the individuals presenters or panelists that would participate in the session. We will contact you with a letter code designation for the speaker to include with the abstracts.

### **Should I discuss my idea for a special session and seek pre-approval from the Program Committee before submitting a proposal?**

Given the later timing, we would like you to just email us your proposal now, as described above, and we'll be happy to discuss details with you as the May 22<sup>nd</sup> abstract deadline approaches. Any idea is a good one for now. As long as you are willing to follow through, there is a high probability that your special session will be selected for the final program.

**Why do we need to notify the Program Chair early?**

Each special session will receive a special code that their organizers and presenters will use to “tag” their abstract during the online submittal process. The Program Chair will use the codes to assign each abstract to the appropriate special session and prevents misplacement of an abstract.

**Will special session participants be extended a special registration discount?**

No, all participants are required to pay registration (note that one-day registrations are available as are student registration rates). The organization of the conference is an all volunteer effort, and there are at this point no exceptions to this policy. Refer to the conference registration form for additional details.

**What if your Special Session includes a distinguished guest that would only be there to support the special session?**

These requests will be dealt with on a case by case basis – most special session speakers attend at least that day of the conference and are asked to pay the one day rate. If distinguished guests have restricted budgets or other issues with this, please consider sponsoring working with the Conference Chair to identify a sponsor for their participation.

*If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.*

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