

OCEANS '15 MTS/IEEE WASHINGTON, DC CONFERENCE

Sea Change “Dive into Opportunity



A little over 2,000 people converged on the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center October 19-22 for OCEANS '15 MTS/IEEE Washington, DC. They comprised a wide variety of technical professionals, researchers, industry leaders, educators, policy makers and students – all interested in sharing the latest information on how marine technology and ocean engineering can support exploring, monitoring, protecting, and wisely using the world's ocean resources.



The conference was honored to have Congressman Sam Farr, co-chair of the House Oceans Conference and Dr. Rick Spinrad, Chief Scientist of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), as the Honorary Co-chairs. We were very fortunate to have Rear Admiral Tim Gallaudet, Oceanographer of the Navy, join Dr. Spinrad as the featured speakers for the Plenary Session. Their outstanding presentations, on the role of oceanography and its underlying technology in supporting Naval operations and the potential market for tailored information products to support the Blue Economy and mitigate coastal threats, are available on the [conference website](#), along with comments by IEEE/OES President René Garello and MTS President Ray Toll.



At the end of the Plenary Session, Mirick and Barbera led a VIP Tour of the Exhibition Hall, including stops at the Student Poster Contest supported by the Office of Naval Research, where Spinrad and Gallaudet, two PhD ocean scientists, could easily have spent the entire day discussing the excellent work of the

contest finalists. The tour also visited the sponsoring society booths, as well as the exhibits of OCEANS '15 Patrons, including the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador which organized the Atlantic Canada Pavilion, Kongsberg Underwater Technology, Inc., and NOAA. At the NOAA booths, the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System unveiled their new logo.

At the heart of every OCEANS conference is the Technical Program and OCEANS '15 Washington, DC upheld the tradition of providing a valuable opportunity for exchanging high quality technical information. Of the 644 abstracts submitted, 488 were accepted into the final program. They were organized into 106 sessions in 11 parallel tracks on Tuesday afternoon through Thursday.



Integrated into the technical programme were a number of Special Sessions, Town Halls and Panels. These group and interactive sessions have grown in popularity and several were Standing Room Only. NOAA's IOOS program was especially active, partnering with The Maritime Alliance to organise "Ignite! A Lightning Round of Innovations, Discoveries, and Applications in Blue Tech!" and a "Town Hall Session on Marine Technology and Services in the Blue Economy." The Blue Economy theme was continued in the "Town Hall on Promoting OceanSTEM and Blue Economy Work Force Development," which was kicked off by opening remarks from Congressman Farr.

A very popular session called "OCEANS '25 (and beyond) – Envisioning the Future of Marine Technology and Ocean

Engineering," was moderated by Dr. Spinrad and included a strong panel of leaders sharing their insights on future needs and trends and what we'll be seeing at OCEANS conferences in the future. The webcast of this intriguing session is available on the conference website.

The technical program also was complemented by six tutorials and four workshops on Monday, preceding the formal opening of the conference. The tutorials were intensive half or full day programs focused on the fundamental elements of a technology or the rudiments of a subject in a classroom setting and earned participants continuing education certificates. The Workshops provided a format for like-minded individuals to spend an extended period of time discussing a topic, such as the all-day XPRIZE workshop on "Catalyzing Ocean Services in a World of Abundant Data."

A lot was going on in the exhibition hall at OCEANS '15. In addition to the 169 booths where 129 companies, institutions and projects were featuring the latest innovations in products, services and programs, a new program was launched. The product theater provided exhibitors the opportunity to expand on their latest innovations in a 30-minute presentation, away from the traffic and noise of the Exhibit aisles. The 12 presentations were scheduled to occur during the breaks in the technical sessions to provide maximum exposure.

The exhibition hall also was home to the Student Poster Contest (SPC). The posters were displayed along one wall of the hall, with the students present to discuss their work during published times. The awards ceremony on Thursday suffered a bit from a malfunctioning sound system, but that didn't dim the enthusiastic response of the crowd. Before the results were revealed, MTS president Ray Toll and IEEE/OES President René Garelo presented a commemorative plaque honoring Norman Miller to Dr. Ellen Livingston of the Office of Naval Research, the long-time sponsor of the contest. The SPC was initiated and championed by Mr. Miller, who passed away in July.

The winners were announced by Liesl Hotaling, MTS Vice President for Education and Research and Philippe Courmontagne, IEEE/OES Student Activities Committee Chair. Dr. Livingston presented the awards: first place to Jeffrey Ellen leading a team from the University of California, San Diego; second place to Luke Rumbaugh, representing a team from Clarkson University in New York; and Third Place to Jie Li and a team from the University of Michigan.

The focus was also on the future generation during the K-12 Teachers Workshop held on the preceding Saturday. The free, full-day workshop provided a hands-on approach to learning and classroom resources on the following topics: ROVs, water quality sensors, buoys, and deep sea exploration. On Monday, a career panel acquainted students with some of the many career options in the oceans field.

As with all OCEANS conferences, there were plenty of opportunities to network and socialize throughout the week, starting off with the Ice Breaker reception on Monday night, including the Exhibitor Reception on Tuesday evening, and topped off by the Capital Casino Night Gala Dinner on Wednesday, where attendees enthusiastically tried their luck at Texas Hold'em, Blackjack, Roulette and Craps. The IEEE/OES and MTS Awards Luncheons provided members with a recap of Society activities and the opportunity to honor their outstanding leaders.

As predicted when the conference theme, 'Sea Change: Dive into Opportunity', was chosen, the week's activities shone a bright light on some of the most critical issues the world faces today and how the community can help society develop solutions to address their impacts and benefit from new opportunities. MTS and IEEE/OES are extremely proud to have sponsored this successful event.