RPSEA Progresses Into A New Phase Of Helping Small Operators

As the oil and gas conference season moved into full swing, I found myself planning a trip to Galveston, Tex., at the end of August to attend the latest conference put on by the Research Partnership to Secure Energy for America. When I mention RPSEA of late, folks generally look a little perplexed and say things such as, “I thought that project was complete.”

They are partially correct. The funding for the 999 portion of RPSEA officially ends this year. However, work continues to move forward as the organization takes on new leadership for the next phase of its work and showcases the last 10 years of successful research for onshore and ultradeepwater operations.

As I began reading through the “Best of RPSEA 10 Years of Research” conference material, it occurred to me just how much impact this organization has had on the oil and gas industry, and on independent operators in particular. I have highlighted many RPSEA projects in this column for their technical solutions aimed at small operators. I also was reminded that RPSEA’s contributions to unconventional resources and ultradeepwater operations have impacted our industry as well.

Many RPSEA-developed technologies have been commercialized and several more are on their way to market. RPSEA’s work includes advances in low-permeability resources, well completions, environmental impact, reducing safety risks, effective use of reservoir and geoscience techniques, drilling and interventions, ultradeepwater floating systems and risers, subsea power systems, measurement and system integrity, and inspection, maintenance and repairs.

RPSEA was formed to develop next-generation technology intended to tap ultradeepwater and unconventional onshore hydrocarbon resources in the United States that were inaccessible or uneconomic using existing technology. Additionally, at RPSEA’s inception, there were few programs that addressed the specific needs of small producers, such as produced water management, power generation and usage costs, and transportation costs. With so many small producers managing stripper wells, it was important that efficient and effective optimization be addressed.

Now, with the announcement that Tom Williams will be taking over the reins of the organization, it is time for the next chapter of RPSEA’s contributions to industry. Williams’ long career includes holding management positions at the U.S. Department of Energy and Interior from 1989 to 1993. He has worked to create programs whereby industry and government can work together.

In a RPSEA press release, Williams says, “This new role at RPSEA is an exciting opportunity to make a contribution during a very challenging time for the oil and gas industry and our country. It is a program whereby our members work together toward common goals. I appreciate the RPSEA board’s trust in me, and believe I can utilize my energy and experiences to help RPSEA as it prospers in the future.”

In his new role, Williams will help RPSEA focus on expanding the opportunities to utilize its unique capabilities and find real solutions that can be applied directly to solving the energy challenges of coming decades.

Returning to RPSEA’s “best of” conference, one project report I found very interesting was titled, “Identifying and Developing Technology for Enabling Small Producers to Pursue the Residual Oil Zone Fairways of the Permian Basin, San Andres,” by Steve Melzer. Another interesting report is, “Reducing the Impacts of Deterioration of Cement Integrity on Small Producers,” by Rouzbeh Shahsavari at Rice University. This can be an especially troubling issue for small operators.

“Petrophysics and Tight Rock Characterization for the Application of Improved Stimulation and Production Technology in Shale,” by James Puckett at Oklahoma State University offered an unconventional perspective. And “Novel Engineered Osmosis Technology: A Comprehensive Approach to the Treatment and Reuse of Produced Water and Drilling Wastewater,” by Tzahi Cath at the Colorado School of Mines addressed an emerging issue.

Finally, “Lowering Drilling Cost, Improving Operational Safety, and Reducing Environmental Impact through Zonal Isolation Improvements for Horizontal Wells Drilled in the Marcellus and Haynesville Shales,” by Paul Sonnier with CSI Technologies LLC held the promise of opportunities for operators working in those shales.

In my experience, RPSEA has been a great organization to work with and I am excited to be a part of its next chapter. Mentioned here are but a few of the presentations at the best of RPSEA event, showcasing a history of solid contributions to industry and a move into the future while keeping innovation and technology development for America top of mind. Keep an eye on this group as it moves forward.

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