

WILLISTON BASIN PETROLEUM CONFERENCE AND EXPO

By Ed Murphy

The Sixteenth Annual Williston Basin Petroleum Conference & Expo was held April 27-29 at the Holiday Inn Riverside and the North Dakota State Fair Center in Minot, ND. The conference was co-hosted by the North Dakota Petroleum Council, North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources, and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources. This was a record-setting conference in every category. The high level of mineral leasing and drilling activity in the Bakken Formation, coupled with the release of the U.S. Geological Survey's assessment of oil in the Bakken Formation two weeks prior to the meeting, and the advertised release of the ND Department of Mineral Resources' Bakken assessment at the conference, resulted in an unprecedented interest. Anticipating some of this interest, earlier in the winter we moved many of the activities (meals, meetings, and Expo) to the more expansive State Fair building complex located across the street from the Holiday Inn. As the pre-registration numbers climbed to 1,370 in the week before the conference, we were in the unenviable position of having to close registration to comply with Fire Marshall restrictions and ensure we were able to provide meals to those in attendance. This conference has always maintained a 20% or so walk-up registration; so that, along with the heightened interest in the conference, may have resulted in roughly 2,000 participants had we not closed registration. As it was, this year's conference registered more than twice the number of people that attended the conference in 2006 and five times as many that attended in 2004 (fig. 1). Attendees came from 27 states and four countries. In 2006, we added the Expo to the conference and sold approximately 65 booths. At this conference, we quickly sold out all 171 booths and could have sold many more (figs. 2 and 3). Exhibitors were very pleased with the traffic and the business that was conducted in the booths during the Expo. We also had nine companies exhibiting cranes, drills, trucks, etc., outside in the parking lot.

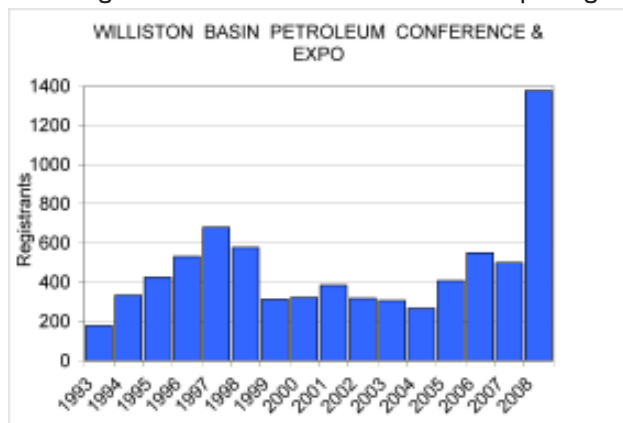


Figure 1. Attendance figures for the Williston Basin Petroleum Conference & Expo (formerly the Williston Basin Horizontal Well Conference).

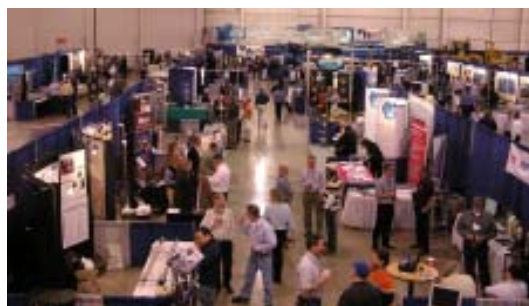


Figure 2. A portion of the Expo during one of the few relatively quiet moments during the conference.



Figure 3. The ND Department of Mineral Resources booth at the 2008 conference. Recently published maps of the Bakken Formation and core of the upper, lower, and middle members of the Bakken Formation were big draws in the DMR booth.

In addition to the Expo, workshops, and traditional activity updates for each of the states and provinces within the Williston Basin, there were 14 other presentations, and two panel discussions: one on pipeline transportation issues and the other on Bakken completion and stimulation. As would be expected, several of the talks focused on the Bakken Formation and were well received. There was also significant interest in other producing horizons such as the Red River Formation that demonstrated a number of companies, for a variety of reasons, are looking beyond the Bakken. The keynote address, entitled *Energy Geopolitics*, was presented by Michael Economides, a professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at the University of Houston, and author of a number of books including *The Color of Money* and *From Soviet to Putin and Back*.

A post-conference electronic survey of registrants indicated that the Expo and the ability to network with fellow participants were the reasons why many attended the conference. The 2009 Williston Basin Petroleum Conference & Expo will be held April 26-28 in Regina, Saskatchewan.