

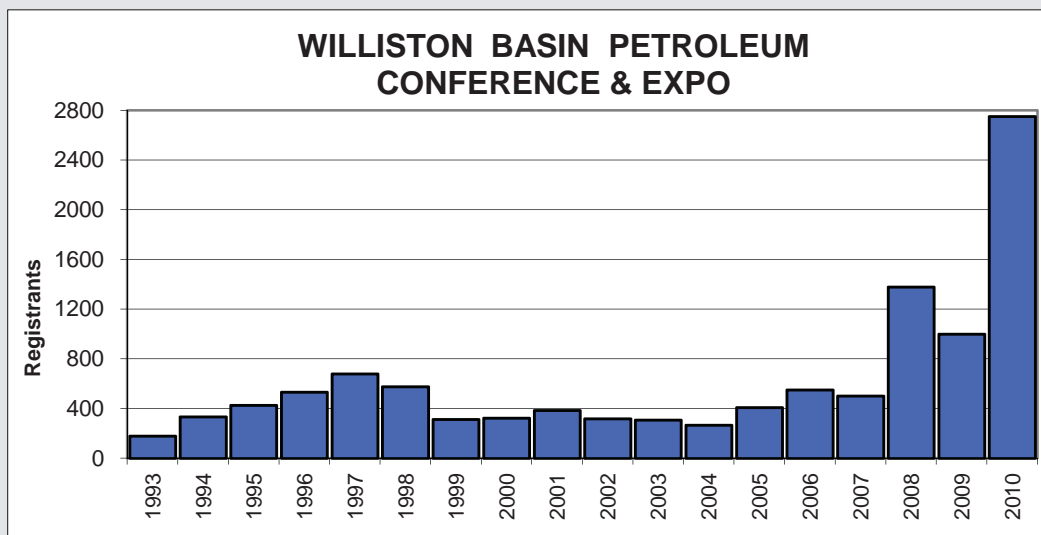
# 2010 Williston Basin Petroleum Conference

by Ed Murphy

The 2010 Williston Basin Petroleum Conference and Prospect Expo was, as they say, “one for the books!” The conference was held at the Bismarck Civic Center from May 2-4 and set an all-time attendance record of 2,750, twice that of the previous record set in Minot in 2008 (fig. 1). Attendees came from 45 states and three Canadian Provinces. The conference offered a record number of 300 booths that were sold out by the first week in February, only three weeks after booth registration had begun.

The Williston Basin Petroleum Conference and Prospect Expo began 18 years ago as the Horizontal-Well Workshop. The conference was created as an opportunity for geologists and engineers in both Canada and the United States to share their successes and failures regarding the relatively new technology of horizontal drilling. One of the significant changes that has come about over the years has been the diversity in attendee backgrounds. In recent years, this meeting has evolved into a business development conference that attracts not only oil companies, service companies, geotechnical firms, and local, state, and federal governments, but also banking establishments, investment firms, housing companies, and a myriad of other businesses that have both direct and indirect financial ties to oil and gas activities (figs. 2 and 3).

The length and diversity of the program has grown significantly over the years. In 1993, the technical program included eight scientific presentations and four panel sessions that spanned a total of 6.5 hours. This year there were 54 scientific presentations resulting in 24 hours of technical program. We incorporated concurrent sessions into the 2010 program because 2008 attendees had requested both more technical, as well as more general presentations. Session themes were diverse and included automation/facilities efficiency, both basic and technical information on the Bakken and Three Forks Formations, Williston Basin geology, Williston Basin drilling and engineering, midstream issues, and resource management. Featured talks included activity updates and forecasts for North Dakota, South Dakota,



**Figure 1.** The 1993 and 1994 meetings were held in Minot and since that time have alternated between Regina during odd numbered years and either Bismarck or Minot during even numbered years.



**Figure 2.** The Prospect Expo portion of the conference was held within the Exhibition Hall of the Bismarck Civic Center.

Montana, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan as well as Bakken/Three Forks frac design, connectivity between the Bakken and Three Forks Formations, and Bakken crude on the world market. One of the highlights of the conference was a presentation entitled Parshall Project by Mike Johnson, Association of American Petroleum Geologist's 2009 Explorer of the Year. Johnson's talk detailed his recognition of similarities between the Middle Bakken in Mountrail County, North Dakota with the Middle Bakken in the Elm Coulee Field in Montana, which led to the discovery of the prolific Parshall Field in 2005. Mike received two standing ovations during his presentation in recognition of his important contribution to the ongoing Bakken play in North Dakota.

Several Department of Mineral Resources employees gave multiple presentations. Lynn Helms, Steve Nordeng, and Julie LeFever spoke on three different occasions. Lynn gave a presentation on Sunday entitled *Bakken Basics: Drilling, Fracing, Producing (How it Works)* to a capacity crowd and was asked to repeat it again during breakfast on Tuesday. On Monday, he discussed *Oil Activity in the North Dakota Portion of the Williston Basin* and released the findings of the *DMR Three Forks Oil Assessment*. Steve and Julie, along with Rich LeFever, presented Bakken/Three Forks core workshops on Sunday and Tuesday. In addition, Steve gave a presentation entitled *The Bakken Source System: Emphasis on the Three Forks* and Julie presented on *The Horizontal Drilling Potential of the Spearfish Formation (Triassic) in North Central North Dakota*. I gave a presentation entitled *Bakken and Three Forks Basics*.

The Williston Basin Petroleum Conference and Prospect Expo is co-sponsored by the North Dakota Petroleum Council, North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources, and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources. Although the conference has changed

significantly since 180 scientists and engineers first assembled in 1993, the exchange of information across the international border remains one of the centerpieces of the conference.



**Figure 3.** There were 25 exhibits in the static outdoor display including two workover rigs, two pump jacks, a production test unit, park model homes used in the oil patch "man camps," and meter buildings.

*The background photograph of Governor John Hoeven speaking in the main arena of the 2010 Williston Basin Petroleum Conference is courtesy of the North Dakota Petroleum Council.*