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July 2019 Sneak Peek Preview

## 2019 URTeC Returns To Rockies Roots

By Scott Singleton

DENVER—The Unconventional Resources Technology Conference was first held in Denver in the summer of 2013, starting its life as an upstart new conference that had grand visions of one day equaling the Offshore Technology Conference on the land side of the business. That first year was understandably small, with URTeC occupying only a portion of Denver’s Colorado Convention Center. But the topic obviously struck a chord with the oil and gas industry, attracting almost 4,400 people and causing an incredible buzz on the show floor.

As a result, the industry was ready for the next year, when the number of submitted abstracts shot upwards, the show floor doubled in size, and attendance jumped to 5,300. The buzz of these first two years was thanks to the simple fact that the Society of Petroleum Engineers, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, and the Society of Exploration Geophysicists had successfully come together to jointly create a conference catering to the unconventional industry and devoted to the theme of “technical integration,” which many of us in the unconventional side of the business knew for a long time to be necessary, but one was sadly lacking at the time.

Unfortunately, as we all know, the industry crashed in 2015, taking everything and everyone with it. The URTeC conferences in 2015 and 2016, both held in San Antonio, suffered the consequences, having the lowest attendance of any years before or after. URTeC then rotated to Denver in 2017, and attendance once again exceeded 4,000, abstract submissions once again exceeded 800, and activity, much to everyone’s relief.

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The following year, the 2018 URTeC rotated to Houston, where well over 6,000 attendees crammed into a large and vibrant show floor. It was evident that the industry was once again open for business.

This year, URTeC has the privilege of returning to Denver, the site of its origin, on July 22-24. We are thrilled that the industry is continuing its recovery and all signs point to this conference being as big or bigger than last year's Houston conference. Abstract submissions have exceeded 800, as is typical of the last few years, but this year it was achieved without any abstract deadline extensions. Pre-registrations are running ahead of last year's conference, which may result in more attendees or may indicate more people have to plan travel and so are registering ahead of time. Either way, it's a good sign!

## **Collaborative Production**

To provide an impression of the breadth and depth of the collaboration that produces URTeC, I first should say that although there are three sponsoring societies—SPE, AAPG and SEG—there are eight other endorsing societies. They are:

- American Rock Mechanics Association;
- American Institute of Chemical Engineers;
- Association for Iron & Steel Technology;
- American Society of Civil Engineers;
- American Society of Mechanical Engineers;
- Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration;
- Society of Petroleum Evaluation Engineers; and
- Society of Petrophysicists & Well Log Analysts.

Two of these societies, ARMA and SPWLA, have special sessions at URTeC where they present “best of” papers. Other special sessions feature the Hydraulic Fracture Test Sites (HFTS I and II) in the Permian Basin, and midstream challenges and logistics solutions in the Permian. The midstream is new to the conference and our intention is to highlight the challenges the industry is facing getting product to market. Supported by the National Energy Technology Laboratory and GTI, the HFTS consortia had two sessions last year that were among the most popular in the conference. The sessions will reprise again this year with the newly offered HFTS II consortium.

The conference kicks off with an opening plenary session on Monday morning, July 22. The speakers are Mike Henderson, senior vice president at Marathon, Clay Gaspar, president of WPX Energy, Susan Cunningham, adviser at Darcy Partners, Brad Holly, president and chief executive officer of Whiting Petroleum and Shawn Bennett, deputy assistant secretary for oil and natural gas at the U.S. Department of Energy. Following the plenary session, the first full slate of focused panel sessions begins.

## **Panel Sessions**

Panel sessions are scheduled for all three days. Topics range from development activity in horizontal resource plays to the development of new technology, starting on Monday morning with two concurrent sessions featuring:

- Sustainable development goals for unconventional, with panelists Denise Cox, president of Storm Energy, Ray Leonard, president of Anglo Eurasia LLC (AAPG), Linda Battarola, professor of petroleum engineering at Colorado School of Mines (SPE) and Nancy House, principal of Integrated Interpretation (SEG); and
- A view from the front lines of unconventional play development, with panelists Chad McAllister, vice president-Permian at Anadarko, Dave Cannon, vice president-geoscience at Diamondback Energy, Dale Kokoski, vice president-Eagle Ford at Marathon and Chris Edwards, vice president at Whiting

## Petroleum.

Monday afternoon's panel discusses the value proposition of microseismic mapping of hydraulic fractures. Tuesday morning's panel session focuses on induced seismicity, followed by another panel in the afternoon analyzing hydraulic fracturing's effects on well integrity.

Wednesday morning's technical program includes a panel on the "next technology frontier in unconventional," with Rusty Mathis, reservoir optimization adviser at Chevron, Frederic Wasden, project manager at iShale, Jon Ludwig, CEO of Novi Labs, Sidd Gupta, CEO of Nesh, David Craig, director of stimulation design at Oxy, and Erdal Ozkan, professor of petroleum engineering at Colorado School of Mines.

On Wednesday afternoon, panelists Mariano Gurfinkel, advanced analytics manager at Marathon, Sebastien Matringe, reservoir optimization manager at Newfield, Srikanta Mishra, senior research leader at Battelle, Patrick Rutty, director of technical consulting at DrillingInfo, and Jose Contreras, reservoir engineering adviser at Baker Hughes, provide an update on data analytics in unconventional plays.

## Breakfasts And Luncheons

URTeC also has an aggressive topical breakfast and luncheon program, with 13 total presentations scheduled. Monday luncheons feature Congressman Ken Buck, R-Co., discussing the landscape of the oil and gas industry in the state, Three Rivers Operating Company IV's CEO Mike Wichterich assessing the status of the U.S. shale revolution, and 2019 SEG President Rob Stewart, a professor at the University of Houston, looking at where geoscience is headed in the 2020s.

Tuesday breakfast sessions feature a presentation on enhanced oil recovery technologies for unconventional oil reservoirs by University of Houston Professor Ganesh Thakur, and a preview of the next phase in the shale revolution by Lime Rock Management Director Gary Sernovitz.

Attendees can choose from three concurrent luncheons on Tuesday. They are titled:

- "Horizontal Drilling in the Permian: A look at the Objectives," by J. Michael Party, president of AAPG and president of Beryl Oil & Gas LP;
- "Increasing Recovery: Basin-Specific Approach and Produced Water," by Elena Melchert, director, office of fossil energy, U.S. DOE; and
- "How to Protect Your Company from Extinction," by M. J. Clark, senior leadership consultant at Integrated Leadership Systems.

Wednesday also features two breakfasts and three luncheons. The breakfast programs cover "freshwater neutral" water management by Karen Olson, director at Southwestern Energy Co., and perforating design impacts on hydraulic fracturing by Steve Baumgartner, senior engineering adviser at GEODynamics.

The luncheons on Wednesday are titled:

- "Politics, Policies and Passion: Lessons from Colorado," by Dan Haley, president and CEO of the Colorado Oil & Gas Association;
- "Seismicity in Texas: What We have Learned from the First Three Years of TexNet-CISR Monitoring and Research," by Peter Hennings, research scientist at the Center for Integrated Seismicity Research at the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas at Austin; and
- "The Role of Technology in Driving down Unconventional Reservoir Cost-of-Supply: Historical Results and Future Projections," by Greg Leveille, chief technology officer at ConocoPhillips.

## Special Events

Recognizing the role that advancing technology plays in unconventional resource development, a special URTeC event, the U-Pitch Pavilion, must be mentioned. U-Pitch provides an opportunity for those with new offerings to make their pitch to potential investors, clients and partners. Thirty presentation slots over the Monday through Wednesday timeframe will enable conference attendees to look at many innovative ideas.

Surrounding the conference, we have events both before and afterward. On the weekend preceding the conference, four societies (AAPG, SEG, SPE and ASME) collectively are offering 15 one- or two-day courses. I encourage all interested participants to register for these courses, because as is the norm for any course offering anywhere, the classes will be cancelled if they do not make a required minimum number of registrants. On the other hand once the courses are full, registration will be closed.

In addition to the preconference activities, if URTeC attendees haven't had enough fun by the end of the conference, on Thursday, July 25, Steve Sonnenburg is offering an all-day field trip to the Wattenberg Field in the Northern Front Range of the Denver-Julesburg Basin. Sonnenburg is the Charles Boettcher Distinguished Chair in Petroleum Geology at the Colorado School of Mines. The field trip will stop at outcrops for all of the main Niobrara and associated reservoir units. The event is sponsored by Rocky Mountain Association of Geologists.

I highly recommend that everyone in the unconventional oil and gas industry make sure to mark this 2019 URTeC on their calendars. It is the "must-see" event for the hottest segment of the industry. I predict a record crowd, given the resurgence of unconventional plays. And it is in Denver in the summer. What more could one ask for?



**SCOTT SINGLETON** is the SEG Technical Co-Chair for URTeC 2019 and the geophysical and geomechanical technology adviser for Independence Resources Management, a private equity-funded operator in the Midland Basin. He has 35 years of experience in the oil and gas industry, spanning from offshore acquisition as a doodle bugger to seismic processing, interpretation, geophysical reservoir characterization and shale reservoir geomechanics. Singleton has spent the past eight years working in unconventional resource plays. He holds a B.S. in geophysics from the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology and an M.S. in geophysics from Texas A&M University.

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