

Guest Editorial

Stephen A. Holditch, 2002 SPE President

The SPE Public Energy Education Committee



Holditch

Stephen A. Holditch was 2002 SPE President. He is a Schlumberger Fellow and a leading consultant in the upstream oil and gas industry. As a Schlumberger Fellow, he serves as the Production and Reservoir Engineering adviser to the top managers at Schlumberger. Holditch also consults for Holditch Reservoir Technologies, a Schlumberger company. He served as Vice President Finance on the SPE Board of Directors during 1998–2000 and is a member of the SPE Board of Directors. Holditch has received several SPE technical and professional awards, including becoming a Distinguished Member in 1989 and receiving the Lester C. Uren Award, the John Franklin Carll Award, and the Distinguished Achievement Award for Petroleum Engineering Faculty. He is a member of the Natl. Academy of Engineering, the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, and the Petroleum Engineering Academy of Distinguished Graduates of Texas A&M U., where Holditch earned BS, MS, and PhD degrees and currently serves as an adjunct faculty member.

SPE officers spend significant time traveling around the world to meet with members at regional and section meetings. We listen to your concerns and ideas. Additionally, SPE has conducted focus groups as part of two needs assessments to identify new opportunities to serve our members. Three consistent themes have emerged in these discussions throughout the world. Members have consistently told us that SPE should do more (1) to strengthen senior company-management support for SPE, (2) to encourage young people to join our industry, and (3) to improve our industry's public image.

To address these three issues, SPE established the Public Energy Education Committee (PEEC) in 2002. The following Vision, Objectives, and Key Messages have been identified by the PEEC.

Vision

Students, the general public, industry customers, industry employees, governments, and nongovernmental organizations understand the accomplishments and challenges involved in producing oil and natural gas, as well our industry's contribution to their quality of life.

Project Objectives

1. To provide easy access to credible sources of informational material on the oil and gas industry and the role of petroleum engineers.
2. To design and implement a process whereby SPE members and others working in the oil and gas industry are encouraged and supported to seek opportunities to deliver the informational material.
3. To encourage young people to choose to work in the oil and gas industry.
4. To share best practices and lessons learned on the process of communicating with the public.
5. To adapt programs and materials for use in the diverse regions of the world where SPE has a presence.

Key Messages

1. Oil and natural gas are critical to the world economy, empowering people by providing mobility and improving their quality of life.

2. The oil and gas industry uses cutting-edge technologies to bring consumers the oil and natural gas that support their way of life.

3. The extraction and processing of oil and gas can be (and are) accomplished safely and with minimal impact on the environment.

The PEEC plans to complete the first phase of its work by the end of 2004. By that time, SPE will have a prominent website, as part of SPE.org, devoted to collecting, storing, and disseminating energy education materials.

Implementation

Once the information needed to meet the Vision and Objectives of the committee are either on or linked to SPE.org, we must energize our 55,000 members to be their industry's champion—to go to their local schools, their civic organizations, and other groups with facts about the benefits of having an economical and reliable source of energy. It is clear that a country's standard of living is directly related to its access to a reliable, affordable supply of energy. For the next few decades, the primary source of that energy will be fossil fuels.

Neither the SPE staff nor the SPE officers and directors are the primary implementers of public energy education: **our members will need to do the work.** We also need to cooperate with other groups, such as the American Assn. of Petroleum Geologists and the Soc. of Exploration Geophysicists, to help with this education effort. To that end, SPE plans to form a large network of volunteers, which we are calling the Public Energy Education Implementation Network Committee. SPE has 14 administrative regions. Each region will be asked to find a volunteer to be the Regional PEEC Coordinator. The Regional PEEC Coordinators will work with SPE sections and student chapters to set up section and chapter committees devoted to Public Energy Education. These section and chapter PEECs then will plan and implement activities appropriate for their countries, their communities, and their cultures. It is apparent that the way these section and chapter committees operate will have to be tailored for local school systems and local cultures, but the end results should be similar.

We need to be proactive in telling people about the sources and importance of energy in their lives and our industry's concern for the environment that surrounds those precious resources. SPE members must take every opportunity to speak to their local schools and civic organizations. When we do this, we communicate information that educates and that dispels misconceptions, and we open the door for real communication.

This is not a 1- or 2-year project. Successful education of the public is a long-term effort, but it is a goal worthy of our commitment.

Each of us can make a difference. Imagine what we can do together. Contact the SPE President at president@spe.org if you want to help in the PEEC initiative.

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