

September 2011

Annual Report of the Eastern Section, National Association of Geoscience Teachers.

The eastern section is pleased to report that we continue to be an active, participating section within NAGT. Our section maintains the tradition of scheduling the section conference / meeting for late spring, usually during the month of May. The spring 2011 section conference was held in Johnstown Pennsylvania during the weekend of May 19-22. Eastern section meetings typically consist of a four-day schedule of events; and conference participants can elect to attend the entire weekend, or selected events. Activities include poster sessions, presentations, workshops, field trips, awards, recognition dinner banquet, and the section business meeting. The section conference usually includes a Thursday early registration and arrival with a social gathering, field trip or evening session guest speaker. Friday includes morning poster sessions, workshops, and presentations till midday. Friday afternoon will typically offer a group field trip to a point of local interest. Saturday has been reserved for the traditional eastern section geological field trip(s) and excursions. Participants are transported by either rental vans or school bus. The section awards and recognition banquet is held on Saturday evening, with awards given to section OEST winners, as well as other section award recipients recognized for their contributions to the section and Geoscience education. The eastern section conducts the section business during a Sunday morning breakfast meeting, with section conference activities ending before noon. Typical attendance at a section meeting averages forty members, which represents approximately twenty-three percent of our active membership of one hundred seventy five section members. Our meetings are open to both members and non-members, and efforts to recruit attendees from local schools and colleges often results in an average additional five conference attendees. The average fees established for eastern section conferences average one hundred twenty dollars, with fees slightly higher for non-NAGT members. Discounts are made available for spouses to attend, and OEST awardees from the previous year can attend the conference for free.

Whenever possible, the eastern section relies heavily on local schools and universities to provide a host site for the conference. The spring 2011 Johnstown conference was hosted by the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. Our 2011 meeting provided us with the unique opportunity to include many of our university students currently majoring in geology and earth-space sciences to participate along with our NAGT members. Coinciding with the section meeting was the universities first summer session of courses. Students within the geology program were currently taking the departments “Geologic Field Methods” course, and we combined our conference Saturday field trip along with our students field work for that day. The students had the opportunity to work and interact with NAGT members throughout the entire day. This provided an ideal situation for interaction between students and a wide assortment of veteran Geoscience educators.

The eastern section continues to recognize excellence in Geoscience education. Much emphasis is placed on recruiting nominations for, and recognizing Outstanding Earth Science Teachers from each state within our section. OEST winners are encouraged to attend the section meeting and then continue their active affiliation with NAGT.

The eastern section also awards our own field camp scholarship to a student planning to attend a summer geological field camp experience. The section “James O’Connor Memorial Field Camp” award is in the amount of five hundred dollars each year, given to one selected applicant.

The eastern section also awards its “Distinguished Service Award” to a member of the section. The distinguished service award is given to a member of the eastern section (still actively teaching or retired) who has, over the years, contributed to the growth and activities of the eastern section.

Outstanding teaching at the college level is recognized by the section in the awarding of the “John Moss” award. The John Moss award is reserved for instructors and professors who, at the college level, model outstanding teaching in the geosciences.

The section “Digman” award is designed to recognize an individual who works to bring Geoscience to the general public. We look for individuals who are not teachers; but work in a capacity that educates the general public in areas of the geosciences. Museum directors, curators and assistants, state survey employees, mine and quarry public relations people would all qualify for this award.

The eastern section publishes its newsletter The Bulletin four times each year. This new letter keeps members informed of activities within the section and encourages any member to submit an article to be published. Traditionally, The Bulletin has been hard-copy mailed to every member of the section. Beginning with the winter 2011-2012 edition The Bulletin will now be sent electronically to every member; unless they specifically request a mailed hard copy.

As with many other organizations, the eastern section tends to rely on a core group of dedicated members to maintain the section activities and business. Our spring conference is the one opportunity each year when members of the section can gather to exchange their knowledge of Geoscience education. We strive to continue the recognition of individuals for their contributions to Geoscience education, and our annual section conference places a high priority on that part of our mission.

Respectfully submitted,
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