

Funding New Technology

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The invited organization to this year's Offshore Technology Conference (OTC) is the Research Partnership to Secure Energy for America (RPSEA), a consortium of producers, service companies, and academia working to fund upstream R&D projects. Each year, OTC—which is sponsored by 12 oil and gas industry organizations and societies—invites one or more organizations to develop special programming to provide a focused supplement to the OTC program. The special programming normally complements the technology presented by one of the sponsoring societies. Previous invited organizations have included the Society for Underwater Technology last year, the French Oil and Gas Suppliers and Services Council in 2007, and the UK Energy Institute in 2006.

At this year's conference, which takes place 4–7 May in Houston, RPSEA will organize a Wednesday afternoon technical session that will provide an overview of its work and the types of technology it is funding. Panelists will include GE Oil & Gas Chief Executive Officer and President Claudi Santiago, US Department of Energy Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy Victor Der, RPSEA President C. Michael Ming, Devon Energy Senior Vice President for Exploration William A. Van Wie, Rice University Mechanical Engineering Professor Enrique V. Barrera, Letton-Hall Group Partner Jim Hall, GE Oil and Gas General Manager for Advanced Technology Mohamed A. Ali, and OTC Board Member and RPSEA Ultra-Deepwater Technology Commercialization Manager Art Schroeder.

The industry consensus is that hydrocarbons will likely be the world's primary energy source for at least the next two decades, and that new and enhanced technologies are critical for developing and producing those hydrocarbons to meet global demand. Technology uptake in the oil and gas industry historically has been slow compared with other industries. Price cyclicality that leads to industry cost cutting does not help, as R&D projects are often the first to go by the wayside in down periods.

RPSEA, as well as other organizations, are trying to jump-start interest in developing new technologies and forge consortiums among small and large producers, service providers, and academia. RPSEA's memberships cover a wide spectrum, including such companies and institutions as Anadarko, BP, Baker Hughes, ConocoPhillips, Marathon, Petrobras, Schlumberger, Shell, Weatherford, StatoilHydro, Penn State University, Texas A&M University, the University of Texas at Austin, and Stanford University, among others. The consortium's focus is on developing projects in three areas: ultra-deepwater, unconventional resources, and smaller production in mature fields.

Last month, the organization—which receives federal funding to oversee the program—announced that it had selected nine unconventional resources proposals for possible award. Those projects include Barnett Shale water management and reuse technologies, novel gas-isotope interpretation tools to optimize gas-shale production, and tight-gas sand development in the Piceance Basin. In the past 2 years, RPSEA has funded deepwater projects involving subsea power generation and flow measurement, well intervention, subsalt imaging, and riser design. **JPT**

JPT is always eager to hear from its readers. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact me at jdonnelly@spe.org or by phone at +1.713.779.9595 ext. 616.

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