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Conference Review - 4th International Phytotechnologies Conference, Denver, CO, September 24-26, 2007

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CONFERENCE REVIEW—4TH INTERNATIONAL PHYTOTECHNOLOGIES CONFERENCE, DENVER, CO, SEPTEMBER 24–26, 2007

Jason C. White and Joel G. Burken

Co-Vice Presidents, International Phytotechnology Society

The manuscripts in this current and dedicated issue of the *International Journal of Phytoremediation* were presented at the 4th International Phytotechnologies Conference (Denver, CO) from September 24–26, 2007. The Conference was co-sponsored by US EPA and the International Phytotechnology Society, with additional support from ChevronTexaco, BP, Edenspace, Dynamax, Weston, Roux Associates, and Taylor and Francis. The meeting boasted 74 platform presentations, as well as an additional 40 posters and 7 exhibitors. Attendees represented 25 countries, numbering in excess of 155 scientists, engineers, regulators, site owners, and students. This conference follows previous such meetings in May of 2000, in Boston, MA; March of 2003, in Chicago, IL; and April of 2005, in Atlanta, GA—firmly establishing itself as a premier gathering of the leaders in the field of phytotechnologies. This meeting also represented to the first gathering of the newly formed (summer 2007) International Phytotechnology Society.

The meeting opened on September 24th with a Plenary Session that featured a welcome by Conference Co-Chairs Steve Rock (US EPA) and Lee Newman (University of South Carolina). As part of the opening ceremonies, Dr. Milton Gordon was remembered and his career accomplishments were summarized by his friend and colleague, Lee Newman. Milt was remembered by all as a true scholar and gentleman. He will be missed personally and professionally by all that were fortunate to know him. In Milt's honor, the Milton Gordon Award was established and presented to its first recipient, Jerry Schnoor (University of Iowa), for his career accomplishments in phytoremediation. Dr. Schnoor then delivered a keynote talk on Global Perspective for Phytotechnologies that helped set an international tone for the conference. Other speakers in the Plenary Session included David Tsao (BP), who spoke on the Interstate Technology and Regulatory Council (ITRC); Tomas Vanek (Czech Republic), who spoke on phytoremediation in Eastern Europe; and Yongming Luo (China), who summarized phytoremediation research and development in China.

The remainder of the conference consisted of concurrent sessions that truly embodied the international field of phytotechnologies and the broad diversity of research efforts, ranging from full-scale implementation to fundamental molecular research seeking to genetically modify plant and bacterial systems to build new tools for the next generation of

phytotechnologies. Many new research areas were included, such as wetlands applications, vegetative covers, genetic engineering efforts, and use of plants as monitors or sentinels of environmental contamination. New initiatives that utilize plants for biofuels and in urban sustainability efforts highlighted the diverse applications and potential for phytotechnologies. Some of these new areas exemplified the initial attractive advantages of phytotechnologies, including the public's acceptance and embrace of plant-based treatment systems and the duality of phytotechnologies in treatment/remediation and concurrent ecological enhancement. In the current landscape, these advantages also include potential for carbon management and renewable energy. A number of these groundbreaking research efforts are highlighted in this publication of *The International Journal of Phytoremediation*. Specifically, session topics on day one include a historical perspective on the field of phytoremediation, total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH), and molecular genetics. Session topics covered on day two included groundwater, urban sustainability, salt/selenium, phytomonitoring, biowaste, biofuels, phytoextraction of metals, vegetative covers, and pesticides/polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). On day three, topics included restoration, energetics, and wetlands.

A poster and exhibit reception was held during the evenings of September 24th and 25th, which included judging of submissions to the student poster competition. In addition, on the evening of the 24th, the members of the International Phytotechnology Society gathered at one of Denver's finest Brew clubs for a meeting (minutes available at <http://www.phytosociety.org/>). At that meeting, the officers for the newly formed society were elected; they are as follows:

- *President*- Lee Newman (University of South Carolina)
- *Co-Vice Presidents*- Joel G. Burken (Missouri University of Science and Technology) and Jason C. White (Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station)
- *Secretary*- Elizabeth Nichols (University of North Carolina)
- *Treasurer*- Steve Rock (US EPA)

On the evening of the 25th, the editorial board of the *International Journal of Phytoremediation* gathered a separate establishment. In 2007, manuscript submissions to the journal were up by 19% over 2006. Current estimates at the time this conference review went to press were an additional 20% increase in submissions for 2008. As a result, Taylor and Francis have increased both the number of issues (from 6 to 8), and the numbers of papers within those issues. In addition, as of July 2008, the *International Journal of Phytoremediation* has moved to the on-line submission/review system of Manuscript Central™ (ScholarOne, Inc). Other relevant statistics:

1. Impact factor at the time this conference review went to press was 1.489
2. The *IJP* rejection rate is 41%.
3. 36% of submissions are from the US; 64% are from abroad.
4. Those international submissions have come from 42 countries.

At the closing plenary session, David McMillan (Natresco Group Companies) announced the student poster winners. The first place winner was Andrew (Doug) Gemmel (University of KwaZulu-Natal); second place went to Melissa Whitfield (Royal Military College), and third place went to Jwan Ibbini (Kansas State University). In addition, the goals and agenda for IPS in 2008 and beyond were discussed, including the 5th International Phytotechnologies Conference. The 5th Phytotechnologies Conference was held in Beijing,

China this past October (2008) and was organized by Yongming Lou and Jing Song. Details concerning this and future conferences can be found at <http://www.phytosociety.org/>. After the closing plenary session, IPS organized local tours of National Renewable Energy Labs, US EPA Region 8 Headquarters, and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, where phytoremediation has been applied.

Perhaps like no other field of study, phytotechnologies require an immense range of expertise—scaling from molecular mechanisms to multi-hectare plume control systems. By bringing these leading scientists, engineers, and regulators together, the Phytotechnologies Conference series seeks to not only assess the current state of the science and application of phytotechnologies around the globe, but to plot out the direction and goals for plant-based remediation systems in the future, as well. In the humble opinion of these attendees, the Phytotechnologies Conference series has again not only achieved but also surpassed these goals.