

# PEERS 2018 • PORTLAND, OR

## Q&A With 2018 PEERS Conference Chairman Mark LeBel



**Q. What do you feel is the key reason that mill management should attend PEERS this year?**

It provides an opportunity to learn about the latest technical developments and best practices that benefit mills in the PEERS areas.

Among the many advantages of attending are networking with peers and leaders from operating companies, academia and suppliers, and direct participation in workshops, panel discussions, technical committee meetings, and more.

**Q. As the 2018 PEERS program was being developed, what were the goals in terms of education and real-world applications?**

We specifically conducted an Ambassador program where volunteers and TAPPI staff met with a number of mills. The meetings were focused on what mill management/staff felt were topics of specific importance to them, and soliciting tangible returns on investment that could be brought back to the workplace.

We also discussed how PEERS can serve as a training tool for mill personnel. This year, we are excited to offer Continuing Education Units (CEUs). The feedback was that this would be helpful to all employees attending – but particularly those with professional engineering licenses.

**Q. Can you share which topics/tracks you feel will be most impactful to management/mill workers?**

All of them, of course!

Our goal is for the program to be beneficial to as many mill people as possible. The workshops provide practical information on topics integral to successful mill operations and best practices.

PEERS is again co-located with the International Bioenergy & Bioproducts Conference (IBBC) which always has great material for mills exploring (or taking advantage of) new technical developments in these areas.

We also have a number of panel discussions planned for mill personnel to share their knowledge and experiences, such as chip quality issues specific to the Pacific Northwest, and how advanced automation projects can improve mill bottom line outcomes.

Attending the open Technical Committee meetings is a great way to see what's going on in the various disciplines and gives you the opportunity to have direct involvement in establishing the Technical Information Papers (TIPs) and Standards that so many of us rely on.

**Q. Regarding the Hot Topics Breakfast – how are topics selected; what can attendees expect to learn?**

The Hot Topics Breakfast has been a popular mainstay of the conference. It is a great way to gain insight and connect with industry leaders in a more intimate and less formal setting. Topics are selected based on feedback from the mills, along with the Pulp Manufacturing and Engineering Division Conference Technical Program Chairs. The breakfast tables are hosted by a conference participant/presenter and up to nine spots are available per table in order to keep the discussions intimate and engaging. Slots are on a first-come, first-serve basis and are available to reserve now.



**Q. How does the special mill pricing benefit mills?**

Special pricing allows mills to take advantage of reduced fees while giving them the flexibility to send multiple people over the course of the conference. The program allows for five slots that can be shared from the opening session on Monday through the end of the IBBC sessions Wednesday afternoon. The benefits of having slots rather than attendance dedicated to specific individuals is that mills can tailor the attendees to the topics in a given day, or multiple days, depending on availability, interest and mill production demands.

**Q. What changes have you brought to the event with your Chairmanship this year?**

I mentioned previously the introduction of CEUs and championing/participating in the Ambassador program. I am also looking forward to working with TAPPI to improve/change the way we drive conference participants to engage with exhibitors.

**Q. Closing comments?**

I'd like to thank all of the volunteers on the PEERS 2018 Planning Committee and TAPPI staff for contributing to the development of an exciting program! I think the mill feedback this year was extremely important, and I look forward to the conference returning to the Portland area. Be sure to join us and take advantage of the high quality program planned and the outstanding expertise being showcased.

# Technical Solutions for Today and Beyond

## Information That Powers Performance

- **Eight Conference Tracks** focused on today's relevant Mill issues, featuring career development components. **Plus**, access to the entire IBBC technical program
- **Workshops** designed to provide hands-on experience that can be put to use immediately in all operational areas
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Expert-led program provides real-world results for actual challenges Mill teams face each day.

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Additional discounted pricing tiers available. For more info, please contact Lisa Stephens at: [lstephens@tappi.org](mailto:lstephens@tappi.org) or 770-209-7313.

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