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Federal Highway Administration



The Environmental Quarterly

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Environmental Colleague:

Welcome to the latest edition of the Environmental Quarterly. Our lead article focuses on the expansion of the Resource Center Environment Technical Services Team—now officially the Environment and Realty Technical Services Team. Co-authored by Marshall Wainright, Realty Team Leader and Michele Palicka, Realty Specialist, this article provides an excellent introduction to the various services the Realty component of our Technical Services Team has to offer. I would also like to extend my personal congratulations to the Environmental Excellence Award winners and the recipients of the Environmental Discipline Annual and Career Achievement Awards.

As always, if you have stories you'd like to contribute or story ideas for this newsletter, let us know.

Sincerely,

Lamar Smith
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The RC Environment & Realty Technical Services Team: Our New Name Reflects Our Expanded Services

Michele Palicka, RC ENV-Realty TST
Marshall Wainright, Team Leader RC ENV-Realty TST

Something exciting has happened on the FHWA Resource Center Environment Technical Services Team (RC ENV TST)! With the addition of a Realty section, the RC ENV TST is now the Environment and Realty Technical Services Team (RC ENV-Realty TST).

The new team consists of Marshall Wainright, Michele Palicka, and Chrisy Currier and we would like introduce ourselves and our services to all of you.



Marshall Wainright, the Realty lead, joined the team in April 2012 from the FHWA Office of Real Estate Services in headquarters where he worked for 8 years. During his tenure in headquarters, Marshall covered the appraisal, acquisition, relocation functions under the Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (Uniform Act) as well as the property management function, and the control of outdoor advertising and junkyards under the Highway Beautification Act of 1965. For the six years immediately prior to joining this team he served as the National Relocation Expert for the agency. Prior to his service with FHWA, Marshall worked for the Florida Department of Transportation as a Right-of-Way (ROW) agent in the Central Florida region. Contact Marshall at marshall.wainright@dot.gov / (404) 562-3692.



Michele Palicka joined the team a little over a year ago on a part-time basis but recently joined the team full-time this spring. Before joining the realty team full-time, Michele worked in the Georgia Division for around 13 years as the Division Realty Officer, responsible for the oversight of the Georgia Department of Transportation's Right of Way Program, as well as an environmental coordinator for a few Georgia Department of Transportation Districts. Before joining FHWA in 2000, she worked as a ROW agent for the Florida Department of Transportation in the Central Florida region. Contact Michele at michele.palicka@dot.gov / Ph: (404) 562-3918



Chrisy Currier, who has been with the agency over 10 years, joined the realty team a little over a year ago on a part-time basis. Chrisy currently works in the FHWA Texas Division where she is responsible for planning and environmental review oversight for a couple of TxDOT districts and two MPOs, and provides oversight and guidance for half of the TxDOT districts on right-of-way issues. Before arriving in Texas, Chrisy worked for headquarters in the FHWA Office of

Real Estate Services office Washington, D.C. and the Los Angeles Metro office. Contact Chrisy at christina.currier@dot.gov / Ph: (512) 536-5931

Even though our team is fairly new, we have been tremendously busy this past year providing training and technical assistance around the country. We have provided customized training for several State DOT's and Local Governments on the Uniform Act, the Federal real estate acquisition process, relocation, and Environment and Right-of-Way (ROW) linkages. We have been assisting our FHWA and State DOT partners by participating in process and program reviews. The topics of the reviews include Local Public Agency projects, Acquisition, Administrative Settlements, Relocation and Outdoor Advertising Control. Our team has also had the pleasure of attending several Right-of-Way region meetings learning the latest and greatest best practices from our state partners and informing them about the services we offer.

We are all excited to be a part of the Environmental Technical Services Team and look forward to assisting the Environmental Team and our partners in providing our expertise to improve project delivery. Right-of-Way specialists have unique experience and training in communications that can be very helpful in determining social impacts of a project. Our team and other right-of-way professionals may be able to assist with determining the possible impacts of mitigation on a community and the role ROW could play in the mitigation process; an understanding of advance acquisitions; hazardous waste concerns; complete conceptual stage studies; as well explain what relocation funds can be used for and what they cannot.

Our team can provide custom tailored training and technical assistance in the following topical areas:

- **Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970**
- **Realty implementation of MAP-21**
- **Federal requirements for Local Public Agencies (LPAs)**
- **Right of Way (ROW) Streamlining**
- **ROW Property Management**
- **ROW and NEPA Linkage**

We plan on providing future articles to the Environmental Quarterly to help identify where the Realty Discipline may be able to assist in the NEPA process, so look for our future articles. If you would like to discuss how our team might be able to help you, please do not hesitate to give us a call. Thank you and we look forward to working with all of you in the future.

2013 FHWA Environmental Excellence Awards



Since 1995, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has presented the biennial Environmental Excellence awards to recognize outstanding transportation projects, processes, and partners that go beyond "business as usual" to achieve environmental excellence.

Three new Environmental Excellence Awards categories were added this year to recognize environmental practices that exemplify collaboration and partnership; demonstrate innovative applications of geospatial tools, technology, and analysis; and showcase best practices of programmatic agreements that have brought quantifiable streamlining benefits.

Congratulations to the following agencies and contributors whose projects were selected for the 2013 Environmental Excellence Awards:

- **West Coast Electric Highway** Agencies Awarded: Oregon Department of Transportation and Washington Department of Transportation. Category: Air Quality Improvement and Climate Change.
- **Moses Creek Wetland Restoration** Agencies Awarded: City of Stevens Point, Wisconsin; University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, Schmeckle Reserve; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. Category: Collaboration and Partnership.
- **Lake Champlain Bridge** Agencies Awarded: Clough, Harbour & Associates LLP; Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. and sub-contractors Mountain Lakes PBS, and Lake Champlain Maritime Museum; HNTB Corporation ; New York State Department of Transportation; Vermont Agency of Transportation; and Consultant Subcontractor, Parsons Brinckerhoff. Category: Cultural and Historical Resources
- **Indiana Bat Programmatic Conservation Memorandum of Agreement** Agencies Awarded: Federal Highway Administration, Kentucky Division; Kentucky Transportation Cabinet; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Kentucky Field Office. Category: Ecosystems, Habitat, and Wildlife
- **Cleveland Innerbelt Green 7** Agency Awarded: Ohio Department of Transportation. Category: Leadership.
- **Wildlife Crossing in Utah** Agencies Awarded: Utah Department of Transportation Utah Division of Wildlife Resources; Utah State University. Category: Environmental Research

- **Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment** Agencies Awarded: Atkins North America; CH2M HILL; Colorado Department of Transportation; Federal Highway Administration, Colorado Division; Federal Highway Administration Western Legal Services; and the Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc. Category: Streamlining
- **Apache Trail Historic Geographic Information Systems Inventory** Agencies Awarded: Arizona Department of Transportation; Federal Highway Administration, Central Federal Lands Highway Division; U.S. Forest Service, Tonto National Forest; Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc. Category: Geospatial Tools, Technology, and Analysis
- **Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway** Agencies Awarded: Nevada State Parks and Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway, Inc. Category: Non-motorized and Multimodal Transportation
- **Oregon Federal-Aid Highway Endangered Species Act (ESA) Programmatic** Agencies Awarded: Federal Highway Administration, Oregon Division; National Marine Fisheries Service and the Oregon Department of Transportation. Category: Programmatic Agreements
- **Washington State Department of Transportation Endangered Species Act (ESA) Programmatic with the National Marine Fisheries Service** Agencies Awarded: Federal Highway Administration, Washington Division; National Marine Fisheries Service and the Washington State Department of Transportation. Category: Programmatic Agreements
- **Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management, Invasive Species Control and Native Plant Establishment Projects** Agency Awarded: Maryland State Highway Administration, Office of Environmental Design. Category: Roadside Resource Management and Maintenance.
- **Lowry Avenue Bridge over the Mississippi River** Agencies Awarded: City of Minneapolis, Department of Public Works; Hennepin County, MN; and SRF Consulting Group, Inc. Category: Wetlands, Watersheds, and Water Quality.

More information on these award-winning efforts can be on the Environmental Excellence website: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_excellence_awards/eea_2013/



Environmental Excellence Awards



2013 FHWA Environmental Discipline Awards

The FHWA Environmental Discipline is an internal network of over 200 environmental professionals located in FHWA Division Offices, Headquarters, Resource Center, or Federal Lands Highway Division Offices throughout the country.

The Annual Environmental Discipline Award was established to acknowledge and recognize individuals and leaders in the environmental discipline and to cultivate future agency leaders. The Annual Awards Program is intended to support and recognize individual and team excellence within the FHWA Environmental Discipline.

All FHWA employees who routinely work on NEPA/environmental issues in the transportation project development process are eligible to be nominated for an award. This includes environmental specialists, transportation engineers, operations engineers, transportation planners, team leaders, supervisors, and others who may have worked on FHWA environmental issues. On June 19, 2013, FHWA Executive Director Jeff Paniati announced the recipients of this year's awards.

The following individuals are being recognized for their contributions to the discipline and agency during the past year:

Cindy Callahan—Biologist, FHWA Washington Division. Cindy is widely recognized and respected for her expertise with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). She has been a catalyst for the development of programmatic approaches in the Pacific Northwest, including Washington's statewide Programmatic ESA Consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service, eliminating the need for individual informal and formal consultations on approximately 70% of projects, saving from 30 to 260 days. She was instrumental in the successful completion of the ESA consultations for the Columbia River Crossing on Interstate 5, the Alaskan Way Viaduct, and the State Route 520 Floating Bridge Replacement.

Matt Fuller—Environmental Programs Engineer, FHWA Illinois Division. Matt is a valuable

asset to the Division and IDOT on all environmental matters. Matt played a key role in the successful completion of the NEPA process of two high profile major projects: Elgin-O'Hare Western Bypass Tier II Environmental Impact Statement (a \$3.5 billion project involving FAA, IDOT, Illinois Tollway), and Illiana Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (a \$2-3 billion project involving two states with a study area of 950 square miles with the first combined Final Environmental Impact Statement/Record of Decision in the country). He also managed the Illinois NEPA/404 Merger Process, including a streamlining initiative for major projects in the Chicago Region.

Stephanie Gibson – Environmental Program Manager, FHWA Colorado Division. Stephanie was instrumental in the oversight of an intensive NEPA process of the I-70 Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment (EA), a high priority transportation corridor for the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), resulting in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in just over 15 months. She was proactive in the development of the CDOT Environmental Commitment Tracking Form to ensure environmental commitments are tracked and addressed in project plans. Stephanie also led the development of the questionnaire on planning and environmental linkages (PEL) which became the model for the Every Day Counts (EDC) initiative on PEL.

Two individuals are being recognized with Career Achievement Awards for continuously providing outstanding service to the Environmental Discipline and Agency over multiple years.

Daniel Johnson –Environmental Specialist, OTS Resource Center, Environment Technical Services Team. Over the course of three decades, Dan has worked in the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delmar Divisions and the Resource Center, playing a significant leadership and technical role in delivery of many EIS projects in Maryland and Pennsylvania, including complex and controversial actions such as the Intercounty Connector (ICC) project. Dan continues to be a mentor and coach for the environment discipline, assisting both new and seasoned staff in expanding their discipline competencies and in developing creative or innovative solutions for program and project challenges.

Ruth Rentch (Retired) – Environmental Specialist, FHWA Office of Project Development and Environmental Review. Ruth retired from FHWA in February 2013 after 15 years of service. She left behind a legacy as a problem-solver who could take on a challenge, organize a strategy, develop a team, and then get the job done. Ruth was responsible for the successful implementation of the NEPA delegation pilot program in California, including overseeing the audits and publication results to Congress.



The Lake Champlain Bridge Replacement Project

Omar Elkassed, FHWA New York Division and James Boni, NYSDOT



Bridge as seen from the ruins of Fort St. Frédéric at the Crown Point State Historic Site

Photo courtesy NYSDOT

Introduction and Background

The Lake Champlain Bridge otherwise known as the Crown Point Bridge was a historic steel truss bridge spanning 2,186 feet across Lake Champlain connecting the rural communities of Crown Point, N.Y., and Chimney Point, VT.

It opened in 1929 with then-New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt at the ribbon-cutting. Since its opening, the bridge served as a vital economic link between communities, which share hospitals and fire departments, as well as a link to the past.

In February 2009, the 1929 Lake Champlain Bridge was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and in October 2009, it was nominated for National Historic Landmark status.

Both the New York and Vermont shores contain several historical and archaeological sites, some dating back thousands of years. The New York approach to the bridge, located in Adirondack Forest Preserve, includes remains of two 18th century forts, Fort St. Frederic and Fort Crown Point. In addition, the

bridge originally was tolled and the historic toll house is located just south of the bridge approach road, with a 19th century lighthouse and campground farther to the south.



The 1929 Lake Champlain Bridge at sunset

Photo courtesy of Ed Burke

At the Vermont approach, there are remains of an 18th century French fort under the first span and the historic Chimney Point Tavern, also listed on the National Register of Historic Places, to the south. Additionally, artifacts dating back more than 7,500 years have been found at the Chimney Point Historic Site, directly adjacent to the bridge.



Demolition of the Lake Champlain Bridge, December 28, 2009

Photo courtesy NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

Loss of the Engineering Marvel and Cultural Landmark

Eighty years after opening, the bridge was demolished on December 28, 2009. In October 2009, an underwater inspection of the bridge's piers revealed serious cracks that led to a decision to close and, ultimately to demolish the bridge.

Engineering evaluation showed that while short-term and long-term rehabilitation or replacement of the piers was technically possible, it could not be guaranteed as a long-term solution. Furthermore, the fragility of the bridge condition would have resulted in unacceptable danger to construction workers, and led to a decision to demolish rather than rehabilitate the bridge. The 1929 Lake Champlain Bridge was demolished by implosion on December 28, 2009.



Impact of abrupt bridge closing was lessened by temporary ferry service for commuters

Photo courtesy NYSDOT

Minimizing the Struggle

Without the bridge, people struggled with four-hour commutes, separation from family, friends and medical services. At public meetings, they urged transportation officials to rebuild the bridge at its original location and to provide a temporary ferry to reconnect the corridor upon which their lives depended.

With limited options to cross the lake, people faced an 85-mile land detour. A state of emergency was declared by the states of New York and Vermont. As short-term mitigation, New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) negotiated subsidies for two existing ferry services, which allowed commuters to cross the lake for free.

On Nov. 11, 2009, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), New York and Vermont Divisions granted National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) approval for the proposed temporary ferry project in both states. On Feb. 1, 2010, the temporary ferry began operation three and one-half months after the

bridge's closure. Operating the temporary ferry service cost NYSDOT and VTrans an average of \$24,250 daily. It ran 24 hours, seven days a week.

Commemorating the 1929 Lake Champlain Bridge

Many residents were deeply saddened and some wept the day the bridge came down. People who had grown up with the bridge couldn't imagine a time without it. At night, the view across the lake from the Village of Port Henry was now of darkness rather than a row of twinkling lights from the bridge.

To preserve the memory of the 1929 Lake Champlain Bridge a commemoration program was developed as a result of Section 106 Programmatic Agreements signed in December 2009 and January 2010 among the FHWA, the New York State Historic Preservation Office, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Vermont State Historic Preservation Office, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, NYSDOT and VTrans.



Lake Champlain Bridge Commemorative Resources

The commitments made in these programmatic agreements fulfill the federal requirements that the irretrievable loss of this important historic resource, the 1929 Lake Champlain Bridge, will be mitigated by a program of commemoration activities so that the memory and significance of the bridge will not be lost.

The plan for commemoration of the 1929 bridge called for the following elements:

- [Commemoration website](#) All bridge commemoration materials can be accessed through the website that was developed as part of the agreement. One of several commemoration activities, the website provides a portal to all of the other commemoration products, all of which were funded by NYSDOT, VTrans and FHWA. The commemoration process was managed and the commemorative website developed for NYSDOT by Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., subcontractor to the engineering firm HNTB, Inc., designer of the new bridge.
- [Resource Guide](#) The 65-page *Lake Champlain Bridge Resource Guide* summarizes the location and content of historic source material, such as bridge reports, letters, engineering drawings, photographs, postcards, newspaper stories, brochures, and artifacts found at 16 key locations in both New York and Vermont.
- [Oral Histories](#) Twenty-two individuals with a connection to the 1929 Lake Champlain Bridge were interviewed to record some of their memories of the bridge. Among the interviewees are people who attended the 1929 opening day celebration, toll collectors, business people, local residents, historic preservationists, and engineers.
- [Popular History Book](#) *Spanning the Decades: The Lake Champlain Bridge Story* tells the story of the historic Lake Champlain Bridge from the importance of the Lake Champlain crossing throughout history, the building of the 1929 bridge, and its impact on the region and influence on bridge design, to the loss of the iconic structure and the building of a new Lake Champlain Bridge.
- [Documentary Film](#) *More Than Steel: The Lake Champlain Bridge Story*, tells the story of the 1929 Lake Champlain Bridge through the voices of people closely connected to it...historic preservationists, engineers and the public officials charged with responding to the loss of this key transportation link. It documents the history of the bridge, its construction, engineering significance, and its use. In addition to the documentary, [six short films](#) focusing on various aspects of the life of the Lake Champlain Bridge were developed for exhibit media players.
- [Interpretive displays](#) of the Lake Champlain Bridge story have been developed for five sites – three very close to the bridge and two locations within sight of the bridge. Exhibits will be installed soon at these sites: the Lake Champlain Visitors Center (the Toll House), Crown Point, NY; Crown Point State Historic Site, Crown Point, NY; Port Henry Public Dock, Port Henry, NY; The Iron Center, Port Henry, NY; and Chimney Point State Historic Site, Addison, VT.

All of the resources listed above can be accessed via the Lake Champlain Bridge Commemoration website at <https://www.dot.ny.gov/programs/LCBCommemoration>

Reminiscent Elegance of the New Bridge

Thru the public involvement process we learned how important the bridge's shape was to the community. The Project Team ended up designing an arch for the main channel span and extending the curving lines down to the main span's piers to replicate the original design.

The new bridge was placed at a similar height as the former bridge. This was for both navigation purposes as well as to maintain the former bridge's profile, which was something the local residents wanted to maintain.

During design of the new bridge, the designers went to great lengths to re-establish viewsheds from the historic properties to pre-bridge days. This was accomplished because of the height of the bridge approaches and the elimination of the former bridge's framing.



Completed Bridge

Photo courtesy NYSDOT

The Lake Champlain Bridge Replacement Project illustrates the extraordinary effort by FHWA and its State Partners in commemorating a cultural landmark through the Section 106 process. It's an amazing story presenting the need for creative and innovative minimization and mitigation strategies to respond to irretrievable loss of an important historic resource while at the same time addressing an operational and safety transportation need. The high level of partnership and coordination among the numerous agencies involved in this effort was an extraordinary experience that resulted in a transportation solution that many are proud of.

Editor's Note: The Lake Champlain Bridge Replacement Project recently received the 2013 FHWA Environmental Excellence Award in the Cultural and Historical Resources Category.

Three Perspectives on the Leadership Development Academy (LDA)

Breck Jeffers, FHWA DelMar Division

Keith Moore, RC ENV & Realty TST, Baltimore

Deborah Suci Smith, FHWA Pennsylvania Division/RC ENV & Realty TST



The FHWA Federal Lands Division periodically hosts the Leadership Development Academy (LDA), a team-oriented, 6-month leadership development program open to all grade levels. Components of the LDA include: Developing individual leadership skills, including emotional intelligence; working in teams to complete projects; self-assessments and feedback from co-workers; interviews with leaders and shadowing assignments; and reading and sharing books on leadership. Three graduates

from the 2013 LDA share their personal perspectives on the program in the following articles.

Breck Jeffers – DelMar Division Office



I have found the Leadership Development Academy to be a very rewarding experience. It has given me the chance to learn about myself by completing the Myers Briggs Assessment. It has also allowed me to find out what others see as my strengths and areas for improvement through the completion of the EI indicators. Through my participation in the LDA I was able to shadow and interview Associate Administrators and learn firsthand how their career paths and guiding principles that helped them obtain their positions.

The LDA requires a lot of assignments to be completed in addition to your regular work duties and many of the participants have to travel and stay overnight to attend the sessions. All of the work and sacrifices are worth it because the LDA provides its participants the opportunity to improve themselves professionally and personally.

As a part of the LDA team project Breck created a video documentation of his impressions of the program. Watch Breck's video at <http://youtu.be/ChQ6c77fx3s>

Keith Moore - RC-TST Environment & Realty



The Leadership Development Academy (LDA) has been a tremendous learning opportunity. While there were so many rewarding elements, my favorite and most valuable lesson included training to enhance my communication skills. Communication is vital at work, at home, with friends and family, etc. Communication is critical to emotional intelligence. Communication is often crucial to the success of any dialogue.

Effective communication techniques I learned from LDA Training include:

- Matching my voice pitch and hand gestures with the need of the audience.
- Repeating what I am hearing so everyone hears the same information
- Asking questions, if something is unclear.
- Affording listeners the opportunities to ask questions.
- Following up any dialogue with results (if necessary)
- Using additional helpful hints to resolve confusion in communication.

Now that the six-month training has ended, it is time to apply those learned skills to the real world. As for the LDA, I would comfortably recommend this program to my colleagues. It is easily a stepping stone to success.

Deborah Suci Smith – Pennsylvania Division & RC-TST-Environment & Realty



Participating in the Leadership Development Academy (12/13) was an unusual and challenging. It provided me with an intense opportunity to work with a group of individuals from other offices and disciplines with diverse personalities, experiences, interests and backgrounds. One of the many useful lessons I take from the LDA is the continual effort to self-examine and the ongoing practice at active listening techniques. The latter was especially useful in the context of developing a team project where everyone had an

opportunity to express their perspectives into the development process. Recognizing and respecting the unique leadership styles of different people and learning how to most effectively work together was a key lesson of the program.

I especially appreciated the opportunity to shadow or interview several very interesting leaders including; **Sarah Shores** – FHWA Associate Administrator, **Karen Hedlund** – FRA Deputy Administrator, and **Amy Lucero** – FHWA Director of Technical Services. Each graciously shared their insights into

leadership and with those I shadowed, it was interesting to observe which leadership techniques they used in various circumstances. I found the shadowing and interviewing to be an outstanding opportunity to witness leadership both within and outside of the FHWA as well as witnessing a variety of different techniques in handling difficult or challenging situations. Participation in this program can certainly be a benefit if you are interested in becoming a leader in the agency. However, I also wholeheartedly recommend that **anyone** interested in finding new or improved ways of working in challenging situations, complex projects or programs to consider applying for the next Leadership Development Academy.

LDA photos courtesy: Heather Zawalick, Administration Program Manager

Happy Birthday North Carolina EEP!

Rob Ayers, Environmental Program Specialist, RC ENV-TST
Donnie Brew, FHWA North Carolina Division



What do the numbers 14 billion, zero and ten have in common?

By offering four voluntary In-Lieu Fee (ILF) mitigation programs (NCDOT Stream/Wetland, Statewide Stream/Wetland, Riparian Buffer, and Nutrient Offset) to comply with federal and state regulations the North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Program (EEP) has achieved three important milestones.

Since the inception of the EEP ten years ago, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has advanced almost \$14 billion in transportation projects using EEP as its partner for providing stream and wetland compensatory mitigation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. And so what about the number zero? That's the number of projects utilizing EEP that were delayed due to problems obtaining Section 404 permits. Not a single NCDOT project has been delayed due to 404 mitigation requirements.

So what is this "EEP" thing and how did it get birthed?

The EEP is a North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR) initiative that restores and protects wetlands and waterways for future generations while offsetting unavoidable environmental damage from economic development.

Before 2003, Section 404 compensatory mitigation for NCDOT projects was performed primarily by NCDOT (as the permittee), but there were issues such as low success rates, high costs associated with mitigation and numerous project delays due to the inability to find appropriate mitigation sites. NCDOT began using the NCDENR's North Carolina Wetland Restoration Program, but there still was dissatisfaction by environmental regulatory agencies.

In response, a cooperative process-improvement initiative in North Carolina involving more than ten state and federal natural-systems agencies convened in 2001. Obstacles identified in the initiative included inadequate communication, undefined roles and responsibilities, poor synchronization in executing existing mitigation and permitting processes, and a lack of clearly understood mitigation-success objectives. Recommendations coming from this initiative focused on NCDOT compensatory mitigation being provided years in advance of project impacts and be designed to replace unavoidable functional losses to wetlands and riparian buffers.

Planning occurred for the next two years, culminating in a [2003 Memorandum of Agreement](#) (MOA) among NCDOT, the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Wilmington District which established EEP's procedures.

So what's happened since 2003?

In 2005 and 2007 EEP was recognized as one of the top 50 new innovative government programs in the nation by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. In 2005 received a prestigious award for local watershed planning from the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) and in 2006 EEP was named Natural Resources Agency of the Year in the Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards

Aside from the numbers cited earlier related to advancing NCDOT's transportation program with no project delays due to mitigation, here are a couple other numbers representing the scale of the EEP effort:

- 630+ miles of streams, nearly 30,000 acres of wetlands and about 680 acres of buffers conserved/restored/enhanced
- 50,100+ acres of natural areas preserved for future generations
- 1.53 million lbs. of nutrients removed
- Nearly \$500 million in contract awards outsourced to the private sector
- Nearly 4,000 developers & partners served
- 100 percent customer-satisfaction rate

Is any of this transferrable to other states?

Absolutely. While some states may not have the magnitude of impacts that would warrant the creation of a new state agency, the following aspects of this program (as identified from the 2005 FHWA Domestic Wetland Scan) are potentially applicable to all other states:

- Adoption of an ecosystem perspective;
- Establishment of trust;
- Inclusivity; and
- Procurement of funding commitments for organizational development and implementation;
- Proceeding with the expectation that promoting economic development while also protecting the environment is an achievable goal.

The North Carolina EEP has become a national model for stream and wetlands mitigation, earning numerous awards, so let's add one more recognition—Happy 10th Birthday!

For more information about the North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Program (EEP) visit:

<http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/eep>

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Due to our Quarterly publication schedule, all article submissions for future issues are due to the Editor-In-Chief by the **15th** of March, June, September, and/or December

Getting the news:

*If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please send your email address to:
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