

Successes **in** Stewardship

<http://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/strmlng/es4newsltrs.asp>

August 2007

Successes in Stewardship Celebrates Its Sixth Year!

In August 2001, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released the first issue of the monthly newsletter now called [Successes in Stewardship](#). The initial goal of this newsletter was to provide a monthly publication on FHWA's website that highlighted examples of the use of environmental streamlining in transportation projects around the country. Since that time, developments in environmental technologies and processes and new Federal legislation have led to improved streamlining and stewardship practices, and so, the newsletter has evolved to meet the changing needs of environmental and transportation professionals. Fred Skaer, Director of FHWA's Office of Project Development and Environmental Review, describes the purpose of the newsletter as "to reach as broad an audience as possible with bite sized stories that help practitioners understand what their colleagues around the country are accomplishing and how to follow up if they would like to pursue the subject in greater depth." This issue of *Successes in Stewardship* presents a retrospective of selected stewardship and streamlining practices over the last six years.



Route 201 in Maine, featured in an issue on [Maine's Integrated Transportation Decisionmaking \(ITD\) Process](#) (October 2002), ITD helps Maine to "Do More with Less" while protecting the environment. Photo courtesy Maine DOT.

Topics Highlighted in Past Newsletters

The inaugural issue showcased the [Pennsylvania State Route \(SR\) 119 South Improvement Project](#), focusing on the streamlined environmental impact statement (EIS) process, public involvement, and interagency coordination. As a result of these activities, the transportation needs of the local community were met in shorter timeframes and with fewer environmental impacts on surrounding wetlands and streams.

Subsequent issues continued to feature state projects that were utilizing environmental streamlining but also began to highlight projects demonstrating sound environmental stewardship.

Innovative Technologies

Transportation projects continue to use sophisticated technologies and processes to streamline the environmental review process and minimize impacts on the environment. An early article featuring innovative technologies, [Resource Mapping and Early Involvement](#) (March 2002), featured the use of resource mapping by Arkansas to identify wetlands, farmlands, community establishments, and other natural, archeological, and cultural resources in the development of the Southeast Connector to Interstate 69. The impact of GIS was also explored in [Geographic Information Systems and Data-Sharing: Mapping the Future of Transportation](#) (November 2003), which looked at Indiana's statewide GIS system, Florida's Efficient Transportation Decisionmaking Process, and Washington State's Environmental GIS Workbench.



Colorado DOT and its partners have worked together to protect endangered species in the prairie located in the eastern third of the state, as featured in [Mitigating Today to Protect for Tomorrow: Prairie Protection and ESA Consultation Streamlining in Colorado](#) (December 2001). Photo courtesy of the Nature Conservancy.

Did you know?

- There are over 2,000 newsletter subscribers, representing all 50 states and Canada.
- Subscribers range in profession, including local, state, and Federal governments, private consultants, and non-profit organizations
- Since 2001, the newsletter has been published every month, this being the 72nd issue.
- The newsletter has showcased effective practices and projects from over 35 states.

Environmental Guidance

The newsletter has also served as a source of information for new FHWA guidance and transportation legislation. [Navigating Section 4\(f\): Updated Policy Paper and New Programmatic Evaluation Now Available](#) (June 2005), focused on FHWA's 4(f) policy paper, which was updated for the first time in over 15 years. The 4(f) policy paper provides guidance to professionals on determining when and how to apply the provisions of Section 4(f). The September 2006 issue on [Improving the Quality of Environmental Documents](#) featured guidance

for improving the readability, functionality, and effectiveness of environmental documents.

New Legislation

The enactment of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) in August 2005 had a major impact on transportation policy and subsequently raised questions about its effects on transportation projects. Reflecting the SAFETEA-LU focus on stewardship as an important aspect of environmental conservation, the newsletter's name was changed from *Successes in Streamlining* to *Successes in Stewardship* in August 2005. Since the passage of SAFETEA-LU, issues that have covered issues related to the statute have included:

- [Easing the Transition to SAFETEA-LU](#) (February 2006)
- [SAFETEA-LU Section 6002](#) (July 2006)
- [Celebrating 50 Years of the Interstate](#) (March 2007)
- [Streamlining the Environmental Process: State DOTs Take on NEPA Compliance Responsibilities](#) (July 2007)

New and Improved Partnerships

To improve effectiveness and efficiency of the project development process, FHWA has increased its efforts to build partnerships between planners, environmentalists, and engineers at FHWA Division Offices with state departments of transportation (DOTs); other Federal resource agencies; community groups; state, local, and tribal governments; and the public. By taking a more integrated approach to the transportation planning and project development process, project sponsors can work together to ensure that alternatives are fully explored and all issues are addressed before a project is implemented.

Tribal consultation is another important partnership that continues to be an area that can be improved. This topic was addressed in two newsletter issues, [Respectful Communication Accelerates the Section 106 Process: Iowa's New Tribal Consultation Process](#) (July 2002) and [Improving Section 106 Compliance by Improving Relationships: FHWA Tribal Consultation Workshops](#) (September 2005).

Given the diverse viewpoints of the many different groups typically involved in a transportation project, partnerships can benefit from consensus-building. Alternative dispute resolution was used to reach an accord among project agencies and stakeholders in [The Stillwater Lift Bridge Project: From Impasse to Agreement Using Alternative Dispute Resolution](#) (February 2007). *Eco-Logical: An Ecosystems Approach to Developing Infrastructure Projects*, which was authored by an interagency steering committee of nine Federal regulatory agencies and published by FHWA in April 2006, offered a non-prescriptive approach to making infrastructure more sensitive to wildlife and ecosystems through greater interagency cooperative conservation. [Eco-Logical](#) was showcased in the March 2006 issue.

FHWA continues to advance the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) initiative, which enhances partnerships and communication. This integrated approach to transportation decisionmaking, featured in [Planning and Environment Linkages \(PEL\): Streamlining Transportation Decisionmaking](#) (April 2007), takes into account environmental, community, and economic goals throughout the project's life cycle, from the planning stage through development, design, construction, and maintenance. PEL promotes greater communication within and among transportation and resource agencies, leading to improved decisionmaking and project development.

More to Come

Successes in Stewardship is one of many FHWA forums for learning about new advances in transportation and the environment, and how they can be applied nationwide to transportation projects of all sizes. As the newsletter keeps evolving, reader feedback will continue to be an important tool in shaping future issues. Having *Successes in Stewardship*



The Louisiana Route 1 project used innovative planning strategies and construction techniques to protect coastal wetlands, as featured in [Protecting Invaluable Wetlands While Improving Safety and Mobility: Louisiana Highway 1](#) (January 2004). Photo courtesy of LADOTD image.



Policy changes, such as the historic preservation exemption featured in [The Interstate Highway System Section 106 Exemption: Maintaining a Unique Resource](#) (May 2005), continue to change the landscape of transportation and the environment. Pictured above is the western span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, which will still be subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act under the new Historic Preservation Exemption for the Interstate Highway System. Photo courtesy of FHWA.

accessible online facilitates such feedback. New projects, topics, processes, and projects are always welcome and can be submitted through the [Feedback Form](#).

Contact Information

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Look What's New!

Defenders of Wildlife's new publication, [Getting Up to Speed: A Conservationist's Guide to Wildlife and Highways](#), is an all-encompassing resource documenting the life cycle of a road project and the legislative and regulatory framework associated with the transportation infrastructure. For more information, contact [Trisha White](#).

Successes in Stewardship is a Federal Highway Administration newsletter highlighting current environmental streamlining and stewardship practices from around the country. To subscribe, visit http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/sis_registration/Register.aspx or call 617-494-3997.