



Special Sessions Overview

This year's conference included several new sessions and special events worth noting.

Acoustics Ecology

For the first time, ICOET addressed acoustics ecology issues as they relate to aquatic wildlife and birds. California has championed much work in this specialized area. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) was recognized by the Federal Highway Administration in 2005 for environmental excellence in ecosystems, habitat, and wildlife due to its "Fisheries-Hydroacoustics Mitigation for San Francisco Bay Bridges Work Group" initiative. This proceedings includes eight technical papers and abstracts from two sessions, organized by Caltrans and UC-Davis in cooperation with FHWA, on transportation and acoustics ecology advances in the U.S. and Europe. This subject will become a regular ICOET track in future conferences.

High-Speed Rail

As communities consider the implementation of high-speed rail corridors, the ecological implications are becoming increasingly challenging to identify and assess. ICOET 2005 included a high-speed rail session, organized and facilitated by Defenders of Wildlife, a long-time ICOET co-sponsor, to help states begin to investigate the general ecological impacts of high-speed rail, focusing on both positive elements and drawbacks, and also including an overview of the California high-speed rail proposal.

Integrating Transportation and Resource Conservation Planning

In keeping with the stewardship theme, ICOET 2005 included four sessions that explored approaches for integrating resource conservation issues earlier in the transportation planning process. Conservation banking, conservation planning, landscapes and road networks, and science and partnerships comprised the four session titles that featured initiatives from the U.S. as well as Switzerland and Taiwan. In addition, Defenders of Wildlife hosted an evening workshop, titled "Conservation and Transportation Planning in California," with a facilitated discussion on barriers to integration, solutions to these barriers, and proposed recommendations. The report and the presentations given at the workshop are available on Defenders' website: <http://www.defenders.org/california/icoet.html>.

Keynote Presentation



"Beauty and the Beast – Human Dimensions in Ecology and Transportation"

Dr. Bruce Leeson, senior environmental assessment scientist (retired) for the Parks Canada Agency, Western Service Center - Calgary, provided an outstanding keynote address on the evolution of and challenges associated with the human perceptions tied to the 30-year highway twinning project in Banff National Park. The project involved the construction of an unprecedented number of wildlife crossing structures, which have generated an exceptional body of research data on effective crossing structure planning, placement, and monitoring. Dr. Leeson discussed how the human factors associated with this project ultimately posed far greater challenges than the ecological or engineering factors. He encouraged attendees to consider carefully how to successfully engage the public throughout the course of transportation projects that have significant ecological impacts, as well as the importance of educating the public on the complex and dynamic relationship between wildlife and transportation issues.

ICOET Steering Committee Member Recognitions

At the conference closing session, ICOET 2005 Chair Leroy Irwin recognized two of ICOET's "founding fathers," who recently retired from Federal service: Fred Bank, team leader for the Water and Ecosystems Team, Office of Natural and Human Environment, FHWA Headquarters, and William (Bill) Ruediger, ecology program leader for highways, USDA Forest Service – Washington Office. Mr. Bank and Mr. Ruediger helped to construct the vision for ICOET and to mobilize the agency resources necessary to achieve that vision throughout the conference's nine-year history. Throughout their careers, they have shown leadership, foresight, and an unwavering commitment to achieving environmental excellence in transportation.