

## AND IN CLOSING . . .

The International Conference on Ecology and Transportation, ICOET. What a success! The beautiful setting in Colorado, enlightened sessions, great exhibits, and spirited conversation . . . and the fishing was not bad either.

Coming just on the heels of the horrific tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup>, I was delighted to see all the enthusiasm of moving forward with our meeting. It was certainly a tribute to the dedication of our sponsors, organizers, and most of all, our attendees in the face of such trying times.

All aspects of the conference were in a word, impressive. The paper sessions were simply outstanding. Our speakers demonstrated that their work is on the cutting edge of the science, technology, and policy of protecting wildlife and habitats impacted by the construction and operation of transportation systems. I saw much that was new and innovative. The exhibits were very popular because of their quality and the useful information they each provided. It is said that most of the benefit of attending a conference is gained from the time you spend engaged in conversation in the hallways between sessions and after hours. ICOET was no exception to this tenet. It was great to see old friends reunited and new ones established as we exchanged information, concerns, interests, and business cards.

The conference had a solid contingent of speakers and attendees from outside of the United States... a continuing trend. Their contribution to the overall program puts real substance to the word "International" in our title. We have much to discover and appreciate from their work. Just a week after ICOET, a group of "ICOWET / ICOET veterans" traveled to several countries in Europe as members of an FHWA / AASHTO technology scanning tour. The group saw first-hand some of the innovation, technology, and supporting research that we heard reported at ICOET and the previous ICOWETs. We found these countries are sponsoring some truly amazing work to protect their wildlife and connect their remaining wildland ecosystems across developing transportation corridors. But what we saw was only small sample of what is being done beyond our borders. So, we can only benefit from a continued strong presence of international contributors. Be looking for the report of scan trip due out in mid 2002. I think you will be impressed by the work of the Europeans and understand why we should continue to encourage global representation at future ICOET conferences.

Having brought ICOET 2001 to a successful close, what do we do next? Hopefully, we all came away from Keystone with new ideas and information that can be put to good use in work to reduce transportation impacts on wildlife and habitats. Also, ICOET 2003 is on the horizon. We will be working with the good people at the New York State Department of Transportation to hold the 2003 conference in that beautiful State. The many comments and recommendations we received from attendees at the 2001 conference will help shape what we do in 2003. One frequent comment was that we should strive to involve folks who traditionally have not attended in the past. Suggestions included highway maintenance personnel, transportation planners, chief executives, and the variety of engineering disciplines. I wholeheartedly agree. If we are to realize improvements in wildlife passage and habitat protection, these are the people who have the expertise and responsibilities to bring about the necessary changes in the way we plan, design, construct, and operate our transportation systems.

I cannot close without giving special thanks to our great friends at the Center for Transportation and the Environment. Without their organizational skills and due diligence, ICOET would not have happened. The previous ICOWET series began with a relatively small gathering that was planned and carried out by the dedicated personnel of the sponsoring agencies. But as the conferences grew larger and more complex each time they were held, we needed an organization with a proven track record to help out. Our decision to involve CTE was an easy one. The Center did a great job and we look forward to their continuing assistance.

See you in New York!

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