

Successes In Stewardship

2015 Environmental Excellence Awards to Recognize Outstanding Environmental Stewardship

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is committed to promoting environmental stewardship and streamlining transportation project delivery across the United States. As part of this commitment, FHWA's biennial Environmental Excellence Awards (EEA) program recognizes outstanding initiatives that incorporate environmental stewardship into the project planning and development processes. Specifically, the EEA program honors agencies and individuals that exceed required environmental compliance for transportation projects; facilitate partnerships to promote environmental stewardship; and develop environmentally sensitive transportation innovations. Winning projects in past years have focused on supporting the use of renewable energy sources, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, preserving historic and cultural sites, considering ecological issues early in the transportation planning process, and streamlining environmental reviews.

The next round of the EEAs will open August 15th. The 2015 EEA program marks the introduction of an expanded set of categories that will allow FHWA to recognize initiatives that protect and enhance both the natural and human environments. These new categories reflect the integration of two former FHWA award programs – the Exemplary Ecosystem Initiatives (EEI) and Exemplary Human Environment Initiatives (EHEI) programs – into the EEAs. As in years past, the 2015 EEAs will promote awareness of the successes that States, agencies, and individuals can achieve by incorporating environmental excellence into their everyday work.

The EEA Program: A History of Excellence

Since 1995, FHWA has used the EEA program to recognize partners, projects, and processes that excel in meeting transportation needs, while protecting and enhancing the environment beyond the procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and other environmental provisions. The [FHWA EEA webpage](#) provides a summary of all EEA past recipients.

The most recent round of EEAs, completed in 2013, recognized 13 exemplary transportation projects. The winners represented some of the best achievements in enhancing and preserving the environment. Summaries of the 2013 EEA recipients are available on the FHWA EEA webpage as well as in the [January/February 2014 edition of Public Roads](#). In addition, several previous issues of *Successes in Stewardship* highlight individual 2013 recipients, including:

- *Environmental Review Process for the Twin Tunnels Project*, as featured in the [August 2013 issue of Successes in Stewardship](#). This project successfully incorporated environmental streamlining practices, while addressing pressing safety and congestion concerns along the I-70 Mountain Corridor in Colorado.
- *The Lake Champlain Bridge Replacement Project*, as featured in the [December 2013 issue of Successes in Stewardship](#). This bridge replacement project



The Lake Champlain Bridge Replacement Project—a 2013 EEA recipient—helped preserve the rich archaeological heritage of the Champlain Valley. (Courtesy of FHWA)

enhanced the public's understanding of regional heritage and supported local tourism, while also protecting the cultural sites adjoining this historic route between Vermont and New York.

- *Effective Wildlife Crossing Practices in Utah*, as featured in the [January 2014 issue of *Successes in Stewardship*](#). This six-year research project used camera traps to monitor wildlife use of several wildlife crossing structures in Utah to determine the best designs for passing wildlife under and above roads. The project's recommendations have become part of the State's standard operating procedures for wildlife crossings.
- *The Apache Trail Historic Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Inventory*, as featured in the [March 2014 issue of *Successes in Stewardship*](#). This initiative improved historic resource management practices in Arizona through a comprehensive GIS inventory of all roadway features along the historically significant State Route 88 Corridor.

EEA recipients in past years have enjoyed the opportunity to receive national recognition for their noteworthy practices and innovative programs. Recipients have found that the awards attract positive attention to their agencies from the public and from their peers. As a demonstration of environmental excellence, the EEA program also helps recipients' establish a well-deserved degree of credibility as leaders in the field of environmental stewardship.

The 2015 EEA Program — Apply Starting August 15th!

The nomination period for the 2015 EEAs will open on August 15th and close on September 30th.

FHWA will accept nominations for any project, process, group, or individual in the public, private, or non-profit sectors that has used FHWA funding sources to make an outstanding contribution to transportation and the environment. All award nominations must be submitted through the online submission form available on the [FHWA Environmental Review Toolkit website](#). A panel of judges with various backgrounds, disciplines, and expertise will review applications and select the winning entries in early 2015. Award winners will be recognized at a ceremony organized by FHWA in summer 2015. Information about the award recipients will also be made available on FHWA's EEA website.

Honoring Achievement in Multiple Categories

The 2015 EEA program features an expanded set of categories that recognize the integration of natural and human environmental concerns into the project planning and development processes. Specifically, the 2015 EEA program will categorize award recipients and nominations according to the following topic areas.

Natural Environment: Categories in this topic area focus on environmental protection issues such as air quality, wildlife habitat, and wetlands.



The new Lowry Avenue Bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota—another 2013 EEA winner—uses innovative water quality practices to protect the Mississippi River from harmful pollutants and runoff. (Courtesy of FHWA)

2015 EEA Categories

Natural Environment

- Air Quality Improvement and Climate Change
- Ecosystems, Habitat, and Wildlife
- Roadside Resource Management and Maintenance
- Wetlands, Watersheds, and Water Quality

Human Environment

- Cultural and Historical Resources
- Nonmotorized and Multimodal Transportation
- Context Sensitive Solutions (*NEW*)
- Community Considerations in Transportation Improvements (*NEW*)
- Demonstrated Advances in Environmental Justice (*NEW*)

Organization and Process Innovation

- Collaboration and Partnership
- Environmental Streamlining
- Programmatic Agreements
- Innovative Use of Technology
- Environmental Leadership
- Environmental Research
- Educational and Training Programs (*NEW*)
- Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience (*NEW*)

Human Environment: Categories in this topic area concern cultural, historic, and community resources affected by transportation projects.

Organization and Process Innovation: These categories highlight best practices in transportation and environmental decisionmaking, such as the execution of programmatic agreements and innovative use of technology.

These three topic areas reflect the incorporation of elements and themes from FHWA's two former environmental award programs: the EEI and EHEI programs. The 2015 EEAs merges with the two former awards into a unified recognition program to streamline processes and procedures for nominees and FHWA. The [FHWA Award and Recognition Programs webpage](#) offers additional information on past and present award programs that have recognized outstanding efforts in the fields of planning, environment and realty, including the EEIs and EHEIs.

The 2015 EEA program features several new and updated categories. Five new categories reflect the integration of the human and natural environments within the recipients' initiatives and within FHWA's programs more broadly, as indicated in the box above.

Each category features a unique set of criteria that the panel of judges will use to evaluate nominations. Sample criteria include the use of innovative methods, partnerships, or public involvement techniques; the integration of environmental concerns into planning and project development; and the degree of creativity or innovation exhibited by a project.

Advancing Innovation and Protecting the Environment

The EEA program exemplifies FHWA's commitment to transportation innovations that support both the natural and human environments. The program is a key mechanism for sharing innovative practices, increasing awareness, and showcasing environmental successes in pursuit of FHWA's mission to improve mobility by supporting innovation in program delivery. The 2015 EEA recipients will serve as examples for agencies and individuals that are promoting environmental excellence across the country.

Nominations for the 2015 EEA program will be accepted through September 30, 2014, and decisions are anticipated by late winter 2015.

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Look What's New!

- FHWA recently launched a new website for its Sustainable Pavements Program. To explore the site, [click here](#).
- In July, FHWA published a frequently asked questions document about health in transportation. The document addresses a variety of health-related transportation topics, including what opportunities exist to address health through transportation and how health effects are addressed through Federal actions. [Click here](#) to view the document.

Successes in Stewardship is a Federal Highway Administration newsletter highlighting current environmental streamlining and stewardship practices from around the country. [Click here](#) to subscribe, or call (617) 494-3539 for more information.