

Successes In Stewardship

2015 Environmental Excellence Awards Recognize Innovative Efforts to Preserve the Environment

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently announced the 2015 Environmental Excellence Award (EEA) recipients. Since 1995, FHWA's biennial EEA program has recognized partners, projects, and processes that protect and enhance the environment while meeting transportation needs. This year's winning projects include 15 exemplary initiatives that incorporate environmental stewardship and streamlining into project planning and development.

This issue of *Successes in Stewardship* presents information about the EEA program and showcases the 2015 award recipients. Several previous issues have highlighted the awards program, including the [August 2014 issue of *Successes in Stewardship*](#), which provided an overview of the history of the EEA program and introduced the 2015 EEA categories.

Recognizing Excellence

Each EEA cycle promotes the successes that transportation agencies can achieve by incorporating environmental best practices into their everyday work. To be eligible for the EEA program, applicants must use FHWA funding sources to make an outstanding effort to preserve the environment and enhance America's transportation network. Winning projects exceed traditional expectations for transportation projects and go beyond the procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and other environmental protection provisions. As models for environmental excellence nationwide, EEA recipients encourage environmental stewardship and partnerships to achieve multi-faceted, environmentally sensitive transportation solutions.

The 2015 EEA program recognizes awardees in 14 categories within three topic areas: Natural Environment, Human Environment, and Organization and Process Innovation. An independent panel of judges, often coming from universities, non-profits, resource agencies, and other Federal agencies, review the applications according to a unique set of criteria for each category. Example 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. FHWA will

2015 EEA Recipients

Natural Environment

- **Air Quality Improvement and Climate Change:** Strategic Assessment of Land Use and Transportation Plans for the Corvallis Area
- **Ecosystems, Habitat, and Wildlife:** Longleaf Pine and Gopher Tortoise Habitat Restoration Project
- **Roadside Resource Management and Maintenance:** Philip S. Raine Safety Roadside Rest Area
- **Wetlands, Watersheds, and Water Quality (1/2):** Green Infrastructure Standards
- **Wetlands, Watersheds, and Water Quality (2/2):** PB-85 Stream, Floodplain, and Wetland Restoration

Human Environment

- **Context Sensitive Solutions:** Klyde Warren Park in Dallas, Texas
- **Cultural and Historical Resources:** Project Development and Environment Services for US 41, 10th Street to 14th Street in Sarasota, Florida
- **Nonmotorized and Multimodal Transportation:** Humpback Bridge Replacement and Joyce Street Improvements

Organization and Process Innovation

- **Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience:** River Science Climate Resilience Strategy
- **Collaboration and Partnership:** Syracuse Connective Corridor, Phase 1
- **Educational and Training Programs:** Montana Highway 78
- **Environmental Leadership:** Animal Road Crossing Project
- **Environmental Research:** Right-of-Way Carbon Sequestration Research Project
- **Environmental Streamlining:** Potters Mills Gap Transportation Project
- **Programmatic Agreements:** First Amended Programmatic Agreement Regarding Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

recognize the EEA recipients on July 9, 2015 at an awards ceremony held during the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Conference on 21st Century Mobility and Passenger Transportation in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Spotlight on the 2015 Award Recipients

The 2015 EEA recipients represent a wide range of professional disciplines, from archaeology and climate change research to bicycle and pedestrian planning. The text box above lists the 2015 EEA-winning projects. To learn more about each of the award-winning projects, visit the [2015 EEA website](#). The following sections highlight two 2015 EEA recipients that demonstrate a commitment to promoting environmental sensitivity and sustainability, while improving mobility.

Syracuse Connective Corridor, Phase 1

The 2015 EEAs recognized the Syracuse Connective Corridor for Excellence in Collaboration and Partnership. The Syracuse Connective Corridor is an ongoing multi-phase traffic-calming project, featuring green infrastructure elements such as porous concrete and stormwater planters. The first phase of the project created a signature "[Complete Street](#)" for the city of Syracuse by reconstructing a comprehensive streetscape. The new streetscape has improved safety for all modes of travel by reducing pedestrian crossing distances, slowing traffic speeds, installing dedicated turning lanes, and providing new sidewalks and crosswalks.

A multi-disciplinary effort, the project demonstrated strong collaboration among numerous project partners, including the city of Syracuse (the project sponsor); Barton and Loguidice, D.P.C; the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority; CH2M Hill; National Grid; the New York State Department of Transportation; the New York State Empire Development Corporation; the Onondaga County Save the Rain program; and Syracuse University. Project partners took a creative and inclusive approach to resolving critical environmental issues and engaging local residents and businesses through a series of interactive public design meetings. As an EEA recipient, the project serves as a national example of agencies' abilities to produce positive environmental outcomes through strong partnerships and innovative interagency collaboration.



The Syracuse Connective Corridor is a strong example of collaboration and creative public engagement leading to positive environmental outcomes. (Courtesy of Barton and Loguidice, D.P.C.)

PB-85 Stream, Floodplain, and Wetland Restoration in Maryland

The 2015 EEAs recognized the PB-85 Stream, Floodplain, and Wetland Restoration project for Excellence in Wetlands, Watersheds, and Water Quality. Through an inspiring and successful effort to mitigate the effects of a large freeway construction project on the Paint Branch watershed, the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and its partners improved water quality, reduced flooding through wetland restoration, and presented a model for similar mitigation efforts in other regions of the country. In one particularly innovative part of the wetland restoration effort, the project partners reconnected the floodplain and reduced erosion by breaching earthen flood barriers (or berms) and converting 12 acres of agricultural land along the streams into natural wetlands. Breaching the agricultural berms also enabled floodwaters to disperse into surrounding wetlands, where they were absorbed—a process that significantly reduces the risk of storm flows and flood damage. The restored wetlands improve water quality in the Paint Branch stream systems and the downstream Anacostia and Potomac Rivers by filtering nutrients from the water and collecting suspended



The Maryland SHA's restoration of wetlands advanced the state of the practice in stormwater and water quality management. (Courtesy of Maryland SHA)

sediment, thereby improving stream habitat for aquatic species. As an EEA recipient, the PB-85 Stream, Floodplain, and Wetland Restoration project provides a compelling model for other States and agencies of the importance and value of preserving and restoring wetlands in transportation projects.

The EEA Program Advances Principles of Innovation and Environmental Protection

The EEA program exemplifies FHWA's commitment to promoting environmental stewardship and streamlining transportation project delivery. By recognizing outstanding initiatives that support the natural and human environment, the program showcases innovative projects that can serve as models for Federal and State agencies across the United States. As national examples of environmental excellence, the 2015 EEA recipients demonstrate the integration of natural and human environmental concerns into the project planning and development processes, and increase innovative program delivery efforts. The EEA biennial program will continue to recognize the Nation's most outstanding environmental initiatives for years to come. FHWA plans to announce the next application period in late 2016.

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Look What's New!

- The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy [released a set of data and tools](#) that are designed to help ensure the Nation's transportation systems are more resilient to the effects of climate change. These are a part of the President's Climate Data Initiative and the Climate Resilience Toolkit.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released [EJSCREEN](#), an environmental justice mapping and screening tool that provides EPA with a nationally consistent dataset and approach for combining environmental and demographic indicators.
- The White House Council on Environmental Quality and George Washington University hosted the [2015 GreenGov Symposium](#) on June 10, 2015. The event brought together senior Administration officials and Federal sustainability stakeholders to discuss the new executive order, [Planning for Federal Sustainability in the Next Decade](#). Presentations from the event are available for download.
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and EPA proposed Phase 2 MD/HD vehicle [fuel efficiency and greenhouse gas standards](#).

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.