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A SUMMARY OF THE 2006 LINKING CONSERVATION AND TRANSPORTATION WORKSHOPS

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Abstract

To improve the linkage between conservation and transportation planning, emphasize the use of information, tools and methods that can be shared between the transportation, resource and regulatory agencies.

Project Description

In 2006, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), NatureServe and Defenders of Wildlife teamed up to organize three state-based workshops to improve linkages between conservation and transportation planning. Host states included the ICOET 2007 host state, Arkansas,* as well as Colorado and Arizona. Approximately 150 people participated in the workshops, from the executive to the field level. Each workshop emphasized the information, tools and methods that can be shared among transportation planners, wildlife and resource agencies and the regulators to better inform the planning process. In addition to improved inter-agency relationships and increased stewardship, integration can save money and time by streamlining transportation projects. Following presentations on transportation planning, conservation data sources and available technology, workshop participants discussed opportunities to integrate and collaboratively developed a work plan.

Each workshop included:

- an overview of transportation planning in their state, from local to state level and from long-range to project level
- major conservation planning approaches in use, including natural heritage methods and State Wildlife Action Plans
- software tools for comprehensive planning, including NatureServe VISTA, Community Viz and Quantm
- discussion and strategy building

Current or Anticipated Results

This presentation will summarize the lessons learned from the workshop series, to include:

- In order to gauge interest and importance of the subject matter, participants were asked for input prior to and following the workshop. For example, "What would be most helpful towards integrating conservation planning into the transportation planning process?" These responses will be compiled and categorized for consistencies across states and across disciplines.
- Compiled and categorized lists of obstacles and opportunities for comprehensive planning, as identified by workshop participants
- Finished work plans from each workshop, with progress updates as of May 2007
- Recommendations for other states from workshop participants
- *As Arkansas hosted both a workshop and ICOET, Arkansas workshop participants will be asked to join us for this session and answer questions on their own progress

Recommendations for Future Research

- Addressing identified obstacles to integrated planning
- Continued monitoring of integrated planning efforts
- Quantify conservation gains from integrated planning efforts