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Contact: Russell Holter, Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 360-586-3533

Outstanding Achievements in Community Infrastructure Honored

Wenatchee--The Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council (IACC) met at the Wenatchee Convention center to honor recently completed infrastructure projects, and the people who have dedicated their lives to making communities livable in Washington State. This year's winners come from a variety of locations around the state, demonstrating the IACC's influence on bringing ideas and funding sources together to improve communities in Washington State.

Lloyd Halverson, Administrator; City of Camas

The winner of the 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award is Lloyd Halverson City Administrator of Camas, Washington. Halverson began his career in government over 24 years ago. During his long tenure as Camas City Administrator, Halverson has been responsible for the City acquiring millions of dollars in grants, beneficial loans, and legislative appropriations. According to Camas Mayor Scott Higgins, Halverson's experience and knowledge has done much to build Camas credibility amongst local governments both here in Washington and abroad. Under Halverson's leadership, all aspects of Camas life have benefited with a sense of fairness for all Camas citizens. This is evident in the improvements made to streets, the sanitary sewer, and drinking water systems. Halverson prides himself on developing public spaces such as the greenbelt, safe playgrounds, and newly developed trails. His vision of a commuter-friendly recreation trail has reached beyond the corporate limits of Camas and has had a positive impact on Clark County. Although Halverson is retiring, no one is convinced that he is slowing down anytime soon.

North Perry Avenue Water District; Kitsap County

When the Washington State Department of Health needed someone to step up to the plate to absorb a failing, privately owned, class "A" water system in Keyport that was unmaintained, beyond its service life, did not meet current standards, subject to service interruptions, and notorious for racking up fines for being out of compliance; most qualified operators politely declined the request. However, the North Perry Avenue Water District rose to the challenge and said, "We can help."

With assistance from various state and federal agencies, the North Perry Avenue Water District successfully completed a total overhaul of the failing Keyport system. The new customers now receive fresh water delivered from a reliable system without the additional costs. The system is now redundant, with better fire flow capacity and virtually eliminates the need for wasteful flushing of the service mains. The IACC chose to honor the North Perry Avenue Water District for outstanding achievement in drinking water for their extraordinary efforts.

The Skokomish Tribe of Indians; Mason County

Keeping the waters in and around Hood Canal pristine has been an interest of the Skokomish Tribe of Indians for thousands of years. The western inlet of Puget Sound has been a favorite place for people to recreate for many generations. Over the years, many of the recreation cabins on Hood Canal have been taxed to their limits as more and more people choose to live in the area fulltime. This has placed a burden on hundreds of septic systems that were already marginal in their operation, thus diminishing the quality of the surrounding water.

The Skokomish Tribe worked for 16 years to bring a wastewater treatment facility to their reservation and do their part to clean up Puget Sound. The tribe, with its limited resources and small staff, persevered through the bureaucratic process. The tribe successfully entered into an agreement with Mason County, and the Mason County PUD, that allowed the tribe to move forward with their plans. Combined, a total of $9.3 million was raised for the design and construction of the facility. In an effort to encourage off-reservation land owners to participate, the tribe offered hook ups to the system free of charge. Currently, all commercial and public entities have hooked up. Many homeowners in the vicinity have voluntarily taken advantage of the tribal wastewater system helping to control the amount of damaging nitrates that enter into the area waterways.

Raft Island Improvement Association; Gig Harbor

Raft Island is an isolated community of 600 fulltime residence that rely upon a bridge constructed in 1958 as their lifeline. Over the years the bridge has suffered the effects of time and tide. The wooden bridge members systematically began failing to the point where load limits and lane restrictions had to be put in place that restricted access for most commercial vehicles.

The bridge also supported other key infrastructure such as electricity, water, gas, and sewer. Beyond its service life, the bridge was recommended for replacement. The Raft Island Improvement Association appealed to more than 30 different lenders with little success. However, with the help of the US Department of Agriculture Office of Rural Development, the association finally reached full financing for new construction. The result is a new concrete deck bridge that has a smaller impact upon the delicate marine environment. The bridge includes all new utility infrastructure and allows the residents of the island make improvements to their property now that dump trucks and cement mixers are allowed to cross onto Raft Island again.

City of Spangle; Spokane County

Main Street in downtown Spangle was originally constructed as part of the old state highway system. Over the years it had been widened, but heavy farm-to-market traffic and perennial freeze-thaw cycles caused the roadway to be badly deteriorated. The downtown core suffered from the Main Street being an eyesore that did not represent a successful and vibrant Eastern Washington community.

The current City of Spangle administration, headed-up by Mayor Don Mangis, could no longer accept the status quo and appealed to the Washington State Transportation Improvement Board for assistance. The failing Main Street was discouraging to downtown businesses and hazardous to pedestrians.

Finding cost saving solutions to small community needs has been hallmark of the Transportation Improvement Board. Using innovative construction techniques the contractor shaved $150,000 off the engineer's estimates for the same road using commonly accepted paving practices. These cost saving techniques included reducing the old concrete road into rubble that was then used as the sub-base for the new road. The result is a Main Street that is inviting and pedestrian friendly that encourages tourism and is inviting to people who shop locally.

City of Port Angeles; Clallam County

In the creative solutions category, the honoree is the City of Port Angeles for their Combined Sewer Outflow project. The City of Port Angeles was aware of issues surrounding run-off and sewer discharges for a number of years. Of the four uncontrolled outfalls, three discharged directly into the Straits of Juan De Fuca. The fourth one discharged first into a stream before contaminating the bay. These result of these discharges not only threatened endangered species, it effected the safety and vitality of Port Angeles since many of the beaches had to periodically closed while the contamination dissipated to acceptable levels.

A challenge in finding an acceptable solution is the fact that many of the project alternatives would require excavating in areas that are culturally sensitive to the tribes due to the presence of archaeological sites. In 2006 the City of Port Angeles began an aggressive campaign to reduce discharges and surface water run-off. The $30 million plan was put in motion to take advantage of existing site conditions and resources available at an abandoned industrial plant at the port.

City engineers were able to retrofit an existing 5 million gallon storage tank, the plants unused outfall, and repurposed the industrial waterlines to serve the new gravity sewer and force mains, thus eliminating the need to dig in a culturally sensitive area and avoiding wasteful demolition of useful infrastructure. This need for finding a creative solution to a pressing environmental issue saved the City of Port Angeles both time and money and is a great example of what can be accomplished when a city decides to implement a policy to reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Town of Lind; Adams County

If success breeds success then the Town of Lind is on the right track. The Town of Lind is a small railroad town in central Adams County. Its wastewater treatment facility was barely functioning, requiring extensive repairs, it could not meet acceptable water quality standards and was not capable of carrying any additional capacity. At the same time, a report issued by the Washington State Department of Ecology traced contamination found in the Lind Coulee back to the Town of Lind. Mayor Jaime Schmunk called a town meeting to address the issues. To her surprise, nearly the entire community turned out.

Concerns were raised as to how the town was going to be able to accomplish cleaning up the Lind Coulee Waterway without raising rates so high that people would no longer be able to afford to live there. The capacity crowd became increasingly more engaged as discussions turned from sewer rates, to capital spending, inflation, interest rate loans, operations and maintenance costs.

Working with the Rural Community Assistance Corporation, the US Department of Agriculture's Office of Rural Development, HUD's Community Development Block Grants, and the Washington State Department of Commerce Public Works Board, the Town of Lind was able to find funding to address the urgent problems at hand. The new wastewater system solves many problems, but better still, the towns citizens feel empowered to do even more to help their community. The Town of Lind has demonstrated an interest in making their community more livable as evidenced by the consistent participation by the public in tackling new infrastructure projects such as stormwater solutions, upgrades to the drinking water system, and improvements to the downtown streetscape.

Debbie Harper; USDA-Rural Development, Olympia

Debbie Harper of the US Department of Agriculture was honored for her many years of service to assist local governments meet their infrastructure needs with a Heart and Soul Award. The award is given in honor to departing members of the IACC. Harper had served a variety of capacities for the IACC, most recently as the treasurer of the non-profit organization. Long standing board member and ex-officio, Cathy Read of the Washington State Department of Commerce said of Harper, "She regularly updated the board in a competent and enthusiastic manner and we always felt confident that our finances were in good hands."

Harper is a great team player who is well-loved by the communities that she serves because she is clear with her guidance on her programs policies and procedures, but also works diligently towards meeting the goals and interests of her clients.

The Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council is a unique non-profit organization made up of board members representing Federal, State, and Local Governments, as well as Tribal and Non-profit organizations. The IACC assists communities, with limited resources, in planning, finding grants or other creative solutions; or can provide technical expertise in community problem solving with the purpose of building stronger towns through better livability, and economic development.

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For more information about the awards or the award recipients, please contact Russell Holter, IACC Awards Committee Co-Chair at 360-586-3533.

Photos of award winners can be obtained from John Carpita at Jcarpita@mrsc.org