

# IRWA is Industry Catalyst at Federal Agency Update



**BY LEE HAMRE, SR/WA, R/W-URAC, R/W-RAC**

Each year, IRWA's leadership heads to Washington, DC to engage in activities that reinforce IRWA's position as the central authority for the right of way profession, while enhancing the value of IRWA membership.

In March, IRWA hosted the Federal Agency Update (FAU), an annual forum that connects real estate specialists representing our federal partners with industry stakeholders for a day of regulatory updates, education and networking. For many agencies, this venue is considered invaluable, as it is one of the few formal opportunities where they can share their perspective

on new initiatives and provide their agency's regulatory interpretation/application.

This year, presentations were given by representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the National Parks Service (NPS).

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Following are some highlights from each session. For more detailed information, visit [www.irwaonline.org](http://www.irwaonline.org) for PowerPoint presentations from each Agency.

FHWA speakers included Nelson Castellanos, Director, Office of Real Estate Services; Arnold Feldman, Relocation Acquisition, Office of Real Estate Services; and Marshall Wainright, Lead Realty Specialist, FHWA Resource Center. The program kicked off with an overview of the new Transportation Bill “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (MAP 21). Highlights of the bill were addressed, including key challenges, opportunities and progress on its implementation. Those changes that are specific to right of way are in the areas of Early Acquisition, Uniform Act, Outdoor Advertising and Junkyard Control. In 2012, the FHWA completed research projects in Alternative Uses of the right of way, Voluntary Acquisitions under the Uniform Act and Incentive Payments. Projects that launched in 2012 include a Reverse Mortgage Study and a Tribal Lands Workshop. For 2013, the FHWA has planned studies on Turbo Relocation and electronic offers by email.

Pamela Peckham, FTA Realty Specialist, discussed newly proposed Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance. To deliver on President Obama’s promise of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century government that is more efficient, transparent and creative, the Office of Management and Budget is seeking to adjust the Federal government’s partnership with non-Federal stakeholders to best achieve the program objectives, while ensuring the financial integrity of the dollars spent. The effort is designed to transform the Federal financial assistance framework so that it meets a higher standard of performance on behalf of the American people. Streamlining the Federal grant-making process will help maximize taxpayer dollars, ensure financial integrity and deliver the most efficient outcome. Reform ideas will be discussed in the Advance Notice of Proposed Guidance, which can be found in the Federal Register.

HUD Relocation Specialists Janice Olu and Bryan O’Neill provided an overview of HUD’s Disaster Recovery efforts. Over the past decade, the agency has provided funds to support recovery from disasters such as Hurricanes Sandy, Ike, Gustav, Dolly, Katrina, Rita and Wilma, and for post 9/11 recovery efforts. Some of HUD’s primary funding sources, such as the Community Development Block Grant were outlined, and the presenters elaborated on the funding process, eligible uses of funds, and common waivers and suspensions of acquisition and relocation requirements.



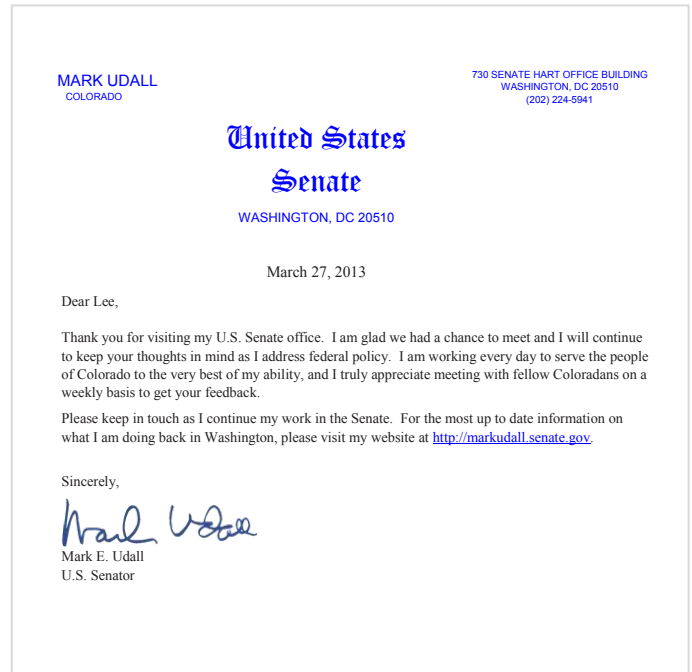
USACE Director of Real Estate Scott Whiteford gave an update on his agency's efforts, including Hurricane Sandy response/recovery efforts, effects from the ongoing drought and land acquisition at Fort Polk, LA. The agency's real estate activities in 2013 will be concentrated in focus on audit readiness, professionalization, consistent delivery of products and services, Contiguous U.S. and Overseas Contingency Operations support, business governance updates and the capture of best practices.

For the many right of way professionals in attendance, this peer-to-peer exchange serves as an invaluable tool for disseminating relevant and timely information and sharing industry insights. The Association looks forward to bringing our Federal partners together again next year to share best practices and collaborate on our common goals.

Rick Etter, Airport Acquisitions Specialist for FAA Airport Planning and Programming spoke about FAA Airport Program funding levels, policy changes and new programs. He addressed FAA's Airport Land Acquisition/Management programs and outlined a typical project, noise land disposal options and the increasing solicitation of airport owners for oil and gas development in areas of shale gas plays. An update of FAA Guidance and Airport Improvement Program Resources was also provided.

An update on IRWA-FERC joint projects was delivered by Douglas Sipe, Outreach Manager, Division of Gas-Environment and Engineering, FERC Office of Energy Projects. He outlined FERC's mission and gave details about FERC Outreach, the IRWA Training Module and FERC's Communication Plan. The training module originated as a method for meeting industry needs recently highlighted in the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America's "Commitment to Landowners," which outlines ethical and professional behavior and landowner interaction principles. The module was a collaborative effort between IRWA's International Pipeline Committee and FERC, and the associated white paper on Pipeline Personnel Strategies is in its final phases of development.

Lucas Lucero, BLM Branch Chief, Rights of Way and Vaughan Marable, Acting Program Manager Lands Special Uses for USFS delivered a joint presentation on the BLM's Right of Way Program, USFS Special Uses Program, EPart Section 368 Energy Corridors and Rapid Response Team for Transmission. Lee Dickinson, NPS Special Park Uses Program Manager, addressed the wide variety of special uses for which National Park permits are sought, from right of way uses to the use of particularly scenic National Park locations for filming of television and movie projects.



While in Washington DC, the International Executive Committee held private meetings with federal partners and Congressional representatives to present IRWA's professional credentials and to offer the Association's unmatched expertise in issues regarding real estate for public and private infrastructure. From left, IRWA Executive Vice President Mark Rieck, International Secretary Wayne Goss, SR/WA, R/W-NAC, U.S. Senator Mark Udall of Colorado and International Vice President Lee Hamre, SR/WA, R/W-URAC, R/W-RAC.