

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSET MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The International Right of Way (IRWA) attributes its longstanding growth and success to the International Committees who represent our core industry segments. Their contributions in the areas of education, member recruitment and outreach programs have significantly advanced the Association and right of way profession.

"I do not think there is an issue or challenge in my job that I could not find an answer to from our committee members....*how can you put a price on that?*"

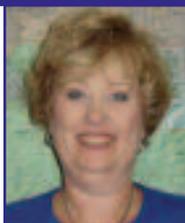
A photograph of two men, Thomas Fox and Gordon MacNair, standing side-by-side. Thomas Fox is on the left, wearing a dark suit and tie. Gordon MacNair is on the right, wearing a light-colored patterned jacket over a dark shirt. They are both smiling slightly.

Thomas Fox, SR/WA, Chair of the International Asset Management Committee, at the 2005 Annual Conference with IRWA Past President Gordon MacNair, SR/WA.

The overall mission of the International Asset Management Committee (IAMC) is to share best practices and disseminate important industry information to the chapter level. The IAMC understands the big picture and helps chapters identify how various aspects of asset management are applicable at the local level.

IAMC Chair Tom Fox, SR/WA, is not one to settle for the status quo. This becomes evident as he describes the future plans for the committee. "Asset management is no longer just about leases or buildings," notes Tom. While leases and buildings are an extremely important and vital function to businesses or agencies, the Asset Management Committee is keenly focused on new initiatives and accomplishing new challenges. They have agreed to expand their attention to any type of activity that enhances or protects an asset, such as physical protection and security of buildings, water plans, electric generating stations, etc. As a result of this expanded focus, the committee members have become inspired to bring new ideas to the table.

BY BARBARA BILLITZER



Committee Members from left: Tom Fox, SR/WA; Johnny Dyess, SR/WA, R/W-EC, R/W-NAC, R/W-AMC; Janet Parks; Dean Harris, SR/WA; and Cynthia Gan, SR/WA, R/W-EC

How would you describe your committee's overall mission?

Tom: Our mission is to be the "primary" source and advocate to those asset management professionals, both inside the IRWA and those who are not members, who seek guidance, education, and professional interaction that will allow them to maximize the full potential of the real property that is their responsibility, be it buildings, land, lakes, leases or physical security.

What are the major responsibilities of your committee?

Tom: Our major responsibilities are to provide the latest information about our industry to all of the asset management professionals. We continually review the needs of all private and public entities to ensure we are providing them with the most "educated" asset managers within their agency or company. We seek the best speakers and professionals in the industry to share their information at our educational seminars, but the most important task which we are assigned is to assure that all of our Asset Management courses (700 series) are up to date and provide the maximum benefit to their users. There is nothing less valuable than paying for and attending a course on asset management, only to discover it contained outdated information.

What are some of your current activities?

Tom: We are currently expanding our committee to include other asset managers outside of the right of way profession. We have asked the International Security Organization (ASIS) to attend one of our committee meetings to discuss any shared interests. The old "charge" of just managing leases or buildings is being reviewed to possibly include any type of activity that enhances or protects an asset, be it physical protection and security of our buildings, water plants, electric generating stations, etc.

We are also looking at several ways to better use lakes and water impoundments for development of recreational areas and as

mitigation sites. Every time our committee meets, our members suggest new activities that could be served by our resources and professional members. It's an exciting time to be involved with these folks on our committee.

What is your greatest/most recent accomplishment?

Tom: It is definitely bringing more IRWA members in to our committee. In the past, we would have meetings where we were not able to attract the attendance we have today. That is directly attributed to the current members on the committee and the fresh ideas they bring. Once we decided to possibly expand our "mission" to include the areas I mentioned earlier, the committee "caught fire" and new ideas are discussed at each meeting. There is only so much you can discuss about leases and buildings, (which are an extremely important and vital function to a business or agency), but with our new outreach initiatives, we look to accomplish new challenges.

What are some major obstacles you face?

Tom: Some of the obstacles we face are common to most who serve on the industry committees within the IRWA...time...money...and people to serve.

We originally thought we needed committee members from every region within the IRWA. However, as new members became acquainted with our tasks, we realized we were accomplishing our goals even though we did not have full representation from all regions. I think it may be a disservice to the members of the regions that are not represented, and I am concerned that there are IRWA members in these regions whose interest in asset management is not being fulfilled or met. Everything we do and provide is for all of the members of the IRWA. And as the communication flows from our committee to the Regions to the Chapters and back, lots of right of way professionals whose responsibility falls within the asset management spectrum are being shortchanged in their membership.



From left: Danny Skeans, SR/WA, R/W-AMC; Mark Riggs; Robert Drayton, SR/WA, R/W-AMC; James Prossick; and Paul Pedersen

What made you originally decide to join this committee?

Tom: My particular position and responsibility with South Carolina Electric & Gas (SCE&G) required me to search for ways to use some of our assets and either turn them into an income-producing function or sell them if possible. I was looking for ways to use our miles of existing rights of way in South Carolina, transmission lines, etc. and found that the Asset Management Committee had numerous experienced professionals from whom I could gather information.

These IRWA industry committees possess a wealth of experience and are a resource available to any member. If you face a problem with a particular issue on your job, I am confident that someone on these committees has experienced it before and can provide a viable solution. What's nice about these experienced folks is that they all are willing to share their information and experiences.

What have you gained from your participation?

Tom: The one thing that I have gained and really appreciated is how much the professional members – not just the Asset Management Committee, but all committees – are willing to work and share their knowledge for the benefit of others.

We serve no other function except to educate our members, and to be in a room full of the various committees and hear and see the results of their work on their particular projects is very rewarding to me as a professional. Being on the Asset Management Committee has allowed me to experience new ideas that are useful to me day to day on my job and has fueled me with enough excitement and energy to last a long time. I do not think there is an issue or challenge in my job that I could not find an answer to from our committee members....how can you put a price on that?

How does your employer feel about your IRWA involvement?

Tom: My employer feels so strongly about the Association, that IRWA courses and seminars are used exclusively as the sole formal

training method for the right of way agents to maintain their position and earn promotions within our company. In order for a SCE&G right of way agent to get promoted to the highest job class within our company, they must be an SR/WA.

Our right of way department has 100% participation in the IRWA, and each member of our team is also supported by our company at 100%. The training and networking benefits we get from our participation in the IRWA is invaluable to my employer, as evident by their support, encouragement and trust in the training we receive.

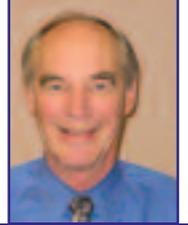
What would you say is your committee's greatest strength?

Tom: Without a doubt, our strength is the member participation we now have and the job and skill diversity they possess.

Since our active committee members have less than five years of service on the committee, the new and fresh ideas that are brought to the table at our meetings are exciting to see and experience. Of course, the members on our committee are all volunteers, but their reward comes from working hard to make sure that those who can benefit from our leadership in the asset management profession will benefit from the most up-to-date information and technology available. We are constantly reaching out to other committees within the IRWA to gather information and share ideas. This is simply not done with a letter or e-mail, but grabbing someone's arm at a meeting or seminar and sharing as much information as possible with them. Our bar tabs have increased dramatically!!!

What goals do you have for the immediate future?

Tom: One of immediate goals is to seek other organizations within the asset management or property management profession who would like to "partner" with our committee. Like I mentioned earlier, we want to be recognized as the "go-to committee" whenever a professional has a question on asset management. We are currently interacting with other IRWA committees to seek topics of joint interest that can be shared at a meeting or education session.



From left: John Spencer, SR/WA, RPA; Heather Edmunson, SR/WA; John Horne, SR/WA; Donna Hunter; and Kent Winslow, SR/WA

How many members do you have?

Tom: Our committee is very fluid and dynamic...but we currently have a total of 18 members – 11 Members and 7 At-Large Members.

How often do you meet?

Tom: We try to meet at least three times per year, and that includes the annual conference. Lately we have found that phone conferences work well if there are not too many issues to discuss. Using the teleconference, we can all share our ideas, and we are forced to speak one at a time, which is very hard for a right of way professional to do!!!

How would someone interested get involved in this committee?

Tom: I would urge them to look at our membership roster below and get a contact name and number for the Committee Chair and/or Vice Chair. Any person on the IEC can direct them to our committee, and the IRWA website has our membership roster and meeting agenda.

Everyone, no matter how much experience or lack of experience in asset management, would be welcome, and....we have fun!!!

International Asset Management Committee Members:

Tom Fox, SR/WA, Chair

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Region 1

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Region 2

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Region 3

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Region 8

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Region 9

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Region 10

Vacant

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