

## FOCUS ON

# THE INTERNATIONAL PIPELINE COMMITTEE



Val Hatley, SR/WA, Chair of the International Pipeline Committee, with Barbara Billitzer, IRWA Director of Communications & Publishing, at the 2006 Federal Agency Update in Washington, DC.

The International Right of Way Association (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 the right of way profession.

The International Pipeline Committee (PLC) stays focused on their key mission: to provide advice and assistance on matters related to acquisition, construction, and operation of pipeline rights of way for public or private use.

“It is a privilege to be associated with such an established group of professionals who have strong opinions and care deeply about pipeline right of way issues.”

With over 70 members on board, the IRWA International Pipeline Committee is definitely unique. One look at their member roster and it's easy to see why their committee is often envied. In existence for over 30 years, there's a certain cache associated with being a member. Having witnessed their camaraderie at the 2005 Annual Conference in Toronto, it's apparent that these right of way professionals share a strong bond.

Committee Chair Val Hatley, SR/WA, reveals his heartfelt pride while describing the committee's strong work ethic. Val believes that members want to be involved and stresses the importance of establishing subcommittees, where most of the work is accomplished. He also describes the significance of integrating social functions with education at each meeting. Whether it's an outside activity such as golf, or simply a hospitality suite, these functions provide a unique venue for developing contacts in the industry and strengthening relationships built over the years.

You might expect to see Val begin winding down as he approaches the end of his two-year term as chair. However, he's already fast at work organizing a new fall workshop in Louisiana...

**BY BARBARA BILLITZER**



Committee Members from left: Val Hatley, SR/WA; Stephen McDaniel; James Dufault; Neilia LaValle; David Sinclair; and Marvin DeJear

### How would you describe your committee's mission?

**Val:** The core responsibilities of the Committee (PLC) have remained constant and include the following:

- Bring current and emerging pipeline-related right of way issues to the PLC for consideration and discussion
- Provide a stimulating forum for discussing key issues in a frank and open meeting environment
- Seek ways to improve the core competencies of our members and enhance their professional standing by participating in and leading educational initiatives
- Look for opportunities to promote member achievements
- Provide networking opportunities for our members and key decision makers that can impact our industry
- Expand our areas of influence

### Your committee has more than 70 members. How would you describe its composition?

**Val:** One of our priorities has been to ensure the makeup of our committee reflects the changes in, and the diversity of, our industry. In the past, committee members primarily worked for major oil company subsidiaries and affiliates that were engaged in the transportation of liquid hydrocarbons by common carrier, long distance pipelines. Today, about 20% of our members are involved in the transportation of natural gas and/or chemicals and roughly a third are involved with land service companies.

### What has changed about the committee over the years?

**Val:** From a group of large liquid pipeline operators in the 1980s with a dozen or so members, we're now able to routinely attract more than 40 members and guests at each meeting. Over 50 members/guests attended our January meeting. I am pleased that the PLC has continued to grow, that the meetings are well attended, and that we cover a lot of ground at the meetings.

We are also a little different than other committees. For instance, we are comprised mostly of At-Large Members of IRWA rather than regional representatives. We have a fairly inclusive policy regarding membership on the Committee. Also, our meetings are mostly self-supporting. Although IRWA provides an annual travel budget for the Chair/Vice Chair, we have not faced the need to seek additional funding from the Association.

### What are some of your current activities?

**Val:** We have been busy...

Given the size of the committee, we have organized several working subcommittees to handle specific items of interest to our industry.

For example, we recently formed a Pipelines and Informed Planning Subcommittee (as a result of the PHMSA Land Use Planning Initiative), and this subcommittee, chaired by Terry Mock, has been tasked with developing best practices. We also have a subcommittee participating in the right of way compensation study involving Native American lands as required in last year's Energy Bill. Members include Ed Peck, Jon Taylor, Alan Wurtz and Dave Anderson.



From left: Michael Baker; Ron Barker, SR/WA; Terry Mock; Rob Latimer; Andrew Langille; Debra Bemenderfer; and Gary Metz

One subcommittee is working with the state of Texas regarding sales tax issues and another subcommittee is working with the state to encourage the uniform application of pipeline encasement policies. By the time this article is published, I hope we have buy-in from the Committee to host a pipeline permitting workshop in Louisiana later this year.

### What is the Annual Pipeline Systems Workshop?

**Val:** As part of a 30-year tradition, member companies of the PLC have hosted the Pipeline Systems Workshop at Durango, Colorado. Ed Peck, our BLM Subcommittee Chair, has done a great job keeping this program and associated programs both timely and meaningful for the participants. Held annually in May, this workshop has further strengthened our relationships with participating agencies. It is primarily geared to agency personnel, although there are five or six slots reserved for industry employees/contractors.

The federal government has approved the one-day workshop for accreditation. We had almost 40 students at this meeting. Our last program was originally planned to foster better communications between industry and the BLM and the National Forest Service. Roger Ryman (Shell), Wayne Stevens (El Paso), and Bill Grissom (Mobil) were instrumental in establishing this program.

For industry, the course provides valuable insight into what the agencies will look for when they process a permit application for new projects. We are working with the BLM to develop additional training courses.

### Tell us about your Spring meeting and partnering with the BLM?

**Val:** Our Spring Pipeline Committee meeting was held at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. This was a result of recent efforts to partner with Federal agencies, including BLM. We had a robust agenda and, given the meeting's proximity to Washington, DC, we were able to attract several governmental agencies to participate.

In addition to the BLM, representatives of PHMSA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Forest Service, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers participated. Our speakers included Ray Brady and Ron Montagna (BLM), Blaine Keener and Michael Khataya (PHMSA), Richard Hoffmann (FERC), Robert Cunningham (National Forest Service), and Michele Joy (AOPL).

The topics included initiatives resulting from last year's Energy Policy Act, OPS' Integrity Management Plan, pipeline activities inside national forests, and damage prevention efforts by AOPL. It's a testament to the quality of the membership of the PLC that we are able to routinely attract such outstanding speakers to participate at our meetings.

In addition to BLM, the Committee is also trying to enhance our relationship with other key regulatory agencies. Last September, a representative of the U.S. Department of Transportation (PHMSA/OPS) joined us as a guest and spoke at our meeting. We are continually looking for new ways to partner with key agencies in the future.



From left: Ken Clagett, SR/WA; Fred Clark, SR/WA; Joe Coates; John Coates, Jr.; Jere Dial; Dave Donnelly; and Jay "Randy" Fraley



From left: Pamela Alley; Kathy Berry; Len Boshetti, SR/WA; Kerry Briggs; Jane Ann Byroad; and Steve Chastain

### What types of educational pipeline sessions will be presented at the annual conference in June?

**Val:** We are presenting three sessions. We have a joint presentation with the Valuation Committee concerning the impact of easements on property values and a joint session with the Utilities Committee on right of way encroachments. In addition, the PLC will continue to conduct an open panel discussion. We call it the Esoteric Chicken Plucking Panel discussion, and Bill Moore has agreed to moderate this year's event.

### What is your committee's greatest strength?

**Val:** I know it will sound hokey, but it's the committee members. The committee pretty much runs itself with the Chair acting primarily as a figurehead or empty suit (if I would ever wear one). It is a privilege to be associated with such an established group of professionals who have strong opinions and care deeply about pipeline right of way issues. Except for Connie Williford (who does not volunteer as a matter of policy), we have a strong work ethic and a willingness to participate in activities outside of the meetings (where most of the work is done).

### What are some challenges you face?

**Val:** Given the number of committee members, communication is sometimes a challenge. In fact, just keeping the e-mail roster updated for the members can be daunting. Without the ability to communicate electronically, I am not sure that you could even hope to communicate

with such a large committee in a meaningful way (now if I could only get the members to quit changing jobs and internet service providers).

Also, I think the problem we have as a committee in attracting younger members is also shared by the right of way profession at large. At one time, one of the biggest attractions to the right of way profession was the possibility of working at the same company for your entire career. However, as our industry has become more cyclical, we're no longer able to "promise" the security of lifetime employment. Our challenge is to create a working environment in which younger professionals can feel rewarded for their technical and computer skills.

### What have you gained from your participation?

**Val:** I would have to say that I've benefited significantly from the personal and professional growth opportunities. I've made valuable contacts within the industry – contacts that would have otherwise not been available. Just last year, one of the committee members (Kathy Berry) provided an easement for a pipeline on a tract that had been identified for disposition and was in "lockdown" mode. We were able to successfully conclude our negotiations only because we had forged an existing relationship through our common involvement on the committee.

### What made you decide to join this committee?

**Val:** The committee's reputation definitely preceded it. I had heard it was a great place to learn and network. There was also some cache associated with being a member since it was historically a committee that attracted more senior members.



From left: Greg Gilcrease; Gary Glancz; Steve Grandon; Brian Green; Steve Hartmann; Glen Hass; and Charles Holmes



From left: Walt Hoppensteadt; Dan Houlihan; Lori Keeter; James Krohe, SR/WA; Michael Lee; Brent Leftwich; and Henry Lloyd

### How does your employer feel about your IRWA involvement?

**Val:** I have been fortunate in that regard. My original managers Roger Ryman and Jim Davis (now retired) were strong supporters of IRWA. My current manager (Pam Alley) is a member of the committee and she has continued to support participation in IRWA.

One of my goals was that enough "red meat" would be on the agenda for each meeting so that each industry representative could go to their employer and demonstrate a tangible return on the company's investment in the PLC.

### What has been your most rewarding experience as Committee Chair?

**Val:** Even though a lot of work goes into planning the quarterly meetings, I have really enjoyed the process of organizing topics and identifying a diverse range of speakers. We have had great success in attracting outside speakers from the public and private sectors. As mentioned before, we had seven speakers at our April meeting.

At every meeting, I try to balance strong core subject matter topics with presentations that are "outside of the box." For example, at our January meeting, we invited an expert to discuss nonverbal communications in the context of high stakes poker and right of way

negotiations. Fortunately, the vast majority of the feedback that I have received on recent meetings has been positive.

### What has been the biggest challenge of your two-year term?

**Val:** I immediately followed two very strong committee chairs who I tried to emulate – Lori Keeter and Terry Mock. My initial fear upon becoming Chair was, "I sure hope I don't screw this up." Then you learn that the PLC creates its own energy.

Early in my tenure, I asked a subcommittee to review the membership bylaws and determine whether there were any constraints on the number of committee members. Without specific limitations on the number of members, the subcommittee and PLC decided not to place arbitrary limits on the committee size. As a result, my biggest challenge has been managing the committee's growth. Other than ChevronTexaco, I believe all of the major pipeline companies are now represented on the PLC.

As you note, our leadership positions on the PLC rotate every two years, with the exception of one position — Treasurer. David Sinclair has performed this service for decades, and he is one of the unsung heroes of the committee. We promised Dave that he could give up being Treasurer just as soon as we find another honest and trustworthy person on the PLC. Alas, our efforts so far have proven fruitless.



From left: Larry Nash; Jim Newcomb; Steve Patton; Edwin Peck, Jr., SR/WA; Bill Sanders; and James Sanford



From left: Laurie Markoe; Macon McDonald; Edward May; Johnny McGee; William Moore; Marshall Murphy; and Peter Nagel, SR/WA

**How are you able to attract/keep so many members?**

**Val:** Cheap booze and free cigarettes! (*Kidding about the cigarettes*)

I believe that members want to work and be involved. By effectively using the subcommittee structure (the heavy lifting occurs between meetings), we have been successful in getting more participation and engagement.

I have also tried to publish agendas early enough for our members to make advance travel plans. By providing topics/speakers that make people want to go to our meetings and by giving them sufficient time to make travel plans, our attendance at recent meetings has significantly increased.

Using e-mail updates helps keep the membership involved in emerging issues. It is a privilege to be able to communicate with so many high level right of way professionals by e-mail, and I have tried not to abuse this privilege. While I will on occasion add an element of humor to boost email readership, I think most of the members of the PLC know that I take the chairmanship seriously and strive to do the best job possible.

It's also important to incorporate official social functions at each meeting to strengthen our relationships. This may include an outside activity (usually golf), a hospitality suite, or perhaps we'll break into small groups for dinner on an ad hoc basis.

**How would you characterize the current relationship between the PLC and IRWA?**

**Val:** I think the relationship is stronger today than ever before.

It's important to realize that the members of the PLC are like cowboys (we're independent and we have issues dealing with authority), and this has led to some tension with the Association in the past. However, in recent years, it has become increasingly apparent that IRWA has made great strides in both the type and quality of the services they provide. The Association's commitment to enhancing the education and professional development offerings has helped facilitate collaboration between the PLC and IRWA. Through teamwork, we've been successful in focusing on our mutual goals and desires that we have for the profession.

**What are your plans after turning over the reins to Steve McDaniel?**

**Val:** I hope to maintain an active role on the committee. If the PLC agrees, I will take the lead in arranging a jointly sponsored pipeline permitting workshop in Louisiana this fall. IRWA will co-sponsor the event with the prestigious Kean, Miller law firm of Baton Rouge. We have also invited the state of Louisiana, Office of Economic Development, to join us at the meeting to discuss the challenges the state is facing in repairing the energy infrastructure since last year's storms. Knowing that the PLC will fully support Steve like they supported me, I am confident that the committee will continue to flourish.



From left: Timothy Suttle; Jon Taylor; Rick Thibodeaux; Darrel Vanhooser, SR/WA; Russell Verba; and Allen Wagers

## Exactly how many members do you currently have?

**Val:** At the time of this interview, we have 72 committee members. As you can see from the roster below, the vast majority are At-Large Members. Lately, we have added about 10 new members each year.

## How often does your committee meet?

**Val:** We meet quarterly, with the summer meeting functioning as an abbreviated two-hour meeting held in conjunction with the Annual Conference. Our other three meetings typically last eight hours or so. We try to mix the geographic locations of the meetings. This not only allows the members to attend at least one meeting in close proximity to where they work, I think it creates some enthusiasm in that the members are able to visit locations that

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they may not have a chance to visit otherwise. We did a survey a few years ago and the members expressed a clear preference to varying the meeting locations rather than having recurring meetings in the central U.S.

## How would someone interested get involved?

**Val:** I encourage anyone who is interested in joining to give me, or any committee member, a call. We have an open door policy and

anyone can attend our meetings as a guest. We try to schedule the meeting locations/dates at least one year in advance and publicize them on the IRWA website. Our only criteria for admitting IRWA members to our committee is that they actively participate. In addition to attending at least one meeting a year, we expect everyone on the PLC to play an active role (except Connie).

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