

Ministry WARS leading the way

Submitted by *Al Planiden*

Wildlife related motor vehicle collisions are one of the operational legacies of highway development throughout the world.

Living in a province where there are more deer, moose and other critters wandering out onto the road than probably anywhere else on earth, gives drivers in BC more negotiation challenges than a mouse living with two cats.

Fortunately this is an issue has that has not been ignored, thanks in large part to the efforts of Len Sielecki, Environmental Issues Analyst with the Engineering Branch. Len and the ministry's Wildlife Accident Reporting System (WARS) were recently featured in a two-page article in the international publication "World Highways."

The WARS system was initiated in the late '70s by Mike Kent, the ministry's Chief Environmental Officer, and through Len's continued ef-

forts, it has been developed into a state-of-the-art management tool that is the envy of other transportation jurisdictions.

It works like this: Our highway maintenance contractors collect wildlife accident information whenever the remains of an animal is discovered along the highway.

Contractors complete an accident reporting form that provides geographic, temporal and species-specific information.

Completed forms are sent to Ministry of Transportation district offices, where the reports are assembled and verified, and then on to headquarters where the data is entered into the WARS database.

That's when the "analyst" part of Len Sielecki's title comes into play. Len takes the information and dissects and interprets the data in enough ways to produce a hefty annual WARS report. The ministry uses the data and report rec-



Len Sielecki next to a deer jump in Belgium

ommendations to identify problem locations and things such as wildlife habits next to highways.

This information allows the ministry to consider wildlife accident mitigation measures such as warning signs, exclusion fencing, reflector installation and wildlife crossing structures.

Liaisons have been established with ICBC, and the ministry has successfully cost-shared with them in providing needed improvements to address wildlife issues along highways. When you consider that between 1997 and 2002, the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia paid almost \$120 million in wildlife-related motor vehicle accident claims

and our maintenance contractors have spent over \$6 million dollars on related accident cleanup since 1993, money used for mitigation efforts is money well spent.

In November of 2003, Len was also invited to speak on the ministry's wildlife accident reduction initiatives at the Infra Eco Europe Network (IENE) conference in Brussels, Belgium. Over 180 highway engineers, planners, administrators and ecologists from 29 countries attended, and his presentation was very well received.

In Europe and the United States, transportation officials are viewing WARS as the model to follow in developing their own programs.

Way to go, Lorne!

Lorne Bonderoff, Project Supervisor, Design in Nelson (Southern Interior Region), received a vest and framed award earlier this year in recognition of his outstanding customer service.



Portage Bridge work takes ministry employee to Athens

(Continued from page 12)

was a bundle of nerves. The quality of the presentations I had attended was very high and I was following Peter Taylor, of Buckland and Taylor. As I gave my talk to a huge audience, in spite of my

fears, I didn't spot anyone falling asleep, some well-directed questions were asked and I was approached afterward and complimented on the presentation. What a relief, but I still think I would prefer to be at the front of the program.