



**MENDOCINO
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

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MCOG Executive Director Retires, Names Successor

On Monday, June 4 at the regular meeting of the Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG), Executive Director Phil Dow announced his retirement after a career of more than 40 years in transportation. A registered traffic engineer, he served as the Transportation Planner for MCOG starting in the 1980s, then as Executive Director since 1999. He has chosen MCOG Program Manager Nephele Barrett as the next Executive Director, starting immediately.

The tone became somewhat emotional as various partners, officials and staff reminisced with affection and praise for Dow's service.

Dow has long been a champion for often-overlooked remote communities such as Gualala and Covelo. Throughout the county he has shepherded local plans for downtown safety improvements, promoted bicycle and pedestrian projects, supported public transit, and enabled innovations. His most significant accomplishment was to facilitate funding of the largest and highest priority project in the Regional Transportation Plan, seeing the Willits Bypass through construction in 2016. He has served on countless statewide committees, advocating for rural transportation needs and securing a fair share of funds for Mendocino County and the North State Super Region in a competitive environment where urban players hold sway. He initiated polling and state legislation that allowed local cities to join "self-help" counties in raising voter-approved sales taxes dedicated to fixing streets and roads.

“Around 1986 when I was first on MCOG as a member, I was struck with how much attention Phil paid to our little town of less than 500 people. He would come to our meetings and sometimes wouldn’t get back until after 11 at night,” remarked Richey Wasserman, Point Arena City Councilman. “Later I realized that he cared about everything in the county. He’s not just a public servant, he’s a wonderful person.”

Never one to seek attention, his deeds are perhaps better known in Sacramento than among the general public. Beyond that, as a Vietnam veteran he has volunteered much of his free time to veterans’ causes; as a business owner, he has been a reliable donor to youth and sports activities and local law enforcement. Phil Dow will be a hard act to follow.

Dow will serve in an advisory role to his staff for the next year or so, before formally retiring. The decision of successor was made after much consideration. Deputy management professionals Loretta Ellard and Janet Orth, each having worked for Dow some 20 years or more, will continue in key supporting roles along with the others on MCOG’s staff team. Barrett, who has worked as MCOG staff since 2000, brings specialized planning experience that will benefit the agency.

MCOG formed as a joint powers agreement in 1972, as mandated by state law, to disburse state and federal funds for transportation, to provide regional planning, and to serve as a regional forum. MCOG is overseen by a board consisting of two county supervisors, a countywide public appointee, and one council member from each of the four incorporated cities. For more information, call the MCOG office at 463-1859 or consult the agency's web site at www.mendocinocog.org.

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