

Moulthrop Recalls Evolution of Preservation

In January, **Jim Moulthrop, P.E.**, retired after serving since 2009 as executive director of FP² Inc., formerly the Foundation for Pavement Preservation.

For decades, he's been a pioneer in promoting environmentally sustainable pavement preservation, where he's had a national role in developing, promoting and supporting initiatives that help preserve America's pavement infrastructure.

He began his career with the Pennsylvania DOT. There he worked for two decades as a registered professional engineer with PennDOT in various positions, including assistant district and regional geotechnical engineer, chief field materials control engineer, chief of the Materials and Testing Division and director of highway maintenance, before moving to the private sector.

Over his long and distinguished career, Moulthrop has held positions and/or served in some capacity with other agencies and associations, and companies such as Lubrizol, Exxon Chemical Americas, Koch Materials and Fugro Roadware, volunteering much time to professional committees which promote better pavements. Over the course of his career, he's also served on FHWA and ASTM advisory committees.

Of most benefit to the pavement community, Moulthrop has been a long-time advocate of the importance of environmentally

sustainable pavement preservation, which is a founding principle of the FP² organization he has led into the 21st century.

During his time with the International Slurry Surfacing Association (ISSA)—while Moulthrop was representing a materials supplier—he was instrumental in working with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to lay the groundwork for broad-based agency support for pavement preservation.

He also was instrumental in clarifying federal surface transportation legislation to ensure the availability of federal funds for chip seal, fog seal, micro surfacing, slurry seal, hot in-place recycling and cold in-place recycling, research, and technological advancements.

Moulthrop is passionate about employing the pavement preservation concept—using the “right treatment to the right road at the right time”—to improve roads nationwide while minimizing the financial challenges associated with the “fix the worst roads first” mentality. He has worked diligently to educate future generations on applying this important concept.

On the occasion of his retirement, Pavement Preservation Journal conducted this retrospective interview with Jim, who has been succeeded by Rick Church (see article p 19).



In 2012, FP² executive director Jim Moulthrop, P.E., is flanked by FP² director Peter Grass, P.E., president of The Asphalt Institute, and then-FP² president Mike Buckingham, as he is inducted into the FP² Pavement Preservation Hall of Fame

Q: HOW DID YOUR CAREER LEAD TO PAVEMENT PRESERVATION?

A: Pavement preservation wasn't a term that was used back when I was the state maintenance engineer in Pennsylvania. From 1981 to 1983—when I had that job—winter services and pavement maintenance were a big budget item. But we didn't use the term preservation in those budgets. I soon moved to the private sector.

After four years working in private industry, I was fortunate to be contacted by **Tom Kennedy** at the University of Texas to see if I would work with him on the Strategic Highway Research Program [SHRP, 1987–1992]. It was during that time that I began to meet people involved in what we now call pavement preservation, mainly micro surfacing. And that's where I got to know some of the ISSA people.

Before long I migrated over to Koch Materials and began work with them in Austin. They had a regional office in which I was a technical manager working with micro surfacing, Novachip and other products, as well in asphalt emulsions.

DID THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION HAVE A ROLE AT THAT TIME?

It all goes back to **Jim Sorenson** [1949–2009], who was senior construction and system preservation engineer, FHWA Office of Asset Management. I would call him the father of pavement preservation as it relates to how we use it today and how it got started. He certainly was the prime driver. He traveled the country promoting pavement preservation to state and local road agencies when he was not leading the effort to fund pavement preservation at the national level.

He was the main mover in my mind for pavement preservation, but also **Larry Galehouse** at Michigan DOT, **Mike Buckingham** with Strawser in Columbus, Ohio, and **Bill Ballou** with Ballou Construction in Salina, Kan.

Mike recognized way back when that the International Slurry Surfacing Association [ISSA] needed an organization that would foster research into various preservation treatments, so Mike led the establishment in 1992 of the Foundation for Pavement Rehabilitation and Maintenance Research, or FPRMR, predecessor to the Foundation for Pavement Preservation. That's how ISSA started the whole thing.

In Fall 2000, during **Bill O'Leary's** presidency, the foundation, as it continued to be known, launched our own *Pavement Preservation Journal*, the only trade publication devoted entirely to pavement preservation. **Gerry Eller**, who had recently retired from FHWA, became our executive director.

HOW DID FP² BECOME INVOLVED IN LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY?

Back then FP² was a 501(c)3 organization, with which I understand we could promote pavement preservation and activities as the foundation, but if we wanted to try to influence and advocate for pavement preservation and activities, specifically with Congress, any money we spent to do that would be taxable.

At a board meeting in Atlanta in early 2009, there was some discussion about advocacy and **David Baker**, our attorney, called a time out and said if you're going to talk about this, this is a whole new ball game. You really need to think about something different, like a reorganization.

In early 2009, the board decided to re-organize as a 501(C)6 non-profit trade association. Mike Buckingham again was elected president and the board appointed me as executive director. So not as to confuse the IRS, the decision was made that we were no longer going to be the Foundation for Pavement Preservation, instead we would be officially incorporated as FP² Inc.

Our new mission was developed, which highlighted three fundamental activities: *advocacy, research and communications*.

We ended up interviewing three firms in Washington, and the committee recommended that we hire Williams & Jensen to be our advocacy counsel. Now we are represented by Alignment Government Strategies.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE FOR FP² TO MAKE AN IMPACT?

We first became heavily involved with the *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act*, that is, MAP-21 surface transportation, and that was passed in 2012. At one point in time, we had over 300 meetings in Washington with Congressional staff and other stakeholders about getting language into MAP-21 that would allow federal funding to be used for pavement preservation activities. And we were successful with that.

But there was a lot of work to start. Our first counsel with Williams & Jensen moved on and we began working with **Tracy Taylor** there. We talked with the whole gamut of individuals and associations, such as AAA, National Association of County Engineers, the Highway Users Alliance, TRIP, and others. They helped us understand the task at hand.

The next thing that came around was the FAST Act. We continued with a course encouraging preservation activities. And then came our current legislation, and there was discussion whether earmarks were going to be permitted in the latest bill. We decided we weren't going to ask for any set aside for preservation.

We did provide input to FHWA on its next steps with pavement preservation, and in December 2020, the FHWA *Pavement Preservation Strategic Plan* was released.

HOW HAS PAVEMENT PRESERVATION CHANGED SINCE YOU BECAME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR?

Pavement preservation has become accepted more among the state DOTs. Not universally

in the U.S., and there are some state DOTs who don't work in that regard or don't set up budgets in that way. But it's become routine in a lot of areas.

The work really now needs to be done at the local level, and we have been spotlighting successful local programs through our *James B. Sorenson Award for Excellence in Pavement Preservation* (see *Elmore County Preservation Achievements Highlighted by 2021 FP² Sorenson Award* in this issue, p 10).

The need is still there, to preserve what we have, and keep good roads good. But preservation has become a mainstream thing. It used to be an orphan or a problem child, or however else you want to describe the early, early days. But now it's more accepted, and more utilized. You can look at the conditions that people are reporting to see what the improvements have been when they are able to keep good roads good. That's a story in itself; it shows that preservation really works.

It gets back to asset management, and that somebody is saying, "How much money do we have and where should we spend it? And what's the condition of the existing system that we're going to spend it on?"

When I say mainstream, to me that means not just the county engineer or the state pavement engineer. It's the asset management people within the structure of the organization, whether it's city, county or state, who understand pavement preservation, what the objective is and how to make these things work.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

We need to continue to innovate in terms of the materials that are used. We need to take the performance characteristics of those materials and improve them. Not that they aren't good today, but you can't sit still on these things.

We need to continually move forward and find new and better ways to use these materials, especially in light of how things that are evolving regarding climate change, sustainability and resilience. We need to make sure we are part of that solution. 