

# The Industry's Annual Premiere Week of Learning Helps Satisfy the Growing Demand for Education in Erosion Control

What happens when you combine an unprecedented level of interest in controlling erosion on construction sites with the industry's very best and latest information about how to do just that? As the record number of erosion control professionals attending EC06 learned, you get an education in erosion control techniques and technology like nothing else in the world.

Held Feb. 20-24, in Long Beach, California, this year's Environmental Connection—the world's largest soil and water event—attracted 2,500 participants from 25 countries around the globe. They left with a wealth of practical information for improving their skills in protecting soils from the impact of blowing winds and flowing water.

As an erosion control professional from an island in the Pacific Ocean, who traveled more than 10,000 km (6,300 miles) to attend EC06, described the week, "It was worth every mile I traveled to get here."

## Learning from Experts

"Erosion control is a hot topic as government agencies step up efforts to protect air and water quality," says Kate Nowak, IECA's Events and Sales Director.

"There's a great need by professionals in a wide variety of disciplines for the type of practical information provided by IECA at this annual event. EC06 offered courses and presentations that provided solutions to every type of



erosion control challenge. This year's attendance also reflects increased awareness among developers and builders of residential and large retail store development projects that the Environmental Connection provides the know-how they need to comply with government requirements on job sites."

EC06 was the first IECA annual conference and expo for Todd Braun. A water programs manager with Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, he attended to broaden his knowledge about a variety of erosion and sediment control techniques.

"Learning about various erosion and sediment control practices gives me a much better appreciation of what contractors do so that I can have more meaningful conversations with them," Braun says. "Also, I'll be able to use the information I gathered about new products in working with engineers on future projects."

Learning from others who have faced similar situations that Braun encounters in his work should also prove beneficial.

“I learned how to save time and money from people who have been doing this type of work much longer than I have,” he says.

### Many Educational Choices

EC06 began with two days of training course. A total of 24 courses covered subjects ranging from computerized site inspection reporting and techniques for predicting wind erosion to bioengineering practices using sustainable native plants in bioengineered project and applying principles of geomorphology to designing natural channels. Another two days of classroom instruction featured a choice 64 technical sessions, forums and workshops covering a broad array of topics, including some of the latest advances in the use of vegetation, BMPs and design software.

EC06 also featured the debut of the “IECA Trained” program. It is designed to enhance professional credibility of individuals in a specific area of study: construction site storm water management, streambank erosion, vegetation establishment or inspector in training. Various socializing activities, such as receptions, the HydRodeo, even a paddleboat competition, provided many opportunities for participants to expand their network of contacts.

“I thought EC06 would be a good place to make contacts and learn new things,” says Claire Aubourg, a water quality specialist with the Colorado Department of Transportation. She wasn’t disappointed.

“I like the kind of hands-on training that I received in the course on how to write and implement a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), because it helps me retain information better,” she says. “It also provided a good chance to learn from people with different backgrounds. I met people who I can call for additional information, if I need it. I learned new ideas that I can use in teaching erosion and sediment control practices and I saw technology that I had never seen before.”

### A Parade of Products

EC06 participants also had plenty of time to examine the tools of the trade at the Exposition. Representatives of 164 manufactures and suppliers exhibited just about every type of product and service the industry has to offer—from long-established materials to the very latest in technology. Among the innovative items on display were a blow-on erosion control material made from recycled tires, an excavator-mounted tool that shoots, rather than drives, long steel bars into the earth to stabilize slopes and a portable tire washer to prevent trucks from tracking sediment off site



The wide variety of products and services on display at the EC06 Expo has made it easier for Stacy Hill when making recommendations to engineers and contractors. She's an environmental engineer with the Montana Department of Transportation.

"The cost of shipping erosion and sediment control products to Montana is a critical factor," Hill says. "The Expo makes it easier to find more readily-available sources of products. A wider choice of products means better erosion control and better compliance on our projects."

Exhibiting at EC06 was a worthwhile investment of time and money for Tim Williams, vice president of sales and marketing for Smart Ditch, a low-impact ditch lining system. He returned to the Expo based on results at his first IECA Expo last year.

"The people who attend this show are very interested in the uses for our type of product," he says. "The show allows us to showcase our product to people who have a direct influence on the buying decision."



He also appreciates the support he received from IECA. "The organization is interested in having an event that is successful for vendors. The show manager stopped by to make sure we were getting our money's worth from attending."

### A Trip to the Beach

The Field Day at the Beach provided a fitting way to wrap up EC06. The site, next to a long steep slope along the Pacific Ocean, provided an ideal setting to demonstrate how a variety of products and equipment, provided by 25 manufacturers, can be used to control erosion and sediment at a construction. The event included compact track loaders and excavators for constructing drainage swales, a machine for installing silt fence and another for making and placing straw wattles on site.

More than 200 participants saw the use of hydroseeding equipment and various erosion control blankets to protect slopes; installation of different types of turf reinforcement mats to control erosion of channels, equipment for filtering sediment from storm water runoff and a portable coffer dam.

"Seeing the way products are actually installed really helps to evaluate them," says engineer Hill. "That's becoming more important as we keep trying more and more products."