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## **ECOS Communications Wins National Association for Interpretation Award**

### **First Place Interpretive Media Award Honors Firms Summit Nature Park Project**

(Boulder) November 10, 2009 ... An international team lead by ECOS Communications, a Boulder Colorado based interpretive exhibit and graphics firm, has been honored by the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) with a first place Interpretive Media Award recognizing the firm's interpretive signs and exhibit graphics for the new Mundo Jaguar (World of the Jaguar) exhibit at Summit Nature Park, Panama's national zoo and botanic garden ([www.summitpanama.org](http://www.summitpanama.org)). The award was presented to ECOS Communications principal Chip Isenhardt at the 2009 NAI National Workshop in Hartford, Connecticut.

"I am pleased to accept this award not just for the staff of ECOS but for the entire project team," said Isenhardt. "Our purpose was to educationally and physically engage Mundo Jaguar visitors, stimulate local pride and appreciate for jaguars, and increase conservation awareness," said Isenhardt. "Recognition by NAI is certainly a confirmation that we're on the right track for meeting those goals," he added.

Besides ECOS, the project team included the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) and the Houston Zoo. STRI ([www.stri.org](http://www.stri.org)) is based in Panama and contributed valuable scientific review and oversight on the project. The Houston Zoo ([www.houstonzoo.org](http://www.houstonzoo.org)) provided critical assistance with the jaguar holding area infrastructure, and managed shipping and customs logistics for the project.

For the new three acre Mundo Jaguar exhibit at the Summit Nature Park, ECOS and the project team worked to create a compelling interpretive experience designed to educate visitors in a dynamic way using wayside signs and other engaging and low-maintenance interpretive exhibit elements. The interpretive features include two sheltered viewing areas and a series of outdoor interpretive trails and activity zones. ECOS produced more than 20 educational signs for the project, banners leading to the exhibit, and two interpretive sculptures.

"The signage and overall experience was designed specifically to be relevant and appealing to Panamanian sensibilities, with natural and cultural history elements relating directly to the local audience," said Isenhardt. "Particularly engaging for younger visitors are the fun activity zones for children that encourage kids to test their "jaguar skills" including climbing and balancing and even hunting like a jaguar," added Isenhardt.



“We also worked to make the story relevant to Panama’s indigenous populations, and hired some local Wounaan artisans to carve jaguar prey items into the exhibit’s wooden supports”  
The storyline development and graphic layout for the signs intentionally championed Spanish content, with English summary text presenting a condensed version of the Spanish content.

“The education staff at Summit Nature Park tells us that the bilingual approach has been very successful,” said Isenhardt. “Most of Summit’s audience is Panamanian, with a growing percentage of tourists. English speaking visitors are often accompanied by local guides who use the Spanish content to better interact with their clients,” added Isenhardt.

Working for two years, ECOS provided coordination, training and feedback on almost all aspects of the exhibit including interpretive master planning, architectural and exhibit design facilitation, landscape planning, and fabrication and installation of signs, sculptures and thematic elements.

**About ECOS Communications:** *Founded in 1991, ECOS Communications is an interpretive exhibit and graphics firm with expertise in visitor behavior, exhibit fabrication, science and cultural history. ECOS Communications creates engaging and effective interpretation – from master plans and identity programs to exhibits, site theming, and sculpture. ECOS has completed thousands of interpretive products for dozens of public agency and private sector clients. ECOS designers use their talents in art, science, education, and communications to produce materials that inform visitors, inspire them to care about the natural world, and challenge us all to take action for conservation. For more information, visit ECOS on-line at [www.ecos.us](http://www.ecos.us).*

**About NAI:** *The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) is a not-for-profit 501c3 professional association for those involved in the interpretation of natural and cultural heritage resources in settings such as parks, zoos, museums, nature centers, aquaria, botanical gardens and historical sites. For more than 50 years, NAI and its parent organizations have encouraged networking, training, and collaboration among members and partners in support of our mission: inspiring leadership and excellence to advance heritage interpretation as a profession. For more information, visit NAI on-line at [www.interpnet.com](http://www.interpnet.com).*

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