

Coach of the Lansdale Catholic High School football team. I am proud that such a dedicated and honorable man has served the constituents of my district for the past four decades.

For the past 40 years, Coach Jim Alego has been a teacher and head football coach at Lansdale Catholic High School. Through far more than football plays and academics, Coach Alego has also taken great pride in preparing the young men on his team for life by teaching them to live by the admirable motto: "Faith, Family, and Football."

Coach Alego's well-rounded approach mentoring players has enabled Lansdale Catholic to achieve a winning record with five PAC-10 titles and six District 1 crowns during his tenure as head coach. Coach Alego has been recognized with numerous distinctions and awards, including the Pennsylvania State Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame, Associated Press PA Class AA Coach of the Year and the Maxwell Football Club Lifetime Achievement Award. Together, these inspired young men and their determined coach were able to bring home the PIAA AA State Championship in 2004.

Coach Alego lives his personal life with the same commitment as his life on the field, sharing the past 48 years with the Crusaders' biggest cheerleader, Mickey Alego. Together Jim and Mickey have raised nine children, and are the proud grandparents of 16 loving grandkids.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in celebrating Coach Jim Alego's 40th anniversary milestone and in wishing him many more years of enriching the lives of those around him. In the many roles Coach Alego has been blessed to fulfill in his life, he has set an example for all of us to follow

WILD MONONGAHELA: A NATIONAL LEGACY FOR WEST VIRGINIA'S SPECIAL PLACES

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2008

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce legislation to designate additional areas as wilderness within the Monongahela National Forest in our State of West Virginia. Joining me in this initiative are my West Virginia colleagues Representatives SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO and ALAN MOLLOHAN.

Our senior Senator, ROBERT C. BYRD, is fond of noting that: "West Virginia is one of the most beautiful and unique places. It is the most southern of the northern and the most northern of the southern; the most eastern of the western and the most western of the eastern. It is where the East says good morning to the West, and where Yankee Doodle and Dixie kiss each other good night."

Indeed, West Virginia is a most beautiful and unique place. And with the introduction of our legislation, "Wild Monongahela: A National Legacy for West Virginia's Special Places," we are striving to keep it that way.

This is about the heart and soul of West Virginia. Our southern mountains have been yielding their coal for generations and our northern ridge lines are being targeted by the merchants of wind power. More development is coming, and, in most cases, it is welcomed.

But as West Virginians we are intimately connected to our land. Our roots are planted deep in our misty hollers and our majestic mountains. We know that we will be judged by future generations on our stewardship of this land that is West Virginia. And so I believe that it is of paramount importance that we, once again, set aside some of God's handiwork in our forests by preserving these Federal lands in their pristine state.

We hunt these woods; we fish these streams. These few areas that we are proposing to conserve in their natural state represent a significant national resource. But more importantly to us, they constitute a fundamental right of West Virginians to retain a vital link to our heritage, and to know that, forever more, these lands will remain in their natural state as our Creator forged them. We cherish this as nothing less and nothing more than our birthright as West Virginians.

By way of background, the Monongahela National Forest is comprised of over 919,000 acres of Federal land in 10 counties of the eastern portion of West Virginia. The forest is a major recreational resource for West Virginians as well as people from neighboring States, hosting approximately 3 million visitors annually. Currently, the forest has five federally designated wilderness areas comprising 78,041 acres: Otter Creek, Dolly Sods, Laurel Fork North and South, and the Cranberry Wilderness.

As part of the revision of the Forest Plan completed in 2006, 18 roadless areas were inventoried and evaluated for their wilderness potential. As a result of this process, the West Virginia Delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives is proposing to designate seven of the evaluated areas as wilderness. Totalling 47,128 acres, three of the areas are additions to existing wilderness: the Cranberry Expansion in Webster and Pocahontas Counties, the Dolly Sods Expansion in Tucker County and the Dry Fork Expansion in Tucker County to the Otter Creek Wilderness. The other four are proposed new wilderness areas: Big Draft in Greenbrier County, Cheat Mountain in Randolph County, Roaring Plains West in Pendleton and Randolph Counties and Spice Run in Greenbrier and Pocahontas Counties.

Under the new Land and Resource Management Plan for the Monongahela National Forest, all seven areas are now being managed essentially as wilderness. Cheat Mountain, the Cranberry Expansion, the Dry Fork addition to Otter Creek Wilderness and Roaring Plains West are under Management Prescription 5.1, Recommended Wilderness. Meanwhile, the Big Draft area, the Dolly Sods Expansion and the Spice Run area are under Management Prescription 6.2, Backcountry Recreation. This management prescription emphasizes a non-motorized setting with a largely natural environment and a lack of management-related disturbance.

Before I describe the special attributes of the seven areas contained in our legislation, I would like to note the support this initiative has among working men and women in West Virginia. I am proud that the West Virginia AFL-CIO passed a resolution last October in support of additional wilderness in the Monongahela National Forest. Their resolution states that "wilderness forest areas and the outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing they provide improve the quality of life for all West Virginians." The resolution further notes that

"protected wilderness helps diversify and stabilize economies by attracting and retaining business, residents, and a local workforce, in addition to generating travel and tourism, one of the fastest growing sectors of West Virginia."

I am also proud that people of faith in West Virginia support additional wilderness. The Reverend Dennis Sparks, executive director of the West Virginia Council of Churches, wrote to me as follows: "An area of federal land belonging to all Americans, the Monongahela National Forest can uniquely provide opportunities for reflection and inspiration that are becoming ever scarcer in our rapidly modernizing and developing world. We believe that carefully protecting this wonderful national forest and its wilderness-quality lands not only has a sound Biblical basis, but is also the best and most practical course of action for safeguarding the world which we will pass along to our children."

Similarly, Bob Marshall, D.V.M., wrote: "Like me, you were probably raised by parents who took you to church, where you learned many of the morals and ethics that guide your decisions today. I was taught to 'Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself.' These words still speak to me today, and have led me to believe that West Virginia needs to preserve as much of our wild lands as possible, through the Wilderness proposal."

This proposal also enjoys the support of various West Virginia chapters of Trout Unlimited. The vice president of the Mountaineer Chapter, Randy Kesling, wrote to me as follows: "National Forest Wilderness Areas are the tap-roots into the landscape of our beginnings—the original forest. The U.S. Forest Service itself calls them 'ecological anchors in a fragile landscape.' Today we are at another crossroad in the natural history of this great forest. This is in every sense a watershed moment—to set this fragile forest on the path to recovery." He concluded: "The Mountaineer Chapter of Trout Unlimited believes that Wilderness Designation provides the best path to that recovery."

Mr. Don Gasper, who worked for the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources for many years, and who is a highly respected fish biologist, wrote: "You lawmakers in Congress have an important opportunity right now to permanently protect some of the most special remaining wild places in the Monongahela National Forest."

Many communities across West Virginia have registered their support for wilderness. The Honorable John Manchester, the mayor of the City of Lewisburg in Greenbrier County, and that city's Council, passed a resolution which in part states: "wilderness forest areas encompass the development of rural communities as people are attracted to, or stay in, places that are clean, beautiful and where they have ample opportunities to connect with nature. . . ."

The Honorable Martin Saffer, a Pocahontas County Commissioner, wrote: "I encourage you to take quick action to introduce legislation to protect some of our most special landscapes. This is truly a watershed moment. The time is now."

In addition, the Fayette County Commission wrote in support, stating: "Wildlands in the National Forest enhance our area's natural resource based tourism economy, increase the

quality of life for Fayette County residents, protect our hunting and fishing lands, clean air, clean water, and protect the headwaters of some of Fayette County's rivers from disturbance, thus reducing the threats from flooding."

The Greenbrier County Convention and Visitors Bureau wrote to me and specifically requested the inclusion of the Big Draft and Spice Run areas as wilderness. They noted: "From the luxury of The Greenbrier Resort to the primitive Monongahela National Forest, visitors can choose their own unique experience while visiting Greenbrier County."

The Pocahontas County Convention and Visitors Bureau has also weighed in, stating: "We feel that designating additional wilderness areas will increase the strong economic base that outdoor recreation in Pocahontas County relies on. Benefits associated with designated wilderness are far reaching for the people of West Virginia, our wildlife populations and the land itself. Protecting our last few remaining wilderness areas will ensure that present and future generations can use and enjoy parts of the forest in their natural state."

Following is a brief description of the seven areas the West Virginia Delegation propose to be designated as wilderness—

Big Draft: This 5,242-acre area in the southern tip of the forest is located about 5 miles from White Sulphur Springs, the home of the famed Greenbrier Resort. According to the Forest Service evaluation of the area, the primary vegetative type is oak and hickory with pockets of hemlock and white pine as well as black hickory and sassafras. The evaluation makes note of the area's "natural untrammelled appearance, and natural ecological processes that are the primary factors affecting the area." Trout and small-mouth bass fishing is considered excellent. The area has also been popular for wilderness quality white-water trips down Anthony Creek, and the trout and rock bass fishing is excellent.

Cheat Mountain: Comprised of 7,955 acres, the area ranges in elevation from 3,000 to 3,800 feet and is a relatively flat forested plateau. The area is dissected by six streams flowing through rugged terrain dropping steeply to the river. According to the Forest Service evaluation, the vegetation consists of northern hardwood stands with some red spruce. It has a "natural untrammelled appearance" and "the opportunity to experience remoteness is good." Special features of the area include the High Falls of the Cheat, which is a major waterfall, and a favorite destination for hikers and excursion train visitors. Cheat Mountain is a favorite of hunters and anglers.

Cranberry Expansion: A proposed 12,032-acre addition to the highly popular Cranberry Wilderness, the expansion is located between the Williams River on the north and the Cranberry River on the south and west. According to the Forest Service evaluation, "both natural integrity and appearance are considered high over much of the area . . ." It contains an excellent trail system and is held in high esteem by hunters, anglers and hikers. The combination of the Cranberry Wilderness, Cranberry Backcountry and Cranberry Expansion would create the largest area of non-motorized recreational opportunities in West Virginia—a vast silent forest primeval.

Dolly Sods Expansion: Another well-known and popular wilderness area, Dolly Sods, is proposed to be expanded by 7,215 acres to the north. Most of the area is a rolling plateau

of over 3,800 feet in elevation. The Allegheny Front drops 2,200 feet on the east, just outside the proposed wilderness boundary. According to the Forest Service evaluation, "the bog and heath eco-types are more typical of what one would expect to find in Maine or southern Canada rather than West Virginia." Views west from Cabin Mountain across the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge are outstanding.

Dry Fork Expansion: This small 740-acre proposed expansion of the Otter Creek Wilderness area has a high natural integrity and appearance and is dominated by spruce at its higher elevations with a mixture of northern hardwoods. This area occupies the northern and eastern flanks of McGowan Mountain leading down to the Dry Fork of the Cheat River. It provides much of the scenic view for this popular river, which contains excellent whitewater recreation opportunities and trout fishing.

Roaring Plains West: This 6,820-acre area located southwest of Dolly Sods ranges in elevation from 3,700 feet to over 4,700 feet and is, according to the Forest Service evaluation, minimally affected by outside forces. The Roaring Plains and Flatrock Plains areas encompassed by the proposed wilderness comprise the highest plateaus in the eastern United States. They are part of the geologic backbone of West Virginia called the Allegheny Front. The evaluation also notes it is remote backcountry, providing a good opportunity for solitude. Special features include an area known as Mt. Porte Crayon, with exceptional views.

Spice Run: A proposed 7,124-acre new wilderness, this area rises from the Greenbrier River on its western boundary and is an extremely remote place primarily accessible from the river. There are no system trails within the area. The elevation ranges from 2,000 feet along the Greenbrier River to 3,284 feet on the top of Slab Camp Mountain. Spice Run, along with Davy Run and Kincaid Run, cut steep hollows which delineate the terrain. Spice Run is one of the most remote places in the State and provides excellent opportunities for solitude and backcountry recreation.

In conclusion, I thank my colleagues in the West Virginia Delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives in joining with me to introduce this bill, "Wild Monongahela: A National Legacy for West Virginia's Special Places."

MR. THIERRY PORTÉ, NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE JAPAN-U.S. FRIENDSHIP COMMISSION

HON. THOMAS E. PETRI

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2008

Mr. PETRI. Madam Speaker, I want to join my colleague, Representative JIM McDERMOTT, in congratulating Mr. Thierry Porté on his appointment as the new chairman of the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission. He will also serve as chairman of the U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange, known as CULCON.

The Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission is an independent Federal agency that provides support, primarily through grants, to Americans to better understand and meet the chal-

lenges of the U.S.-Japan relationship. The commission consists of both private and certain designated public officials, and I am pleased to serve as one of two commissioners appointed from the House.

Mr. Porté was nominated to join the commission and serve as chairman last year with overwhelming support from commission members, and his appointment was recently approved by the White House.

His long and very direct experience in Japan and U.S.-Japan issues will serve the commission and CULCON well as we work to build greater understanding and strengthen ties between our two countries through the funding of educational, cultural, and academic programs. Mr. Porté has vast experience in the financial services industry and currently is the president and CEO of Shinsei Bank Limited.

He also is a member of the board of directors and chairman of the Finance Committee of the American School in Japan. Previously, he served as vice president and governor of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan, and in 2002–2003, Mr. Porté was a member of the Invest Japan Forum, which provided recommendations on the promotion of foreign direct investment in Japan to Prime Minister Koizumi.

But his interest in Japan extends beyond the financial markets—he is knowledgeable in Japanese culture and the arts as well, and he will bring a unique perspective to our efforts.

It is a privilege to have Mr. Porté serve as our chairman. I know he has the right background, skills and energy to continue to build on the important work of the commission.

CONGRATULATING MR. THIERRY PORTÉ FOR HIS APPOINTMENT AS CHAIRMAN OF THE JAPAN-U.S. FRIENDSHIP COMMISSION

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2008

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I would like to take this time to congratulate Mr. Thierry Porté for his recent appointment as the new Chairman of the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission (JUSFC) and the U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON).

Mr. Porté, who is the President and CEO of Shinsei Bank, Ltd. has a long and established history as an advocate for exchanges of ideas and culture between the U.S. and Japan. His distinguished experience in the business community as the first American to head a major Japanese bank combined with his work as Chairman of the U.S.-Japan Bridging Foundation's Tokyo Advisory Board in promoting better educational and cultural relations between the two countries make him uniquely qualified for this position.

As a member of the JUSFC, which was established as an independent Federal agency by Congress in 1975 to administer a trust fund and makes grant to promote scholarly, cultural and public affairs activities between Japan and the U.S., I look forward to working with Mr. Porté over the next few years on coordinating the goals of the Commission and moving the bilateral relationship forward.