

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING THE GREECE ROTARY CLUB FOR 50 YEARS OF TREMENDOUS SERVICE TO THE TOWN OF GREECE

HON. CHRISTOPHER JOHN LEE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Mr. LEE of New York. Madam Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to commemorate the Greece Rotary Club for working for the betterment of the Greece community for 50 years.

The Greece Rotary is made up of more than 100 leaders from the community who volunteer their time and resources to help others and advance goodwill.

The Greece Rotary Club has undertaken many important volunteer projects, including giving out more than 1,600 dictionaries to help bolster children's interest in reading.

The impact of the Greece Rotary has been felt throughout the world as well. Last year, the Rotary worked in conjunction with Rotarians in Africa to complete two community service projects: donating books to Ethiopia and installing clean water systems for elementary schools in Nigeria.

Through its numerous good deeds and unselfish acts, the Greece Rotary has made good on Rotary International's mottos of "Service above self" and "They profit most who serve best." Rotary International works to bring business leaders together for humanitarian service projects and to build trust, goodwill and peace around the world.

Thus Madam Speaker, in recognition of 50 years of tremendous service to the Town of Greece, I ask that this Honorable Body join me in honoring the Greece Rotary Club.

PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA VOLUNTEERS HONORED FOR THEIR WORK TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS

HON. C. W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the more than 500 volunteers with the Pinellas County, Florida, Environmental Lands Division, which help manage and preserve Pinellas County's natural resources. These volunteers, whom I have the privilege to represent, are a diverse group that range from the age of 12 on up.

These volunteers make a vital contribution to the county's environmental protection efforts, ensuring that all citizens and visitors are able to enjoy Florida's native environment. They supplement the efforts of the Environmental Land Division's staff, helping to oversee the nearly 16,000 acres managed by the division. In the first half of 2008 alone, these

volunteers provided over 13,605 man hours in a wide range of activities.

The division's conservation efforts were recently honored both regionally and nationally. In April 2008, the National Association of Counties awarded the program with an Act of Caring Award for community improvement. Additionally, in March 2008, the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council recognized the division for its community service, as well as environmental and public education efforts. Following my remarks, I will include for my colleagues the full story of the volunteer effort as reported by Mariana Minaya of The St. Petersburg Times as well as an editorial from the same paper.

Madam Speaker, the spirit of volunteerism and giving back to the community is alive and well in Pinellas County, Florida and I am honored to represent those who make such an invaluable contribution to the protection of Florida's natural resources. Their hard work and dedication allows the natural beauty of the land to be accessible to all visitors and I would ask my colleagues to join with me today in recognizing their outstanding achievements and to thank them for a job well done.

[From The St. Petersburg Times, July 30, 2008]

500 ENVIRONMENTAL GEMS

(By Mariana Minaya)

Thirty years ago, before development swallowed up swaths of Florida, Pinellas County had the foresight to begin setting aside thousands of acres of land for environmental protection.

Now, a robust corps of volunteers is striving to protect the county's natural resources. The Environmental Lands Division, which manages the county's preserves and other protected areas, has seen its ranks swell to more than 500 people. It is the fastest-growing sector of volunteerism in Pinellas County government.

The division's conservation efforts were recently honored both regionally and nationally. The volunteers are an "invaluable resource" to managing the nearly 16,000 acres under the department's care, said division director Dr. H. Bruce Rinker. Without the volunteers, the division's staff of 34 people would be seriously disadvantaged.

So far this year, volunteers have provided more than 13,605 man hours, equaling more than \$263,433. These numbers are up from the 1,387 hours of volunteer service in 1998, the year the division was founded within the department of Environmental Management.

The volunteers care for 30 different ecosystems. They staff educational centers at the Brooker Creek and Weedon Island preserves, maintain trails and grounds, survey flora and fauna, perform clerical work, lead hikes and help with research.

The sheer number of volunteers, the hours of labor they've donated, and the variety of duties they performed impressed judges of two awards programs this year. In April, the National Association of Counties recognized four counties from about two dozen entrants with an Acts of Caring Award for community improvement, said spokesman Bill Cramer.

In March, the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council recognized the division for its

community service, as well as environmental and public education efforts. The division received a \$2,500 grant for its volunteer program from the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay.

Judges "were amazed . . . to have a program that has that many volunteers," said Wren Krah, spokeswoman for the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council. "The other thing they were impressed with is how much they've accomplished with the stringent budget that they've had."

Over two years, as the division's staff has shrank by 14 positions, the volunteers recognize that the need for them "is real, not feigned," Rinker said. The division wants to grow by 10 percent more volunteer hours each year to offset the effects of staff and budget cuts.

To keep the ranks full, the division keeps the red tape to a minimum, said Kristin O'Meara, the land division's volunteer site coordinator. Once a background check clears, volunteers are open to the wide range of activities. They accept anyone age 12 and up.

Interest appears to be as strong as ever from both young and old. About half the volunteers are retired. About 15 percent are under age 18. Some do it for school requirements; others have a passion for wildlife and nature.

"How can you resist being able to work in the great outdoors?" Rinker said. "Driving down our driveway is like going back in time is what I've heard from people."

That is the appeal for Bill Brown, 62, of East Lake, who lived in Groveland as a child, spending time at his grandmother's boarding house for orange grove workers, living off the land.

"I can remember eating things on the endangered species list," Brown said.

Volunteering gives Brown the freedom that 30 years of office work as an Army Corps of Engineers spokesman never afforded him.

"You don't have a timetable," he said. "They give us a job to do and then turn us loose, which I kind of like."

On Tuesday mornings, he spends about four hours with his buddy, Ty Miramonti, 65, of Tarpon Springs. As a former Navy man and firefighter, Miramonti is the more adventurous and the more experienced, having started in 1993. But once in a while, his wild streak has gotten him literally stuck in the mud, and his partner's caution adds some balance to the team, which has worked together for seven years.

Together, the pair cruises through the Brooker Creek Preserve on a four-wheel drive Ranger, clearing trails with machetes in hand. It's hard work for old men, Brown said, but it lets them stop to soak in the scenery or debate the identities of the critters crawling on them when they need a break.

"It's the type of thing you think an old man wouldn't be interested in doing, but it really is invigorating because you are totally immersed in the environment," Brown said. "It really is cathartic to get out there."

[From The St. Petersburg Times, Aug. 10, 2008]

PRESERVATION REQUIRES VOLUNTEERS

Without an army of volunteers, Pinellas County's environmental lands would become impenetrable jungles dominated by exotic, invasive species.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

In no time, these lands that were preserved so residents could always observe native Florida would look nothing like native Florida.

Just how large an army is working at the task was revealed in a recent story in the St. Petersburg Times. Several hundred volunteers have been helping the county's Environmental Lands Division maintain the almost 16,000 acres for which it is responsible.

The sad fact is, even that number of people can scarcely scratch the surface of the work that needs to be done in the county's preserved lands. If more don't help, the battle eventually will be lost.

It is clear that government will not be able to take up the slack, at least not as it is currently configured. Because of budget cuts, the staff of the county's Environmental Lands Division has been reduced by 14 positions and now numbers only 34. And only a handful of those are assigned to full-time maintenance duties in the preserves.

The lands division now is hoping to grow its volunteer ranks by 10 percent each year to offset its staff cuts. All ages are welcomed—even youths from 12 to 18 can volunteer with parental involvement.

A variety of tasks is available to volunteers, from the hard but essential job of removing invasives such as air potato and Brazilian pepper, to leading hikes, doing research and staffing educational centers.

The problem, of course, with relying so heavily on volunteers is that they don't generally spend as many hours at the tasks as paid employees, and they usually insist on flexibility. Some, like Bill Brown of East Lake, can offer a half-day every week to the effort. Few spend as many hours as Reggie Hall, a volunteer who devotes much of his life to maintaining the Ozone Preserve in North Pinellas.

The combined effort of all those environmental volunteers led to recent recognition for the program from the National Association of Counties and the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council.

The role of volunteers will be even more important in the next few years, as budgets continue to tighten and the pressure on Pinellas environmental lands grows. If you are over 12, and you have a few hours to spare helping to preserve these precious open spaces, consider signing up as an environmental lands volunteer.

HONORING THE WINDSOR HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING BAND FOR THEIR PERFORMANCE IN THE 56TH INAUGURAL PARADE

HON. BETSY MARKEY

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Ms. MARKEY of Colorado. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and congratulate the Windsor High School Marching Band for being selected to march in President Barack Obama's inauguration parade.

In May of 2008, a mile wide tornado cut a 35 mile path through northern Colorado. The tornado resulted in one death and displaced hundreds of residents in the Windsor community. It would be easy to focus on the tragedy of the Windsor tornado when acknowledging the successes of the Windsor High School Marching Band, but to do so would overlook the extraordinary achievements of the band under any circumstance. In 2008, the WHS Marching Band won division first place in three

different regional competitions, as well as "High Musical Performance," "High General Effect," and the 2008 Colorado Bandmasters Association Class 3A "State Marching Band Championship."

For President Barack Obama's inaugural parade, the WHS Marching Band performed an original composition by Frank Sullivan entitled "The Four Freedoms." This piece is a musical interpretation of President Franklin Roosevelt's 1941 State of the Union Address to the United States Congress. In the "Four Freedoms" address, FDR made the case for American assistance in World War II by enumerating the four universal freedoms worth fighting for: Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Want, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom of Fear. The state of Colorado and I were privileged to be represented by the Windsor High School Marching Band at the historic inauguration of our 44th president, and I congratulate them on their much deserved success.

A TRIBUTE TO THE MOHONK MOUNTAIN HOUSE, A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

HON. MAURICE D. HINCHEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Mr. HINCHEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Mohonk Mountain House, a National Historic Landmark located in Ulster County, New York, which is part of the 22nd Congressional District that I proudly serve. This year marks the 140th anniversary of the founding of the Mohonk Mountain House, and I am delighted to have the opportunity to recognize the resort's rich historical heritage, continued vitality, and its many important contributions to our local community.

Founded as a modest retreat in 1869 by Albert Smiley with his purchase of 280 acres of land and a 10-room tavern, the Mohonk Mountain House has grown into a world renowned resort with over 2,200 acres and 265 guest rooms. Adding to the splendor of this mountaintop resort are an array of award-winning amenities including a state-of-the-art, eco-friendly spa, an outdoor ice-skating pavilion, and a warm and welcoming professional staff. The Mohonk Mountain House is also acclaimed for its many charming attributes such as the numerous and stately wood-burning fireplaces, balconies with glorious views and the 19th Century tradition of afternoon tea. Also, during a stay at the Mountain House, guests can get a glimpse of the resort's historic past in the enhanced museum located in the National Historic Landmark Barn.

Not surprisingly, some of the most remarkable attributes of this Victorian castle retreat are not inside the resort but surrounding it. The Mountain House is situated at the heart of a 26,000-acre natural area which is comprised of private preserves, a state park preserve and the resort property, all within the majestic Shawangunk Mountain range. Equally beautiful during all four seasons, this extraordinary landscape affords resort guests the opportunity to swim in a glacial lake, horseback ride on miles of natural trails, enjoy the bountiful gardens and hike the many and varied trails, both on the resort property and throughout the surrounding preserves. In addition, guests and

local residents alike can enjoy opportunities to participate in rock climbing, caving, golfing, cross-county skiing and snowshoeing.

Since its inception, Mohonk Mountain House and its owners, the Smiley family, have been active stewards of the land. In 1963 the Smileys, working with Mohonk Mountain House guests, established the non-profit Mohonk Trust. The goal of this trust was to protect and manage the land for public use. Renamed in 1978 as the Mohonk Preserve, the mission of the Smiley family has continued, and, in fact, sets the standard for mountain stewardship by using science to guide land management. These efforts have helped to ensure that this remarkable landscape is preserved for generations to come.

Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize the Mohonk Mountain House as it enters its 140th year as a family owned and operated resort. I am confident that the Smiley family will not only continue to be outstanding stewards of the land, but also leaders in the hospitably industry and in the management of this National Historic Landmark.

TARP REFORM AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. MAZIE K. HIRONO

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 15, 2009

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 384) to reform the Troubled Assets Relief Program of the Secretary of the Treasury and ensure accountability under such Program, and for other purposes:

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of H.R. 384, the Troubled Assets Relief Program, TARP, Reform and Accountability Act.

Since this capital purchase program, TARP, was implemented, billions of dollars in taxpayer money have been disbursed to institutions with little to no accountability or oversight over these funds. A congressional oversight panel for TARP funding recently concluded that the Treasury Department essentially does not know how TARP fund recipients are utilizing these funds, and a report released last month by the U.S. Government Accountability Office urged TARP administrators to improve the program's internal controls to better monitor how the funds are being spent.

H.R. 384 amends the TARP provisions of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 to strengthen accountability, close loopholes, and increase transparency of the administration of this program. This bill requires any existing or future institution that receives TARP funding to provide quarterly public reporting on its use of the funding and stipulates that the Treasury Department administer a public database that includes the reporting, data collection, and analysis of use of TARP funds.

Last week the House voted unanimously to require our committees to hold periodic hearings on waste, fraud, and abuse in Government programs. As a cosponsor of this bill, H. Res. 40, I believe that Congress has an obligation to restore accountability and oversight