

STATEMENT OF  
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THUNDER BAY SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON THE SANCTUARY ENHANCEMENT ACT AND  
H.R. 905, THE THUNDER BAY SANCTUARY AND UNDERWATER PRESERVE  
BOUNDARY MODIFICATION ACT

July 8, 2009

Good morning Madame Chair and members of the committee. My name is Steve Kroll. I'm a 58-year resident of Rogers City, Michigan, a retired high school math teacher, and Chair of the Thunder Bay Sanctuary Advisory Council. I've owned and operated a dive shop and charter business in Presque Isle County, Michigan for 36 years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 905, the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve Boundary Modification Act.

I'm here today to support H.R. 905 because it would add protection to some of the nation's best preserved shipwrecks and expand successful sanctuary programs to other communities in Northeast Michigan. Communities along the coasts of Presque Isle, Alpena, and Alcona Counties are maritime orientated and ready to recapture, preserve, and protect their maritime heritage. Their letters of support are included in your information packets. I've been diving area shipwrecks for 43 years and can testify that they are the best preserved shipwrecks in the world and there are many more to be found. I've brought photos of two of these shipwrecks: the *F.T. Barney* and the *Florida*. Diving on the *F.T. Barney*, a 130-foot schooner that sank near Rogers City in 1868, you would find a ship that looks ready to sail. A ship's wheel, one mast still standing, anchors, rigging blocks, dishes, running lights, and the compass are all there to see. This wreck is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The *Florida* is a 271-foot wooden steamer that sank off the shore of Presque Isle in 1889. The wreck is mostly intact, and in addition to containing all of its ship artifacts, it's loaded with a cargo called general stores, items that served the everyday needs of the people at that time. Both of these wrecks are outside of current sanctuary boundaries and are not provided the same protection as shipwrecks inside the sanctuary. It was just three weeks ago that a beached wreck in Presque Isle County, the *Joseph S. Fay*, was the subject of a yet unsolved vandalism. The article is in your packet.

It's very important that you understand that originally I was against establishment of the sanctuary. I believed having the federal government determine what we should do with our resources would lead to too many restrictions. This attitude was shared by many citizens and expressed at public hearings prior to designation. As a result, the proposed

size of the sanctuary was greatly reduced. I now see that was unfortunate since the sanctuary has proven itself as a trusted partner, not just with the State of Michigan, but also with the local community. The sanctuary program should serve as a model for other government programs. Public input is received by NOAA with the attitude that they can learn, react, and grow from it. I've been involved in the process and can assure you it's real and working.

On May 22, 2007, the Thunder Bay Sanctuary Advisory Council voted to recommend expansion of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The advisory council represents local governments and community interests including diving, fishing, and economic development. Prior to this vote, I was part of the working group that evaluated the pros and cons of expanding the sanctuary. The working group considered the following in our discussions: how many additional shipwrecks would be protected, how sanctuary programs could be expanded to other communities, and the impact of expansion on existing sanctuary operations. The working group came to the conclusion that there was no reason not to expand the boundary and many reasons to expand it. When the working group presented its findings to the full advisory council, there was considerable enthusiasm and no dissent. Many county entities and citizen groups from Alpena, Presque Isle, and Alcona counties also voiced their support for this expansion.

What will an expanded Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary mean to northeast Michigan? I believe that an expanded sanctuary will provide increased protection for shipwrecks in Presque Isle and Alcona Counties and provide greater opportunities for education, research, long-term monitoring, and law enforcement. I personally support sanctuary boundary expansion because I believe it will provide a vehicle for education. Yes, we need to protect the wrecks but it is not just about them. It's about our past, present, and most importantly our future. The sanctuary has programs and opportunities for individuals of all age levels to utilize and enhance their educational skills. I've seen this firsthand as a judge for an international Remotely Operated Vehicle Building Competition, which inspires students to pursue careers in math, science, marine technology, and archaeology. Whether it's a young person learning to map a shipwreck site, a graduate student researching ship building, or a family building a boat together, it's about passing on the values we've preserved.

Volunteer participation is a testament to community support of the sanctuary. The sanctuary has over 100 volunteers whose talents and expertise are utilized daily in the operation of the sanctuary. I'm one of those volunteers because I believe in the sanctuary's mission.

I strongly urge you to pass H.R. 905 because I strongly believe sanctuaries benefit not just northeast Michigan, but the entire United States. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify before the Committee, and I will be glad to return and answer any questions you may have. I also invite you to visit and experience the maritime coast of Northeast Michigan.