



Congressman Mark Kirk's

# Central Lake News



Tenth Congressional District

July 2004

## Kirk Wins Approval to Protect Lake Michigan Shoreline

Concerned that Fort Sheridan's lakeshore bluffs could fall victim to high-rise developers, Congressman Kirk won U.S. House approval for the Navy to transfer its ownership of key Lake Michigan bluffs to an environmental trust.

"We must preserve these bluffs," said Congressman Kirk during a recent tour of the lakefront area with local leaders. "Only 60 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline exists within Illinois. And most of that land is privately controlled. By acting forcefully now, we will preserve a key habitat located on Lake Michigan's shoreline for the permanent enjoyment of the public."

A partnership was forged between the Navy and the Open Lands Association to preserve the bluffs and beaches. The bluffs, located at the southern end of Fort Sheridan, are home to several endangered species.

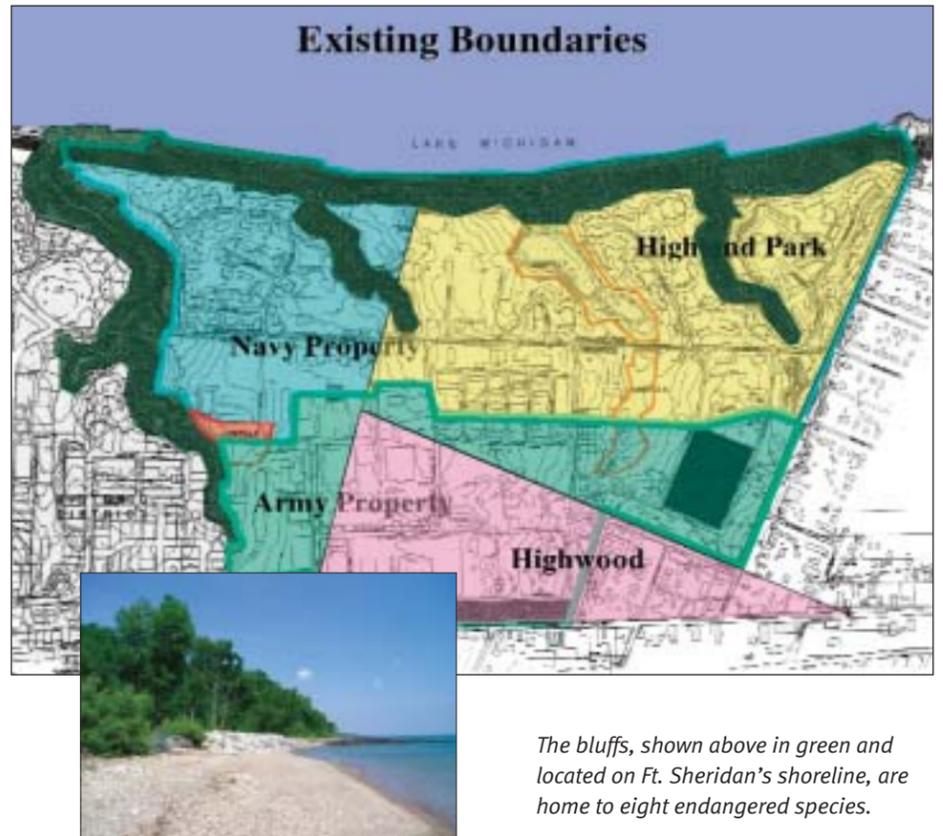
### Measure Would Protect Bluffs Ft. Sheridan Area Would Stay Wild

By Trine Tsouderos  
Tribune staff reporter

Loaded with rare plants such as Canadian buffalo berry and home to endangered songbirds such as the cerulean warbler, 2 1/2 miles of bluffs and ravines on the North Shore are on their way to protection from development at Ft. Sheridan, thanks to a provision tucked into a national defense-spending bill.

Sponsored by U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, who lives near the bluffs, the proposal outlines their transfer from the Navy, which owns them, to Openlands Project, a non-profit land conservancy based in Chicago.

Chicago Tribune: June 22, 2004



The bluffs, shown above in green and located on Ft. Sheridan's shoreline, are home to eight endangered species.

## Leaders Call for Action to Stop Exodus of Doctors from Illinois

During a May ad-hoc congressional hearing, U.S. Reps. Mark Kirk (IL-10), John Shimkus (IL-19) and Judy Biggert (IL-13) heard testimony from Illinois families who suffered due to the exodus of emergency room doctors from our state. The hearing included testimony from Lisa Kasten, whose father died because there was no neurosurgeon in her town. Many communities share similar situa-

### Insurance Costs Threaten Nearby Healthcare

"We are losing doctors at an accelerating rate. And I don't want a situation where Illinois patients come to the emergency room, and there's no one there to care for them," Kirk said.

CBS 2 Chicago: May 10, 2004

tions — there are no neurosurgeons left in Illinois south of the state capital in Springfield. There are only three neurosurgeons still practicing in the 10th Congressional District.

"No medical relationship is more important than the one between you and your doctor," Congressman Kirk told family members who lost loved ones due to the growing lack of doctors in Illinois.

"Illinois families are arriving at emergency rooms only to find key doctors they need have left the state." Doctors testified that the skyrocketing number of lawsuits allowed in Illinois courts are driving up insurance rates.

Data shows the average neurosurgeon is sued every 18 months in Illinois. Due to frivolous lawsuits over the last 20 years, the cost of insuring a neurosurgeon is up 934 percent, 249 percent for emergency physicians, 455 percent for ophthalmic surgeons, and 447 percent for orthopedic surgeons.

Both Wisconsin and Indiana protect doctors from frivolous lawsuits. The cost of insuring a doctor in Wisconsin is just one fifth the cost of insuring a doctor in Illinois.

While Illinois state legislative leaders oppose reforms to keep doctors in their practices, the U.S. House of Representatives passed bipartisan federal legislation to ensure that patients keep the access to the care they need. The U.S. House passed the HEALTH Act that discourages junk lawsuits by capping non-economic damages, limiting lawyer's contingency fees and increasing the share of court awards that go to injured patients. President Bush indicated he would sign this legislation which is currently stalled in the U.S. Senate.

Mark Kirk  
M.C.  
Presorted Standard  
ECRWSS

## Coast Guard Helicopter Unit Begins Summer Patrol

The United States Coast Guard helicopter rescue unit stationed in the 10th Congressional District now has an expanded homeland defense mission. Based out of Waukegan Regional Airport, the Coast Guard rescue helicopter deploys annually in the summer months to rescue swimmers.

Congressman Kirk spent a Saturday in June flying with the Coast Guard to get a first-hand look at their life-saving responsibilities. The helicopter unit patrols Lake Michigan daily and stands on short notice for rescue response.

As part of the Department of Homeland Security, the role of the Coast Guard is expanding. Added to the Coast Guard's important task of rescuing boaters in distress is the job of protecting our waterways from terrorist threats. Several terror organizations now design boat bombs for use. Keeping Coast Guard stations in Waukegan and Wilmette operational is a priority.



Congressman Kirk joins the U.S. Coast Guard on a patrol over Lake Michigan, getting a first-hand look at their life-saving responsibilities.

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Official Business



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## Navy Sailors Save Gurnee Grade School Kirk Coordinates Flood Relief

Sailors from Great Lakes Naval Training Center spent four days in May providing flood relief for the towns of Gurnee, Lincolnshire, Libertyville, Prospect Heights, Mount Prospect and Wheeling.

When the National Weather Service projected that the Des Plaines River would reach historic flood levels, Congressman Kirk contacted the Commander of Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Rear Admiral Ann Rondeau, asking for help to hold back flood waters for key public buildings and homes.

Over 500 sailors volunteered their own time filling sandbags to protect schools, homes and businesses from flooding. Without the help of our U.S. Navy, the Gurnee Grade School would be sitting under water.

### Round-the-clock Efforts Save School

Thanks to some very devoted volunteers, including a few who literally slept in Gurnee Grade School a few nights, students will have a home to come back to this fall...The sailors were led by Petty Officer Alan Dementer, who recently returned from Iraq.

*Pioneer Press: May 27, 2004*



Congressman Kirk thanks Navy sailors who volunteered their time filling sandbags to protect schools, homes and businesses from Des Plaines River flooding.

## Metra's North Central Line Funding On Track



Metra's North Central rail line — serving Arlington Heights, Vernon Hills, Mt. Prospect, Prospect Heights, Vernon Hills, and Libertyville — is set to dramatically upgrade its service from four to 16 trains a day. Recently, the House of Representatives approved \$20 million in additional funding as part of a \$52 million federal transportation package to double track this commuter rail line and expand service next year.

The western suburbs deserve a commuter rail system that models the North line serving northshore communities. Double tracking the North Central line will relieve traffic congestion and help meet our Clean Air Act obligations by reducing air pollution.

*Work continues on the double tracking of Metra's North Central Line scheduled for completion in 2005.*

### Intelligent Transportation Systems

Included in the recently passed bi-partisan legislation to boost transportation funding is \$500,000 to implement an Intelligent Transportation System demonstration project on Lake-Cook Road. The system will provide drivers with real-time travel information between U.S. 12 and U.S. 41. Once operational, the system will suggest alternate routes, time traffic signals to compensate for traffic volume and weather conditions.

Commuters along Lake-Cook Road will be among the first in the country to see this 21st century technology.

## House Approves Widening of Route 60 Bridge

The House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed bi-partisan legislation to boost transportation funding to fight traffic gridlock. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Congressman Kirk secured approval for \$8 million to widen the Route 60 bridge over Interstate 94 in Lake Forest.

The bridge across the toll way at Route 60 is one of the worst suburban traffic hotspots. In a novel public-private partner-

ship combining federal funding with contributions from local employers, the funding will support widening the bridge across the tollway.

"Securing federal transportation funds for this district project was one of my top priorities," said Congressman Kirk. "This project offers a unique opportunity to reduce traffic gridlock using both private and public funds to set an example for infrastructure upgrades."

### Rt. 60 Bridge on House Legislation

Lake County officials celebrated Friday the inclusion of a local road project in the U.S. House's newly approved transportation bill.

The legislation, overwhelmingly approved by a 357-65 vote that morning, provides funding for several area efforts, including \$8 million to reconstruct and widen the Route 60 bridge over the Tri-State Tollway near Lake Forest.

*Daily Herald: April 3, 2004*

## Reducing Train Noise Pollution

In 2000, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) drafted a rule that would force trains to blow their horns at all hours of the day and night, regardless of quiet zones established by local communities. Congressman Kirk opposed the original rule and invited FRA Administrator Allan Rutter to visit our communities twice to hear from people concerned about unneeded noise pollution caused by train horns.

In December, the FRA redrafted its proposed rule, reducing the noise pollution it would create. The revised rule would still trigger too much noise pollution and would impose overwhelming costs on local villages to meet arbitrary FRA standards. Recent estimates put the cost of upgrading just one railroad crossing in Northbrook at \$800,000.

"One study showed that unneeded train horn noise pollution would trigger a \$1 billion property value loss in Chicagoland," said Kirk. "I am working with a bipartisan group of Illinois Republicans and Democrats to transfer the authority of this program from the federal government in Washington to our state government in Springfield. Since Illinois is home to half of all the train quiet zones in America, I know our state officials will do a better job protecting the quiet zones established by local communities."

Thirteen Republican and Democratic members of the Illinois congressional delegation wrote a letter to Rutter urging changes to the proposed federal train horn rule. The letter highlighted the work of the Illinois Commerce Commission that decreased train accidents by more than 72 percent since 1989.



Congressman Kirk and FRA Chairman Alan Rutter speak with local leaders about the noise pollution caused by train horns.

### Rail Horn Ban Costs Disputed

*Officials disagree on safety upgrades*

The Federal Railroad Administration on Monday estimated it would cost \$4 million for Chicago-area communities to comply with a proposed rule to prevent locomotive horns from being blasted as trains chug across northern Illinois.

But the estimate was greeted with skepticism by several local officials who contended their projections show the cost to be significantly higher.

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk said indications are that crossing upgrades in several towns in his district alone would cost in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"It seems very low. It does not appear to be grounded in fact."

*Chicago Tribune: February 17, 2004*

## Young Artists Showcase Talent in Congressional Art Contest



The Arts are an important part of our life in the 10th Congressional District. In May, Congressman Kirk hosted a Deerfield reception recognizing 14 high school students who submitted artwork for the 22nd Annual Congressional High School Art Competition.

Artists from the North Shore Art League declared Amanda Marsh, a Stevenson High School junior, the winner having judged her work the best among the pieces submitted by high school students from throughout the Tenth Congressional District.

Marsh's piece will hang in the U.S. Capitol for the next year.

*Stevenson High School junior, Amanda Marsh, 22nd Annual Congressional High School Art Competition winner.*