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Organization: Florida Peace Action Network

Title:

Comments: As a friend of Native American organizations, I am submitting this comment requesting the withdrawal from the Rapid Creed Watershed for three reasons: First, here in Florida I have worked to exhaustion with the Sierra Club to preserve 5000 acres of the Serenova Preserve given to Pasco Count FL to replace the wetlands destroyed by the state's Sunshine Parkway. These 5000 acres were given "in perpetuity" to be joined to the Starkey Preserve and the wildlife corridor up the middle of Florida. Almost immediately Pasco County made plans for a highway through the Serenova, slicing and dicing this wilderness area to save 5 minutes of driving and connecting folks to a new development that was mostly empty houses. For 20 years, the longest period of delay in the Army Corps of Engineers issuing a permit for the highway, we prevented the county from this heinous act--until President Trump invited county commissioners to the Ultra-White House and a new person was appointed to make the decision, and the permit was issued. The highway is completed while a federal judge goes through over 100,000 letters and other data to determine if the permit should be revoked. Secondly, in my adopted town of New Port Richey, for 82 years a tradition required Native American culture and spirituality to be insulted to sell an 11-day food fest and carnival as a cultural event. Since 1922 a pageant was performed in which children dressed as Calusa Indians (who didn't live here) stabbed to death children dressed as Spaniards in a sacrifice to a fictional god Toya. In this pageant Indians were called pagans, heathens and savages. After witnessing it I offered to rewrite the script. No response. I began a letter writing campaign. No change. I worked with the Florida American Indian Movement (AIM) to peacefully protest. No change. So I sued the mayor of New Port Richey, and the presidents of the Chamber of Commerce and Junior Service League for emotional harm to the 187 children of Native American descent in our schools, and the pageant ended. When the Krewe of Chasco, 250 business and civic leaders who dressed up like Indians on a float refused to cease insulting Indians despite protests from AIM. I chained myself to the roadway and stopped a parade with 100,000 spectators by chaining myself to the roadway with my arm concealed beneath pvc pipe. I was arrested and convicted of four misdemeanors and the felony Battery on a law enforcement officer, facing 2-4 years in state prison, despite the charge being false. After appealing through every state and federal court, I filed pro se a writ of certiorari to the U.S. Supreme Court, and when that failed, served 30 days in the county jail during all of December 2008. While in jail I organized the first Christmas Celebration with a choir, a Christmas card for every inmate in my pod, a bowl using discarded cereal containers with cookies and candy, and a stolen pillow case with gifts for the 11 poorest inmates in our pod. My presentation at the UU Church of Tarpon Springs was awarded the Best Sermon in the Unitarian Universalist faith in 2008. Lastly, I served as a captain in both the U.S. Marine Corps and as an A-team commander in the Special Forces. I served with Native Americans and have the greatest respect and admiration for their resilience and their vital importance to American's future. They deserve to be treated with respect in their efforts to preserve our natural environment. I urge you to honor their wishes not to desecrate their lands with greed.