

Closing Remarks
Richard Harvey, Chair
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group
May 17 - 19, 1999, Embassy Suites, Boca Raton

Wednesday, May 19, 1999

(Edited transcript)

[Richard Harvey] "Let me make a couple of quick comments. First of all, when we talk about communication, we know that scientists are semi-good at communicating. Managers are really good at communicating, but I'm an engineer. Even engineers that can communicate have no business communicating. Even the Corps of Engineers, before you say anything Colonel [Miller], is smart enough to have Stu Applebaum to communicate for you, and Stu is not an engineer. Now, Colonel Miller, what were you going to try to communicate to us"?

[Colonel Joe Miller] "What Richard really meant to say" (laughter).

[Richard Harvey] "I really, really appreciate everybody coming and participating. I think it was an absolutely wonderful science forum. I'd like for Nick Aumen, Aaron Higer, and Bob Mooney to come up here so we can once again express our sincere appreciation for the fine work they did. Obviously a lot more people also did a great deal of work. There was a great deal of effort as you can tell from the quality of the displays and certainly the program and the panel discussions. It was truly a fantastic opportunity for the managers to get together with the scientists; now the managers just need to be smart enough to learn from them.

I came to the forum with some additional objectives; I need to confess that I'm guilty of that too. We [the managers] have always had these little side meetings. When the scientists go to so much effort to put this on, we need not have those side meetings. Typically we didn't accomplish anything in them anyway and Dick [Ring] knows it. It would be a much more productive use of our time to spend it talking to the scientists. I took my senior scientist, Dan Scheidt, with me to all the rooms and we actually talked to the people who were manning the science displays in those rooms. I learned a lot.

I had never seen an Asian Swamp Eel. Nick, I think as you know, that Lee Trevino has his Mexican hat, Jack Nicholas the Golden Bear, and the swamp eel really characterizes you. So maybe you ought to...[laughter]. I have also learned about a new species inhabiting Everglades National Park--the ENP skunk (laughter)--I had always suspected that it resided there, and Secretary Babbitt just confirmed it.

[Dick Ring] That's a garden party skunk. [In reference to Secretary Babbitt's opening remarks when he jokingly referred to Superintendent Dick Ring as being a skunk at the garden party in raising last minute concerns on the Restudy report.]

[Richard Harvey] Oh, I think it was a garden variety skunk. In regards to my comment awhile ago about the politicians not knowing anything about what they are doing; maybe we ought to have a restoration politics forum. This will help us learn how to deal with the politicians. Actually I have a biology degree and two engineering degrees so I try to communicate with everybody.

[Richard Harvey] Once again we are very appreciative of the hard work and the attendance. We certainly appreciate the dignitaries being here: Bruce Babbitt, Sam Hamilton, John Hankanson, Michael Davis, Bonnie McGregor, and Glenda Hummeston.

Some of you may not have known that a couple of folks from the U.S. General Accounting Office were with us. They were relatively quiet. I'm hoping that they developed a real appreciation for what we do. As I say this, I'm looking around the room hopefully that...Oh, no, they're here! My program gets audited next! They actually left us alone because when you look at the money that's spent down here, my office probably has the smallest budget.

[Sherry McDonald, U.S. General Accounting Office] We'll be back.

[Richard Harvey] "I'm sure Sherry," [laughter] and in conclusion...

(Applause)

[Richard Harvey] Bob, in recognition of all your hard work, you're going to get to do this next year" [laughter]

[Bob Mooney] Do I get to say some words here?

[Richard Harvey] "No, no, the microphone gets turned off. Seriously Bob, in recognition of the tremendous job that you did, we are presenting you with this momento that says: 'In recognition of Robert Mooney for outstanding coordination of the South Florida Restoration Science Forum, May 17-19, 1999, Boca Raton, Florida, Working Group, South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force.' As Chair of the Working Group, it is certainly my pleasure to present this to you and to say thank you very much.

(Applause)

[Bob Mooney] "It is I who thank you. This was not just a job to me. I've had many lives and I hope to have many more during this lifetime. Being able to be part of the effort means a lot to me. I've been here for 4 years. I came down here after being a field office director for the office of surface mining. I wanted a new life; I was tired of the coal mines after 20 years. I have been amazed at the expanse of the restoration effort. What has been shown at this forum is just a smidgen of the science that's being done here. So many people and their efforts need to be part of this forum. I'm anxious for this forum to continue on the Internet. There it can expand and show the science being here. Others will be able to appreciate and benefit from all the work that you are doing. I thank you.

[Aaron Higer, Co-Chair of the Forum] "Well, it's been a long 4 months having fun. I just got to tell you that Bob Mooney...I cannot express the work he's done...but I can tell you a story. About three times a week--the telephone next to my bed is on my wife's side--I get a calls at 5:00 in the morning or at 12:00 at night, and...

[Bob Mooney] You said to call you.

[Aaron Higer] It's Bob and he is telling me the problems of the day and that I've got to get down to work early. Then I look at the caller ID, and he's in the office. What can you say? I turn to my wife and say he's there; I've got to be there. Bob, I'm about to present you a cash award from our agency. Usually we

get recognition, as most of you know, from other agencies. Bob, you're agency recognizes what you do.

Before I give you your cash, I want to talk about Nick [Aumen]. In 40 years, I've done a lot of science symposia, and I have Co-Chaired a lot of them. Most Co-Chairs disappear when the work comes, when the decisions come - not Nick. He's been there true and making decisions the whole time; never saying our resources, your resources, but saying it's got to be done. Nick, I really appreciate you.

This is a time that I wish I was in private industry. These would be stock options. Government doesn't do that. Bob, this doesn't compensate you, but does show we do appreciate you. Thank you"

[Richard Harvey] One last comment then we'll close. Sherry [McDonald], I knew that you were in the audience before I said anything about government auditors, so please pick on somebody else. Just trying to recover guys. Once again, thank you for coming, and we'll see you again next year. If you really want to see some excitement, stay for the Working Group meeting that is starting at 1:00 this afternoon.

[end of the forum]