

Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame



Ruth Clusen

Inducted, 2002



"We speak dry words at times, but if one has eyes to see and the mind to perceive that what we are working for is the quality of our environment in this and the next generation, one cannot but feel a quickening of the senses." —Clusen

Facts About Ruth Clusen

Four-year president of the National League of Women Voters

Brought attention to environmental issues while serving on the UW-System Board of Regents

Advocated recycling and education policies

Served as Assistant Secretary of Energy for the Environment under President Carter

Ruth Clusen 1922–

Ruth Clusen brought reason, knowledge and commitment to the cause of conservation at time when it was needed most.

Wisconsin native Clusen will be remembered for leading efforts to steer the League of Women Voters (LWV) into the environmental and conservation discussion. As an organization that believes deeply in research and dialogue on issues, the LWV provided a strong voice of reason and concern to the conservation cause.

Clusen was president of the National League of Women Voters from 1974-78. While president, Clusen worked to assure the passage of the 1974 Safe Drinking Water Act.

A stint followed as Assistant Secretary of Energy for the Environment in the Department of Energy under President Jimmy Carter. She served from 1978-81. Clusen had earlier led LWV national environmental activities for eight years (1966-74).

A former teacher in Green Bay schools, she was appointed to the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents in 1983 by Gov. Anthony Earl, and served until 1992.

Born in Bruce, northwest Wisconsin in 1922, she earned a bachelor's degree in secondary education at the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire. Clusen taught school at a Blackfoot Indian Reservation in Montana for two years, and in the Green Bay area from

(Continued on back page)

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**About Wisconsin's
Conservation Hall of Fame**

Location:

Schmeckle Reserve
Stevens Point, Wis.

Attractions:

Displays, information on Wisconsin's conservation history and leaders. Schmeckle Reserve, owned by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, provides hiking and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Purpose:

To educate and inspire people with information about how resource conservation has shaped our environment and our lives.

Hours:

M-F: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Sat: Noon - 4 p.m.
Sun: Noon - 4 p.m.

Support: The Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame is funded solely by contributions. Donations are tax deductible and may be sent to:

WCHF Foundation Inc.,
Schmeckle Reserve,
UW-Stevens Point,
Stevens Point, Wis. 54481
715-346-4992.

Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame
Honoring our state's rich conservation history

Ruth Clusen

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1947-58. She has lived most of her life in the Green Bay area.

In a 2001 Conservation Hall of Fame interview, Clusen noted that her concerns about the environment, especially water pollution, came about because of Green Bay's water quality problems.

Clusen rose to the position of president of the state League in 1962, serving until 1966. She was named chairperson for the LWV National Committee on Water Resources in 1966, serving until 1970. She was also chairperson of the League's National Committee on Environmental Programs and Projects from 1968-70.

During her national presidency, the League also promoted a common-sense conservation measure. The group advocated recycling and educated communities about source separation of solid waste.

As Assistant Secretary of Energy, Clusen worked to develop and implement a strong National Energy Policy. Was the effort successful? On the heels of the Arab Oil Embargo of 1973, the U.S. found itself in a vulnerable position, given its vast energy needs and the fact that its reliance on foreign energy supplies was growing. But beginning in 1978 and for several years thereafter, U.S. reliance on foreign energy supplies declined. Energy conservation is credited as the main reason for the decline in demand for foreign energy.

Clusen's office also worked on further reducing energy consumption by using synfuel technology and biomass conversion. Her office also had prime responsibility for overseeing governmental research on topic that would draw increasing attention in future years: global warming caused by increased amounts of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Looking back on her activities with the LWV, Clusen said she thinks the work of her group was essential at a key time in the effort to clean up the environment.