



**Wisconsin  
Conservation  
Hall of Fame**

# New Leaf

*Semiannual newsletter of the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame*

## TRANSITIONS from your past president

For as long as *New Leaf* has been published, you have been subjected to my rather ponderous "Ponderings" in every issue, but with this issue, all of that changes.

As of the last annual meeting of the Board of Directors, Gene Roark has taken over as President of the Board of Directors, and from now on, he gets to "Ponder" – or whatever he wants.

I have asked Gene to give me this one last shot.

No, you haven't seen the last of me – I volunteered to serve

as Executive Secretary, and I will be continuing in that role for a while - never as well as our friend Bill Horvath, but hopefully offering as much support as I can to Gene.

### *A few personal words:*

**First** – thank you to everyone who has been involved with the Hall of Fame for all your help and support over the past years. It has been a great run and lots of fun.

**Second** – on a note of sadness - my personal condolences to Bill Buckley's family. Bill was a great positive voice on the Board of Directors and we will all miss him.

**Third** – our silver anniversary is coming up! Anybody with ideas for a celebration let me know.

That's about it for now.  
Thanks again, all.



Earl Spangenberg



C.D. "Buzz" Besadny



Mel Cohee



Paul Husting

## Besadny, Cohee and Husting are 2008 inductees

### Ceremonies set April 19 in Stevens Point

The man who led the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources at a time of major environmental gains, a soil conservation pioneer and a U.S. senator who pushed for public water rights will be honored April 19 in Stevens Point. They are this year's inductees into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.

The trio will join 60 other distinguished inductees to the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame in ceremonies at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 19, at the Sentry Theater in Stevens Point.

Kewaunee native C.D. "Buzz" Besadny led the DNR from 1980-92. He was a career natural resources professional who earned the nickname "Father Nature" for his work on behalf of Wisconsin's natural resources.

Mel Cohee was among a handful of visionaries who established the soil conservation movement in America in the 1930s and who spearheaded the nation's first erosion control pilot project at Coon Valley in Wisconsin.

Paul Husting, a Fond du Lac native, served as a junior U.S. senator from Wisconsin in the early 20th century and also in the state Senate, championing populist causes and conservation policy, including public water rights.

Tributes to the inductees will be given at 10 a.m. at Sentry Theater, located at the Sentry Insurance Headquarters, 1800

North Point Drive. A 9 a.m. coffee will precede the program. A luncheon at noon in The Restaurant of Sentry Insurance Headquarters concludes the day's activities. Luncheon reservations cost \$20 and can be made by calling 715-346-4992, the telephone number for the Schmeckle Reserve Visitors Center, where the Conservation Hall of Fame is located.

"The cause of conservation in Wisconsin is an ongoing story. The deeds of these men span most of the 20th century, and their accomplishments serve as living legacies in today's world," said Conservation Hall of Fame Executive Secretary Earl Spangenberg. Following are brief biographies of the three inductees for 2008:

### **C.D. "Buzz" Besadny**

Besadny was educated in Wisconsin schools and gave much of his life to state resources issues. He served the DNR and its predecessor, the Wisconsin

*(Continued on page 3)*

***Mark your calendars:  
The 25th annual Induction  
Ceremony will be held  
Saturday, April 19, 2008  
at Sentry Theater,  
Stevens Point.  
See you There!***

## Board of Directors representing member organizations

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Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
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Wisconsin Chapter
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[www.wchf.org](http://www.wchf.org) 715-346-4992  
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## Nomination for the Hall of Fame

The Hall of Fame aims to celebrate the life and activities of individuals who have contributed significantly to the growth of the conservation ideal in Wisconsin and in the Nation.

Nomination is an open process. Member organizations of the Hall of Fame Foundation or individuals may nominate people who they believe merit induction into the Hall of Fame.

Nomination does not mean automatic induction. When a person is nominated his or her name is added to a relatively large pool of nominees. Our biographer prepares and updates biographies of nominees on a regular basis. Obviously, the more information a nominator can supply, the easier it is to prepare biographies for review.

Every year our Board of Governors reviews the biographies of nominees for whom we have complete biographies, and recommends a slate of nominees to the Board of Directors. At the annual meeting in November, the Board of Directors selects the inductees for the following April.

Those nominees not selected for induction go back into the pool for consideration at a future time. Names are not purged from the pool of nominees, so a nominee is always open to consideration.

If you want to nominate someone, you may do so through the Hall of Fame web site ([www.wchf.org](http://www.wchf.org)) or through the mail. Use the "Standards and Criteria for Induction" as a guide in preparing the nomination documentation. You don't need to fill out a form, just provide as much background information as you can

to help the Board of Directors make their decisions.

### Standards and Criteria for Induction

*Adopted by WCHF Board of Directors – September 1991*

- Standards for selection into the Hall of Fame shall include but are not limited to:
  - Nominee's contribution must be state-wide, inter-state or national in significance;
  - Nominee's contribution must affect a wide range of natural resources and their use;
  - Nominee's contributions are able to be measured in context of past inductees contributions, and in the historical setting of the time in which they lived;
  - Nominee must have significant ties to Wisconsin, i.e. birth, family, background, or residency;
- Nominee shall have made a sustained and outstanding contribution to conservation of at least one, and preferably several, of the following kinds:
  - Environmental law enforcement
  - Applied resource management
  - Conservation education
  - Conservation policy formation, legislation, and public leadership
  - Conservation-oriented research
  - Conservation literature, art or journalism
- If the nominee is living, they shall be at a stage in their career that their contributions are undeniable, and are likely not to be impugned by any of their present or future endeavors.



### *In Memoriam – Bill Buckley*

*William J. Buckley, 75 of Marshfield, Wisconsin died on Thursday, March 6, 2008 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield.*

*Bill was a charter member of the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame Board of Directors, representing the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.*

*Throughout his time on the Board of Directors, Bill fought passionately for the principles of recognizing the accomplishments of inductees based on what they did, rather than who they were. In these efforts, he was successful, and our efforts at recognizing contributions to the conservation ethic are the better for his work.*

*Bill was born on July 8, 1932 in Marshfield. He graduated from Marshfield High School and obtained his bachelors degree from the University of Wisconsin Stout. He taught at the Marshfield Junior High School in the metal shop department from which he retired. During his teaching tenure, Bill received his Masters Degree from Ripon College. He was on the Board of Directors for WEAC, very active at the Central Wisconsin Sportsman's Club, director for the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and a county delegate for the Wisconsin Conservation Congress for many years.*

*Funeral services were on Tuesday, March 11, 2008. Bill is buried in the Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Marshfield.*

*The Board of Directors will miss his passion and dedication.*

## 2007 Inductees *(continued from page 1)*

Conservation Department, for 40 years. As an appointed secretary, he worked with three governors, Lee Dreyfus, Tony Earl and Tommy Thompson.

Wisconsin became the first state in the nation to achieve federal Clean Water Act "fishable and swimmable" standards during Besadny's tenure. Wisconsin also became the first state to develop a wastewater compliance management program.

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund for land acquisitions was created in 1989 as a successor to the Outdoor Recreation Act Program. Administered by the DNR, it is the state's major program for acquiring and protecting lands of significant environmental importance. Ground-water protection, soil erosion control, toxic substance regulation and recycling were other environmental initiatives at the time. Multiple-use forestry also gained acceptance in the state during his time as secretary. "He was the right man at the right time with the right skills," said Conservation Hall of Fame President Gene Roark.

The state also made major strides in wildlife management in Besadny's years. The successful re-introduction of wild turkeys to Wisconsin came under his watch. The DNR also initiated deer census and tracking methods and introduced hunter's choice deer permits. These accomplishments hit close to home for Besadny, who was trained as a wildlife biologist.

The conservation work of this Wisconsin native son earned accolades from governors and colleagues, and the name "Father Nature," was used to describe him in the Wisconsin magazine of the Milwaukee Journal. The same newspaper characterized him as "Wisconsin personified, a solid citizen who tells homey stories about himself, thinks before he talks, takes his time to consider all sides, then makes up his mind, digs in and holds his ground."

Besadny died in 1999.

### **Mel Cohee**

Cohee joined other soil erosion pioneers

in implementing the Coon Valley Watershed Demonstration Project in southwest Wisconsin in 1933. The first of its kind in the nation, the project was selected as a model by the fledgling Soil Erosion Service under the leadership of Hugh Hammond Bennett. Others participating in the project included Conservation Hall of Fame inductees Aldo Leopold, father of the "land ethic," and George Wehrwein, a UW-Madison rural economist.

The Coon Valley project involved a 92,589-acre drainage basin in the hilly driftless region of southwestern Wisconsin, mostly in Vernon County. It emerged as a national model because it included a plan of action based on close personal contacts with cooperating farmers on their land. This model continues to underlie private lands conservation work in America today. The Soil Erosion Service evolved into the Soil Conservation Service and then the Natural Resources Conservation Service, but this one-on-one approach with land owners is still important to the work of technicians in the field.

Cohee was a key field worker on the Coon Valley project, serving as farm management specialist. He went on to a lifetime of work in soil conservation, land use and agricultural economics. He headed the SCS regional office in La Crosse and later went to Washington, D.C., where he served the agency in several capacities. His roles included six years as chief of the program procedures and project plans division of SCS, putting him in charge of project planning for the entire country.

Upon retiring from SCS, Cohee returned to Wisconsin, where he spent 10 years as a technical consultant for the DNR, doing economic research for state and privately owned recreation enterprises. He also did consulting work for the United Nations in the areas of land use and irrigation.

Cohee was among the founders of the Soil and Water Conservation Society and played an important role in the society's early days by serving as its first elected national secretary.

Cohee died in 2001.

### **Paul Hustung**

Husting was public figure in Wisconsin and the nation, but his actions as a private citizen had the major impact on natural resources issues. Testing the right of access to public waterways, Hustung "trespassed" onto a portion of the Rock River in the Horicon Marsh claimed as a private hunting preserve by a shooting club. The case went to the Wisconsin Supreme Court, where Hustung was vindicated and two major precedents were established.

A state senator at the time, Hustung was concerned with public rights on navigable waters. He paddled a skiff to a widening of the Rock River where it flows through the Horicon Marsh, making sure to remain in the river bed. He was arrested for trespassing, initiating an important test case. The Supreme Court ruled that navigable waters are public waters, free for commerce, travel, recreation, hunting and fishing. The court also established that ordinary high-water marks determined navigability. This standard continues to define state DNR permit jurisdiction and public waters protection for many activities.

An attorney educated at UW-Madison, Hustung served for eight years in the state Senate and is credited with drafting and passing laws aimed at conservation of natural resources. In the Senate, he chaired a legislative committee investigating water power, forestry and drainage. Water power bills passed in 1911 and 1913 reflected the work of that committee and Hustung's advocacy for public water rights.

Husting also championed social and public concerns in other areas. He supported a progressive state income tax, worker's compensation laws, measures to protect women and child laborers, and the election of U.S. senators by popular vote. He was the first U.S. senator to be chosen by that method in Wisconsin. Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1914, he served until his death in a duck hunting accident in 1917.

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## **— Cedric A. Vig Receives Award —**

Cedric A. Vig was awarded the **NACD Friend of Conservation Award during their Annual Meeting in Los Angeles February 2007.** The *Friend of Conservation Award* recognizes an individual, business, organization, agency, etc. outside the association for outstanding contributions to the conservation of our nation's natural resources. Nominated by Tom Rudolph from the Oneida County LCD and board member of the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Districts. His nomination text is pasted below...

**"I write with a philosophy of trying to be a teacher, and I try to teach readers about the outdoors" - Vig**

Cedric A. "Ced" Vig, a well-known and beloved Rhinelander, Wisconsin resident, has been educating and writing about nature and conserva-

tion all his life. His work includes more than four decades as an educator and school administrator, and another four-plus decades as nature writer, author and photographer. Now, at 94 years of age, he continues to write a weekly nature column for several Wisconsin newspapers including the Rhinelander Daily News, New Richmond News, and Phillips Bee.

The Hawkins, Wisconsin native earned an undergraduate degree at Central State Teachers College in Stevens Point in 1933 where he was profoundly influenced by and served as an assistant to Fred Schmeekle, a natural resources professor and 1990 inductee into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.

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***Cedric A. Vig*** *continued from page 3*

Vig started his career as a high school principal in Hawkins in 1934, where he married his wife of more than 69 years, Marvel. He earned his Master's degree at the University of Minnesota. He continued as a Principal at several Wisconsin schools and ended his career as Rhinelander as Superintendent from 1954-1977.

As an educator in the 1960s, Vig served on the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Conservation Curriculum Committee and helped to create a statewide conservation curriculum on outdoor education and school forests for Wisconsin schools.

He assisted with the establishment of one of the early school forests at Rhinelander. The School Board later named a diverse 80-acre forest, "The Cedric A. Vig Outdoor Classroom" in his honor. It serves as an environmental resource center for 1,500 K-12 students annually.

Ced Vig's bright, lively weekly newspaper column, "Wisconsin Woodsmoke" has been a favorite among northern Wisconsin readers for the last 42 years. He focuses on information about conservation and the natural wonders of northern Wisconsin and beyond.

The Rhinelander Daily News compiled 40 years worth of his columns

for a book "Wisconsin Woodsmoke" with more than 5,000 copies sold. An accompanying book of his outdoor photos has also been popular.

Vig continues to teach, educating seniors about nature and conservation at Nicolet College's Institute for Learning in Retirement. He also writes a column for the Trees for Tomorrow national newsletter. He serves on the University of Wisconsin's Advisory Board for Treehaven.

Ced Vig is a tireless educator and advocate for nature and conservation whose work as a dedicated citizen extends to the community. In 1984, Ced began a tradition of encouraging the community to give books to the Rhinelander Public Library. Since its inception, "Cedric Vig Holiday Book Fund" donors have given over \$120,000 to buy thousands of books.

Ced Vig has been recognized by Wisconsin for his conservation work being inducted into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame in 2005. Ced Vig has been an admired and respected conservation advocate and educator throughout most of his 94 years. He is a most worthy nominee for the National Association of Conservation Districts Friend of Conservation Award.

Become part of Wisconsin's conservation history by contributing to the  
**Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame Foundation** with your membership.

*Help commemorate those who labored in years past to ensure the future of Wisconsin's abundant and diverse natural resources. Keep alive the ideals and ideas of those who foresight preserved our environment.*

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*Thank you!*