

STEPHEN BORN (1940 -)



Photo courtesy of Harry Peterson

Stephen Born is a well-known University of Wisconsin-Madison professor who specialized in environmental planning and worked on almost every aspect of water management, in addition to loving all things trout. His impact on conservation in Wisconsin and beyond is broad and varied. Of himself he has said “I have always been haunted by water, and I think some of us are genetically encoded to love water...”

Dr. Born studied at the Universities of Illinois and Oregon before earning his M.S. in Water Resources Management and Ph.D. in Geology from the University of Wisconsin. He joined the UW faculty in Madison in 1969, holding positions in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning and the Institute for Environmental Studies. In the mid-1970s, Dr. Born took a leave of absence from academia to serve in Wisconsin’s state government as Director of the State Planning Office and State Energy Director.

Dr. Born was dedicated to both academic research and applied practice. Professor Born was an exceptional teacher and his students today play important roles

in public sector resource management, nonprofit conservation advocacy, and private sector sustainability efforts. He played many key roles in policy development on Wisconsin’s groundwater management, lakes policy, river restoration and coastal resources. He was an early advocate of integrated resources management and his work is still cited today. His publications and activities illustrate his talent for devising practical solutions to watershed problems and development of conservation strategies.

Dr. Born’s contributions include co-chairing the Waters of Wisconsin Initiative of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters. He was a chief advisor to former Governor Patrick Lucey on the decision not to dam the Kickapoo River, which led to the creation of the 8,500-acre Kickapoo Reserve. And he served on Governor Tommy Thompson’s Blue Ribbon Stewardship Task Force, leading to a significant bi-partisan land protection program in Wisconsin.

Dr. Born has played major roles in non-governmental conservation organizations including the River Alliance of Wisconsin and the 1000 Friends of Wisconsin. This aspect of his work may best be illustrated by his extensive involvement in Trout Unlimited, where he served in many state and national senior leadership roles. His influential efforts brought sophisticated strategic planning to Trout Unlimited, while at the same time enhancing the role and influence of its grassroots volunteers.



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An intrepid angler, he is also co-author of “Exploring Wisconsin Trout Streams: The Anglers Guide,” a seminal work which focuses not only on where to fish, but also stream ecology and protection of cold-water resources.

Dr. Born excelled in bringing people with differing views and ideologies together to forge unified and strong coalitions to protect Wisconsin’s natural resources. And since he continues to serve non-profit groups as a board member or volunteer, his resume and influence continues to grow.

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