



Staff photo by Steve Kinderman

Warren Knowles, with his longtime fishing companion Sam Sanfillippo behind him, fished Lake Tainter in May of 1991 during the Governor's

Fishing Opener in Menomonie. Knowles, an avid fisherman, died Saturday after fishing in the Black River Falls area for this year's Governor's Opener.

Knowles kept outdoors on agenda, in his heart

By Joe Knight
Leader-Telegram staff

Whenever I'm driving on the bridge over Lake Holcombe on Highway 27 between Holcombe and Ladysmith, I think of Warren Knowles.

There is an island to the west of the bridge, and if the muskie season is open, there is frequently a boat drifting the bar off that island and an angler or two casting for northerns. It was near that spot I saw Knowles catch a big northern during a cold Governor's Opener several years ago.

Knowles, a Republican governor from 1965-71, died Saturday of a heart attack after fishing at the Governor's Opener, held this year at Black River Falls. He was 84.

Knowles, an avid fisherman and outdoorsman, founded the Governor's Opener in 1968 to kick off the fishing season. Wisconsin Indianhead Country, a tourism promotion organization for northwestern Wisconsin, has continued the tradition. Knowles attended every one except a recent one in Ashland, which he missed because of health problems.

Knowles Memorial

The Natural Resources Foundation has established a memorial for former Gov. Warren Knowles to fund improvements to Governor Knowles State Forest.

Knowles had expressed an interest in developing an interpretive trail in the forest, according to the Department of Natural Resources.

The Natural Resources Foundation is a non-profit corporation committed to helping preserve the state's natural resources. Knowles served on the board of directors.

Memorials may be sent to: Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, P.O. Box 129, Madison, WI 53701.

Memorials for Knowles have also been established with Mount Mary College, the University of Wisconsin Foundation; and the Medical College of Wisconsin.

At the Governor's Openers I attended, the acting governor, first Tony Earl, then Tommy Thompson, would show up and make a few casts, but Knowles would fish all day. Of course, you have a little bit more time to fish when you're a retired governor.

Knowles not only enjoyed fishing and outdoor sports himself, but he helped make sure there would be opportunities for outdoor recreation for future generations by expanding the Outdoor Recreation Act Program for purchasing lands for parks and

public recreation areas. He also expanded the program to include funding for communities for water pollution control.

The ORAP program has been reincarnated now as the Stewardship program, which has a similar goal of preserving environmentally sensitive land for the public.

In 1981 the Natural Resources Board named a state forest bordering the St. Croix River after him. It includes about 19,500 acres, primarily designated as wilderness.