



Harold C. "Bud" Jordahl
1926-

“In my more than 44 years as a natural resource professional, I have reached an inescapable conclusion. To manage land wisely requires knowledge from a myriad of disciplines.”

–Harold “Bud” Jordahl

Conservation has been at the heart of Harold C. “Bud” Jordahl’s remarkable career for most of his life.

A quick scan of the accompanying biographical information makes it poignantly clear that Jordahl has been down so many paths that any narrative fails to do him justice. Fortunately, Jordahl was kind enough to summarize some of his major accomplishments in a June 2001 interview for this Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame biography.

His professional career began as a game manager for the Wisconsin Conservation Department. In the 1960s, as director of the Department of Resource Development, he worked with Gov. Gaylord Nelson on major conservation initiatives.

He went on to become regional coordinator for the Upper Mississippi-Western Great Lakes Area for the Department of Interior. He worked for Interior Secretary Stuart Udall and, again, with Gaylord Nelson, then a U.S. senator.

Later he took a teaching position at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He had a joint appointment with the University Extension, College of Letters and Sciences, and the Institute of Environmental Studies. He taught economic planning and resource policy classes. He also worked as an Extension regional planning specialist during that period. Retiring in 1989, he was named a professor emeritus. But he continued to be involved in a variety of conservation efforts.

It was fitting that Jordahl’s final professional employment was as a teacher. “All my life, I’ve been a teacher. It was only the last 25 years that I had a teaching role,” he said in an interview for the Conservation Hall of Fame. He offered his students an invaluable gift: Knowledge gained in actual work experiences, and in a variety of backgrounds.

During his teaching tenure, he was a member of the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (1972-76), rising to the position of chairman in the last two years of his term. He also helped found groups like 1,000 Friends of Wisconsin, a land use group, and Gathering Waters, a statewide land trust.

Jordahl was born in 1926 in northwest Minnesota. His grandparents were Norwegian immigrants. His love for nature was born of hunting experiences with his father, and he recalls his grandfather’s farm west of the Twin Cities, lush with marshes and grasslands.

In a Historical Society of Wisconsin taped interview in November 2000, he notes that one of his great life tragedies was moving to Minneapolis in 1936, and then to Finley, Ohio, which didn't have the plentiful resources that were present in rural Minnesota.

His undergraduate and graduate work at the University of Michigan were in forestry, with concentrations in wildlife. His graduate thesis was on the "Impact of Deer Browsing on the Northern Forest," an ecological problem that nettles him to this day.

In his first professional position, as a Conservation Department game manager, he quickly learned that deer and politics were a rough mix.

Of that time, he noted, "Early game managers were the unsung heroes of the profession, and included Harold Steinke, Harold Shine, Paul Kennedy, Earl Loyster, Alan McVey, Harry Stroebe, Norm Stone, Thern Deerwester and many others."

He took a year off from those duties in 1954 to obtain a master's degree in public administration at Harvard. He was married in 1955 to Marilyn June Hanson of Grantsburg. They had three children, Kristine, Kari and Harald.

Moving to Madison in 1956, he worked as federal aid coordinator for the Conservation Department. He coordinated the purchase of fisheries and wildlife areas using federal funds. "There was great satisfaction in coordinating those acquisitions," he said in a Conservation Hall of Fame interview. He helped purchase areas such as Crex Meadow and the Tatogatic Flowage and was instrumental in establishing the Lower Wisconsin State Riverways and its associated public grounds.

Joining the Department of Resource Development in 1960, Jordahl took on what he called the hardest work of his professional career. He began as a recreation specialist and then served as deputy director and then director of the department. In that period, he began what would be a rich association with Gaylord Nelson, who was governor. Nelson was inducted into the Conservation Hall of Fame in 1986, along with Ernie Swift, a man who Jordahl admired greatly for his vision and courage.

Jordahl counts his work with Nelson in creating Wisconsin's Outdoor Recreation Act Program among his greatest accomplishments. ORAP was a major vehicle for development of multi-use public lands in Wisconsin, and it focused specifically on

capital investment in land.. It helped empower local units of government to develop and enhance their own parklands.

ORAP evolved into the Wisconsin Stewardship Fund, which exists to this day. Jordahl helped advise state government in creation of the Stewardship Fund, although he said in his Conservation Hall of Fame interview that he's not completely happy with the dilution of the program's purpose, which he believes should emphasize capital investment.

Nelson and Jordahl worked together from 1960-63 to protect Wisconsin's county forestlands. County governments at that time pushed to diminish the state role in preserving that land. He wrote a history of the effort, "County Forests in Transition, An Account of the Wisconsin County Forest Crop Revolt, 1960-63."

Local pressures were working on county government at that time to wrest full control of the forestland and push the state out of the picture. The Legislature approved such a plan, but Nelson vetoed it. The veto was upheld by one vote. Jordahl then participated in efforts to rewrite the rules relating to county forests. "It's something that's overlooked in Gaylord's legacy, and something I'm really proud of, making 2.3 million acres of county forests part of the public forest system." he said in the Conservation Hall of Fame interview. "It was Nelson's most courageous veto. The Conservation Commission was conservative, as was the Legislature." Jordahl said he is convinced that had the game ended differently "a lot of that land would have been sold and developed."

Establishment of state, regional and local comprehensive planning was also accomplished during his time in the state department.

Jordahl's work alongside Nelson wasn't done, either, even though Jordahl left the state position in 1963 to become regional coordinator for the Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region of the Department of Interior.

Nelson was a U.S. senator then, and the two worked together to create the Apostle Island National Lakeshore, an effort they had begun while Nelson was governor.

Of these accomplishments and their implications for resource professionals of today, Jordahl said, "You have to be smarter than the staff, the bureaucracies you're working with or against, or to overcome."

Citing an example, he noted that the Conservation Commission actually fought ORAP. Sensing that it wouldn't be used to its fullest potential, he and Nelson created a wedge. "We established a Recreation Committee (in his department) that actually did the planning. The Conservation Department was angry."

In another coup, he and Nelson worked together to designate the St. Croix and Namekogan Rivers as Wild and Scenic Rivers. Nelson asked him to write the legislation, and it actually served as the basis for much of the eventual National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. "Then Gaylord rewrote the legislation to include the St. Croix and Namekogan," he said.

From 1965-1967, Jordahl served as co-chair and then chair of the Upper Great Lakes Regional Commission. He was later Gov. Patrick Lucey's alternate to the commission.

His association with the University of Wisconsin-Madison began in 1965. During his tenure at the university, Jordahl was appointed to the Natural Resources Board in 1972. He served as chair for two years before his term expired in 1976.

In one more collaboration with Nelson, Jordahl helped the senator create the first Earth Day celebration, in 1970. "I was on the national committee for Earth Day," he recalled. "John Heritage (later press secretary for U.S. Rep. David Obey) and I did the bulk of the work...Earth Day heightened awareness of the environment. Some of the young people involved then have gone on to leadership in various environmental groups, and the groups have changed." Earth Day broadened the focus of environmental activity and helped changed some of the old environmental bureaucracies, he said.

He expressed pride in the smooth transition that occurred when Lester Voigt resigned as head of the state's Department of Natural Resources and Tony Earl was hired to take the reins of the department during a period of change.

Retiring from the university faculty in 1988, he was shortly later named emeritus professor. He also threw himself into a wide array of conservation activities.

He and his wife tend to a 240-acre farm in Richland County. There, he tries to put into practice environmental stewardship he has advocated for most of his life. He's still not happy about the deer herd, though, noting that it's terribly difficult to promote plant diversity when whitetails gnaw at the vegetation.

A founder of Wisconsin's statewide land trust, Gathering Waters, Jordahl, together with his wife, donated a 220-acre conservation easement to the group, assuring that the Richland County land he nurtures will be preserved for posterity.

A strong advocate of these easements, Jordahl continues to work on the Gathering Waters Board of Directors.

He's also continuing his work on a resource history book on the Apostle Islands. Assuring continuing and further protection of the Lower Wisconsin River is another ongoing effort.

In his mind, Jordahl continues to do what he has always done, work with and for nature.

Advice for today's resource professionals and conservationists was offered by Jordahl in the June 2001 interview for this biography.

"Don't be constrained by conventional thinking. Broaden the boundaries. You've got to think in terms of governmental action, whether the town board, Congress or the White House. These things are only accomplished in a democratic political process. Understand the political process."

HAROLD C. "BUD" JORDAHL
1926-

BIRTH: Aug. 18, 1926, McIntosh, Minnesota

EDUCATION: Findlay High School, Ohio, 1944.
Undergraduate degree in forestry, University of Michigan, 1949.
Master's degree in forestry, University of Michigan, 1950.
Master's degree in public administration, Harvard University.

MILITARY: U.S. Navy, 1944-45.

BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Wisconsin Conservation Department, biology, planning, coordination, 1950-60. Began work as wildlife manager for Conservation Department in Viroqua and then Spooner.

Wisconsin Department of Resource Development, resource specialist, deputy director, director (gubernatorial appointment), 1960-63.

Regional Coordinator, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior, Upper Mississippi and Western Great Lakes Region (secretarial appointment), 1963-67.

Alternate and Acting Federal Co-Chairman, Upper Great Lakes Regional Planning Commission (presidential appointment), 1967-69.

Lecturer, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1965-69.

Professor and Regional Planning Specialist, UW-Madison, Department of Urban and Regional Planning and University Extension, 1969-88.

ORGANIZATIONS, ACTIVITIES

Chairman, Committee on the Constitution and Bylaws, Wildlife Society, 1964-65.

Member, Recreation Committee and Water Resources Committee, Soil Conservation Society of America, Wisconsin Chapter, 1966-67.

Key leader in development of the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, Ashland.

Member, Board of Directors, Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation, 1989-93.

Member and chair, Stewardship Advisory Committee to Department of Natural Resources Secretary George Meyer, 1994-97.

Initiated efforts to protect Lower Wisconsin Riverway, worked with U.S. Rep. Robert Kastenmeier (1972) to authorize a national wild and scenic river under 1968 National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Founding member, citizen supporter of Friends of the Lower Wisconsin.

Chair and member, Citizen Committee to Maintain the Public Intervenor, 1995.

Member, Legislative Council Committee on Land Use, 1999.

Member, Advisory Committee to the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, 1998-present.

Member and chair, committee to establish and fund Gaylord Nelson Distinguished Chair in Environmental Policy Studies – Institute of Environmental Studies Programs, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Wisconsin Legislature designated the chair.

Founding member “1000 Friends of Wisconsin,” land use group; member of the group’s Board of Directors and Legislative Committee; member of Forest Fragmentation Study Subcommittee.

Founding member of Gathering Waters Conservancy (statewide land trust), and member of Board of Directors, 1996-present. Member of Development Committee, Vice Chair, Chair Elect, 2001.

Helped found Driftless Area Land Conservancy, 2000-present.

Member and Chair, Wisconsin Natural Resources Board, 1971-76.

Alternate to Governor Patrick Lucey, Upper Great Lakes Regional Commission (gubernatorial appointment), 1971-76.

Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Consultant to University of Wisconsin Conservation Education Programs.

Member, Pollution Committee, Capital Community Citizens Organization, Madison, Wisconsin.

Member:

Wildlife Society, Society of American Foresters, Soil Conservation Society of America, Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Sciences and Letters, The Nature Conservancy, American Society of Planning Officials, American Society for Public Administration.

AUTHOR

Author of more than 50 articles and reports on wide range of resource topics. Topics ranged from land use issues, open space preservation, scenic easement devices, recreational potential of lands, resource development, tourism, sharp-tailed grouse.

Contributed to numerous government reports, 1952-69.

Note: A comprehensive list of Jordahl's articles and reports is contained in the archives of the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.

SPEECHES

Delivered numerous speeches to professional organizations, conservation organizations, state and community groups. Topics ranged from development strategies, highway planning and the environment, highway and waterfront values, regional planning, use and development of resources, outdoor recreation programs, Wisconsin wetlands problems and opportunities.

Offered statements before U.S. Congress committees on various natural resource topics.

Note: A comprehensive list of Jordahl's speeches and statements before congressional committees is contained in the archives of the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.

AWARDS, HONORS

Distinguished Service Award, UW-Extension Community Development Association, 1987.

Distinguished Service Award, UW-Extension, 1981.

President, University Forestry Club, University of Michigan, 1948-49.

Book and Mortar (scholastic honorary society), Bowling Green State University.

Phi Sigma, Sigma X and Phi Kappa Phi.

Recipient of first Forestry War Memorial Award, University of Michigan, 1949.

Stewardship Award, Dance County Natural Heritage Foundation, 1997.

First recipient, "Wisconsin Idea Award," University of Wisconsin-Madison; College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Center for Resource Policy Studies and Programs, School of Natural Resources, 1988.

Trout Unlimited Conservation Educator Award, 1989.

Joan and Lee Wulff Conservation Award, Trout Unlimited, 1992.

Senior Service Award, Madison Rotary Club, 1997.

Named by Wisconsin Outdoor Journal in 2000 as one of the state's 20 most influential conservation leaders of the 20th Century.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Materials used to prepare this biography were provided by Harold J. "Bud" Jordahl and are retained by the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.

An interview conducted for the Hall of Fame in June 2000 is cited several times in the report.

Also cited is a Historical Society of Wisconsin Audio Tape Log from a Nov. 14, 2000 interview with Jordahl.

The quote on the cover page of this biography is from a copy of "Natural Resources Report" retained by the Hall of Fame.

Quotes from Jordahl regarding Earth Day are from "Wisconsin Week" of April 18, 1990, a UW-Madison publication for faculty and staff.

Information on the conservation easement donated by Jordahl and his wife is from "Woodland Management," winter 2000-2001.

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