

Building a legacy, from the ground up

By Ron Seely

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The names of many famous Wisconsin landscapes — from Crex Meadows to the Apostle Islands — are little more than words to many people.

But to Harold "Bud" Jordahl, the names ring with emotion and memory. They conjure images of meadow and marsh and water and pleasant days afield. They are, in fact, among this Wisconsin conservationist's most treasured legacies.

Jordahl, 82, is one of a select number of conservationists in Wisconsin who can lay claim to helping shape Wisconsin's legacy of environmental protection over the last 50 years.

Though Jordahl is modest, many conservationists working in the state today will speak of him along with luminaries such as former Gov. Gaylord Nelson as being at the forefront for years of efforts to protect landscapes in Wisconsin and in the nation. It is telling that Nelson, with whom Jordahl worked on numerous projects over the years, served as the master of ceremonies at Jordahl's retirement dinner in 1989.

For Jordahl, who spent much of his professional life as an academic in the UW-Madison's department of urban and regional planning, the efforts to protect and preserve public lands remain among the most

meaningful and lasting moments of his career.

"I found that, I think, to be the most fun," Jordahl said. "I found that to be the most rewarding. Places like Crex Meadows, well, you could see your influence on the landscape. It's tangible, really meaningful."

Jordahl, though retired from his academic duties, still remains energetic and involved in environmental issues. Dressed in flannel shirt and tie, he seems one of the old guard when it comes to Wisconsin and its environmental heritage, a man equally at home in front of a campfire or testifying before a legislative committee.

The attachment to the outdoors that has so defined Jordahl's life can be traced to his childhood, growing up in northwestern Minnesota's Red River Valley area and spending hours afield fishing and hunting with his father, a schoolteacher.

That fascination with the natural world carried over to college. He earned a master's degree in forestry from the University of Michigan and a second master's degree from Harvard University in public administration.

Jordahl started his career in natural resource policy with the old Wisconsin Conservation Department and later served as deputy director of the Department of Resource Development. Later those agencies would be merged to become the Department of Natural Resources.

Profile: Harold 'Bud' Jordahl

◆ **Position:** UW-Madison emeritus professor of regional planning, department of urban and regional planning.

◆ **Family:** Three children; Jordy, 33; Kris, 45; and Kari, 43.

◆ **Education:** University of Michigan, bachelor's and master's degrees, forest and wildlife management, 1949-50. Harvard University, master's degree in public administration, 1955.

◆ **Hobbies:** Hunting, fishing, farm management.

◆ **My first job:** District game manager, Wisconsin Conservation Department, Viroqua.

From Wisconsin, Jordahl moved on to the national scene. He went to work for the U.S. Department of the Interior under Steward Udall, serving as regional coordinator for the Upper Mississippi-Western Great Lakes Area. He later served for two years under President Lyndon Johnson as alternate federal co-chairman of the Upper Great Lakes Regional Commission.

In 1967, Jordahl joined the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at UW-Madison, and in 1974 he became a regional planning specialist for UW Extension.

Through all of these years he retained his interest in Wisconsin's conservation issues; he served on the Wisconsin Natural Resources

board from 1971 to 1977, including a three-year stint as chairman.

Whether working at the U.S. Department of the Interior or hashing out issues as a member of the Natural Resources Board, Jordahl was always at his happiest when he was helping protect a piece of land.

In Wisconsin, he played a crucial role in helping set aside the 2.3-million acre county forest system. And working with the U.S. Department of the Interior, he was a major force in getting the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers named as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. He is particularly proud of his role in creating the Apostle Islands National Seashore.

Even in these years of retirement, Jordahl has played key roles in the formation of new and influential environmental groups, including 1000 Friends of Wisconsin and Gathering Waters Conservancy.

The environmental movement in Wisconsin, Jordahl said, is healthy and growing. He's seen it change, he said, from the days when it was mostly anglers and hunters pushing for preservation of natural resources to today when it's rare to run across anyone who doesn't consider himself an environmentalist.

"It's grown beyond just outdoor sport," Jordahl said. "It's become a social movement. It's incorporated into the fabric of the democratic system."

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"I really do feel proud of the tradition I've been a part of," says Harold "Bud" Jordahl. "Especially this state's conservation history. I have been a part of it, and I feel very good about carrying on that tradition."