



## Foundation plays monumental role in creating parks, open space and conservation lands in Idaho

*This is the first in a series of 12 articles about the 50-year history of the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands.*

By Steve Stuebner

**F**ifty years ago, in December 1972, the late Governor Cecil Andrus, D-Idaho, appointed a group of 10 prominent citizens to serve on the board of a new statewide foundation that would have the ability to receive donations of valuable lands that would become state parks, vital conservation properties and local parks and recreation areas.

The Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands played a pivotal role in receiving more than 50 gifts of property that would become some of the most valuable and prominent state parks and conservation areas in Idaho, including Harriman State Park in Island Park, Farragut State Park in Bayview, Veterans Memorial State Park in Boise, Barber Pool and Conservation Area, the Reinheimer Ranch in Ketchum, and many more.

“The Foundation played a vital role in helping the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation get on its



*Sunset at Harriman State Park (courtesy Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation)*

feet initially with the donation of the Harriman Railroad Ranch property and a number of other valuable properties that would become state parks or local parks,” notes Rick Just, Board President of the Friends of Idaho State Parks.

“A lot of people may not realize the role

that the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands played in securing a myriad of park properties across the state that everyone enjoys today.”

In 1972, there was an immediate need for the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands to receive a donation of 15,000 acres of land associated with the “Railroad Ranch” adjacent to the world-renowned Henrys Fork of the Snake River, a blue-ribbon rainbow trout fishery. The gift of this valuable property included a share of capital voting stock in the Island Park Land & Cattle Company, something the state could not hold.

In addition, the Foundation was officially registered as a 501(c)3 non-profit charitable organization, meaning that the value of land donations could be tax-deductible. That’s an important factor for donors.

The Idaho Legislature provided \$35,000 to the Foundation as some initial start-up seed money to hire an executive director to manage donated properties and the Foundation's daily work.

### **Harriman gift leads to creation of Idaho State Parks agency**

The Harriman Family, brothers Averell and Roland, and Roland's wife, Gladys, wanted to gift the Harriman State Park lands to the state of Idaho under the condition that the state create a professional state parks agency to properly manage lands like Harriman Park in perpetuity. Former Governor Robert E. Smylie, who had convinced the Idaho Legislature to create a new state parks department in 1965, was one of the original board members of the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands.

The Harrimans also wanted to gift "Harriman East" to the state - 1,000 acres of land across U.S. Highway 20 from the Railroad Ranch that provided vital access to the Henrys Fork by the Osborn bridge access point and boat ramp area. The Foundation held that property until it was conveyed



Hope Kading, left, getting her "Idaho" book signed by former Governor Cecil Andrus. (Courtesy Kading family)

to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation in 1994. Sharon Hubler, past president of the Foundation Board of Directors. "The Board was always truly proud of what they were able to do for the state regarding the Railroad Ranch and many other future parks properties."



Roland Harriman, left, and Governor Robert Smylie. (Courtesy IDPR)

Governor Smylie said this about creating the state parks system in his autobiography, *Governor Smylie Remembers*, "I count it as one of the great positive, long-term achievements of my twelve-year administration. The twenty-eight [at that time] parks and recreation areas, which the department of Parks and Recreation administers are not only a very successful attempt to preserve a part of what Idaho was for what Idaho will be, it also constitutes a tremendous commercial advantage to the tourist trade of the state and is an economic asset of great value."

Clearly, many prominent Idahoans understood the value of creating the Foundation to preserve potential future park lands and conservation properties.

### **Hope Kading serves as first Board President**

The Foundation was led by Boise civic leader Hope Kading, appointed as board president, and nine other well-known community leaders including Ernie Day of Boise, Art Manley of Coeur d'Alene, R.J. Bruning of Wallace, former Supreme Court justice Robert Huntley Jr., of Pocatello, and former Governor Robert E. Smylie, who had convinced the Idaho Legislature to create a new state parks department in 1965.



L-R, Tillie Arnold, Ernest Hemingway, Taylor “Bear Tracks” Williams, and Mary Hemingway. (Courtesy Taylor family collection).

in 1973, a 480-acre parcel on the Little Wood River, donated by Jack and Byra “Puck” Hemingway. The land and river-frontage featured some of Hemingway’s favorite places to fly fish for trout. He wanted to name the fishing preserve after John Taylor “Bear Tracks” Williams Jr., Ernest Hemingway’s favorite local hunting and fishing guide.

Like many properties gifted to Foundation, the fishing preserve was later conveyed to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation to be managed as a fishing and recreation area. IDPR worked out an arrangement with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to manage the property, while IDPR retained ownership.

The Bear Tracks Williams donation would allow IDPR to obtain \$195,000 in matching funds from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to begin crafting a master plan for Harriman State Park.

This scenario played out multiple times for other properties. “By being able to receive the donation of property and hold onto private lands for future parks or conservation projects, the Foundation could leverage those assets to acquire federal Land and Water Conservation Funds for future or existing projects,” Hubler said.

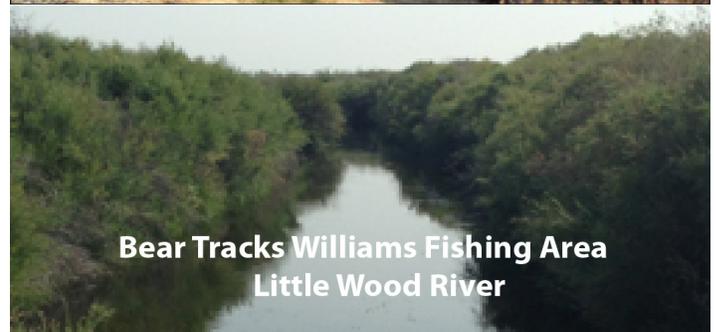
Hubler describes Kading as a colorful dynamic leader.

“She was indeed a force who was respected equally by Democrats and Republicans alike,” Hubler says. “She had flashing blue eyes, she had a lot of charisma, and she really knew how to crack the whip to get things done. She was pretty fearless, and we had a strong board to back her up.”

Kading had experience advocating for public school funding in Idaho, through local PTAs, and also at the state level, encouraging the state Legislature to allocate income from state Endowment Lands to public schools. Knowing how to advocate for school funding at a statewide level made it possible for Kading to learn about community and statewide needs for parks and conservation lands, Hubler said.

“Knowing about the value of Endowment Lands, it was natural for her to advocate for parks and conservation lands as well,” she said.

The first actual gift of land to the Foundation occurred





*The late Jack Hemingway was a skilled fly fisherman and ardent conservationist.  
(Courtesy Sporting Classics Daily)*

### Who was Taylor Bear Tracks Williams?

John Taylor “Bear Tracks” Williams hailed initially from Kentucky. He moved to Gooding, Idaho, in 1920. He started work as a hunting guide for the Sun Valley Company in the late 1930s. That’s where he met Ernest Hemingway, who stayed in a deluxe suite in Sun Valley for the first time 1939. The two apparently hit it off immediately.

In an article about Williams, writer Kris Thiltgen sets the scene:

“Bear Tracks “lived in a cabin near Dollar Mountain called “Boar’s Nest.” He was reported to be the inventor of the Renegade fly. His nickname did not come from hunting bears, but from the shape of his own footprints. According to friends, he was well-read, witty and easy going. Also said by friends to be a hard-drinking skirt-chaser (at this point he was a widower).

“Hemingway said of Taylor, “we call him Colonel because he is from Kentucky but everybody thinks he is a British colonel because he looks like one who has been in India too long and is also deaf.” In the July 1951 issue of “True” magazine, Hemingway wrote a piece entitled “The Shot.” In its leading paragraph, he said of Taylor Williams “can kill you dead with a borrowed rifle at 300 yards!”

The two spent lots of time fishing and hunting in the greater Sun Valley area. Local rancher Bud Purdy owned land on Silver Creek and invited Hemingway

and Williams to fly fish for trout in Silver Creek and hunt ducks by the stream.

Later, Jack Hemingway, who served as a member of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission, chaired a special committee to raise funds to help the Nature Conservancy purchase a 3-mile section on Silver Creek known as the “Silver Creek Preserve.”

Key properties acquired in the 1970s

The first eight years of the Foundation were extremely busy. Besides the Harriman and Bear Tracks Williams properties, five additional properties were donated to the Foundation for eventual long-term protection:

- Boise Cascade Corp. donated the 35-acre lake known as **Veterans Park Pond** to the Foundation in 1975. Located adjacent to the Boise River, Boise Cascade Lake as it was known at the time was improved to provide with wheelchair-accessible fishing docks for people with special needs. Hope Kading led the charge for that effort along with a citizens committee. The park eventually was originally conveyed by the Foundation to the IDPR as **Veterans Memorial State Park** in 1975. The park has been leased by the City of Boise to operate with the oversight of IDPR.
- **Reinheimer Ranch** – Eleanor Reinheimer gifted the 109-acre working ranch property to the Foundation in 1977. It has remained a working ranch and open space near the entrance to the City of Ketchum along Idaho State Highway 75. A small portion of the property crosses the Big Wood River to the River Run base area of Bald Mountain and a much larger eastern portion goes part of the way up Dollar Mountain in Sun Valley.
- **Barber Pool Wildlife Preserve** – Boise Cascade Corporation donated the 411-acre property to the Foundation in 1978. The Barber Pool area has major values for wildlife habitat, the most intact natural cottonwood riparian ecosystem on the Boise River, and it stores water for Barber Dam. That acquisition also assisted in providing land for the IDPR state headquarters in 1994. And the land acquisition also provided space for the Idaho Shakespeare Festival

current outdoor amphitheater.

- **Treaty Rock** – A 4-acre natural area with paved trails, native vegetation, unique rock formations, and picnic area. The site is commonly thought to be the site of a treaty between Frederick Post and the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, according to the City of Post Falls.

“Legend has it that Post chiseled his name and the date, June 1, 1871, and the Indians painted various figures on the rock outcrop ... it is not known if the petroglyphs and Indian pictographs at Treaty Rock represent this agreement or if Post’s name and the date were later added to figures already on the rock outcrop.”

- **Payette Lake frontage** – 560 feet of Payette Lake water frontage near the old site of the McCall sawmill was donated to the Foundation in 1978 by Browns Industries. The property was donated to the City of McCall two years later.

In June 1980, the Foundation hosted a special annual meeting and awards ceremony at Harriman State Park to honor former Idaho Gov. Robert Smylie and Jack Hemingway “in recognition of outstanding leadership in the preservation of Idaho’s scenic heritage, natural beauty and recreation resources,” quoted from a June 23, 1980 article in the Idaho Falls Post-Register.

Hope Kading presented the awards. She noted that the Foundation’s annual awards were named after Governor Smylie because of his “singular role in chartering Idaho’s state parks system.”

Smylie not only convinced the Idaho Legislature to create a state parks system, he also negotiated a land exchange that gave the former Navy base lands for Farragut State Park to the state of Idaho. He was the first board member appointed by Andrus to the Foundation.

Jack Hemingway’s contributions to the state as a strong conservation advocate were well-known. And he had



L-R: C.W. “Skip” Wright, an executive with the Associated Logging Contractors, Sharon Hubler, executive director, Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands, Cecil Andrus, Secretary of the Interior, circa 1977. (Courtesy Boise State Archives)

made an enduring gift to the Foundation with the Bear Tracks Williams property on the Little Wood River.

The Foundation had serious wings now in its eighth year of operations.

“Think about the value of those original properties donated to the Foundation and later conveyed to public entities for everyone to enjoy,” Hubler says. “You just don’t get the opportunity to acquire those kinds of immensely valuable lands every day. Those were monumental land deals, historically important land deals, and it took real foresight and lots of hard work by many people to make them a reality.”

*Next up in February:* History of the Harriman’s Railroad Ranch property in Island Park and how that property donation led to a series of events leading to the creation of the Idaho State Parks system and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.

*Steve Stuebner is a well-known conservation and outdoor writer.*

**Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands**

5657 Warm Springs Ave.

Boise, Idaho 83716

Phone: (208) 344-7141

Email: [jan@idaholands.org](mailto:jan@idaholands.org)