

Bud Lilly

1925–



Bud Lilly's been called "a trout's best friend" and the "Father of Fly Fishing." Suffice to say he's changed the world.

Bud has been a director, founding or charter member of multiple organizations whose goals are to promote clean water, streamside conservation, and the preservation of wild trout fishing.

Think Montana Trout Unlimited, Montana River Action, Montana Land Reliance, International Flyfishing Center, Montana Trout Foundation, Federation of Fly Fishers, and more.

And now – perhaps closest to his heart – at 91, the U.S. Navy World War Two veteran is the director of the Warriors and Quiet Waters Foundation, a project that brings disabled vets to Montana to introduce them to fly fishing and the therapeutic power of ever-flowing waters.

Montana State University's unique library collection – which has archived more than 11,000 books, photographs, papers and other works for public review, research and study – is named in Bud's honor: The Bud Lilly Trout and Salmonid Initiative. It's the world's largest collection of trout information.

After returning from the war, Bud began a math and science teaching career that took him to Roundup, Deer Lodge, and Bozeman. In 1952, with \$4,500 and his summers free, he opened Bud Lilly's Trout Shop in West Yellowstone.

From there, Bud started the first fly fishing schools west of the Mississippi and is widely credited for making fly fishing more appealing and accessible to women.

Also, based out of his landmark fly shop, Bud worked with Yellowstone National Park to adopt "sport fishing" philosophy after a survey indicated 400,000 trout were being tossed away every summer.

YNP soon allowed anglers to use only lures and flies, established three-fish creel limits and catch-and-release only areas. At Fishing Bridge, Bud urged a "viewing only" regulation for visitors to observe spawning Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

When Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks designated streams as "blue ribbon" in the 1960s, Bud helped develop a wild trout management policy that would take hold in the 1970s.

Since 1974 – following a then controversial and now celebrated research project on the Madison River conducted by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' Dick Vincent – managing for naturally reproducing wild trout populations has been a priority in Montana.

The awards and accolades literally rained upon the humble storyteller to include an honorary doctorate from Montana State University, induction to Federation of Fly Fishers Hall of Fame, the rare American Museum of Fly Fishing Heritage award for lifetime achievement, to name a few.

His latest project is on the Gallatin River near Logan at a new fishing access site. As long as Bud's around, the world of trout fishing is bound to just keep getting better.