

Gerry Jennings

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Gerry Jennings has the kind of energy that is unstoppable. She is an avid hiker, biker, and skier, as well as the recent vice president for the Montana Wilderness Association. She has been involved in conservation for most of her life and has been an active volunteer with Montana Wilderness Association since the early 1990s. Gerry is an irreplaceable member of the wilderness advocacy community and has proven her dedication by volunteering on campaigns and holding leadership positions for 12 years.

Gerry's interest in conservation piqued while living for a short time in Germany. She noted how cleaned and "combed" the European forests were of any vegetation or wildness. They seemed tame and manicured. At first, she saw it as anyone would: somewhat pretty. But she quickly realized how strange and unnatural it was to have a "clean" forest. She recognized the importance of keeping public lands thriving and sustainable and the necessity of wilderness to maintain the natural ecosystems and landscape.

Gerry said, "The outdoors will not be what we know them as unless they are preserved." She hopes to teach this to the younger generation because, as she said in a recent interview, "We want them to know the importance of preserving these lands."

Gerry joined the Montana Wilderness Association in 1992 and served as the president of the Island Range chapter shortly thereafter. She joined the state council in 1997 and was association president for four years. When she joined, there hadn't been any new wilderness

designations since 1983. She noted the importance of the association in campaigning for wilderness, but also encouraged additional work to improve relationships with congress and enhance the "boots on the ground" technique for wilderness designation.

Gerry worked with Montana Wilderness Association as changes were made to create a new culture of wilderness and public-land management. She said, "I have enjoyed my relationship with Montana Wilderness Association as much or more than anything else I've done. We are an organization that is not just singularly focused; we are everything that is outdoors and public lands."

Montana's wildlands and fellow conservationists clearly have a place in Gerry's heart. She spoke highly of the administration and the progression of the organization to stay current and become a leader in statewide conservation associations.

"We do have some real heroes in our organization, there's no doubt about it," Gerry said. And while she may have been speaking about others, it is apparent that Gerry herself is a true champion for wilderness.

"[My husband and I] will have the recreation, the wildlands, the skiing and biking for the rest of our lifetime. It will all be there for us. But I want the same activities, solitude, and protected lands to be available for our kids and grandkids, and the rest of their generation, as they get older." –Gerry Jennings
