

Ron Marcoux

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Ron Marcoux was born and grew up in Maine. After high school and military service, he enrolled at the University of Montana where he earned a bachelor's of science in wildlife technology in 1967. He then went on to Montana State University and received a master's of science in fish and wildlife management.

Upon graduation, Ron signed on with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks for an exciting 22-year career.

Starting as a fisheries biologist, he rose quickly to become the fisheries manager for an area that encompassed many of Montana's blue ribbon fisheries.

During his tenure as fisheries manager, his vision and leadership blossomed. In the mid-1970s, Ron and associated biologists embarked on a bold and controversial experiment to manage quality waters as wild trout fisheries.

The longstanding practice of planting hatchery-produced, catchable-size fish was to be abandoned. When proposed, Ron and associates were roundly criticized and, at times, threatened.

However, following a thoroughly professional scientific protocol, they forged ahead and within a few years demonstrated that wild trout management produced a robust and resilient fishery.

The innovative idea quickly became statewide policy, setting a new standard for fisheries management.

Ron also found himself in the crosshairs of controversy on the always contentious issue of stream access. In an attempt to intimidate department personnel, who were competently doing their job, a private

landowner on the Beaverhead River filed a complaint against Ron and associates under the state's code of ethics law. It could have cost Ron and a couple of colleagues their jobs. Ron and his associates were forced to hire an attorney to defend them against the attack. The district court summarily ruled in their favor.

In 1981, Ron became FWP's associate director and later its deputy director. During his 10-year term in those positions, he was actively involved in most of the critical resource issues that the department faced. Ron retired from the department in 1990 and in 1991 began an equally eventful 15-year career with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Ron came on board at the RMEF during its formative years and held a number of positions. He developed its land acquisition, conservation easement and land-donation programs and was involved in major elk-habitat acquisitions in Montana and other western states.

Perhaps his signal achievement in the protection of elk habitat was his role in negotiating the permanent protection of 7,850 acres of elk habitat in the Upper Yellowstone Basin adjacent to the park's north entrance.

It was a transaction once described as "the most significant wildlife conservation achievement in the vicinity of Yellowstone since the creation of the park itself."

In 2011, Ron's career took still another turn when he went to work as conservation director for the Prickly Pear Land Trust, launching its riparian-protection strategy.

Today, Montana's wild trout fishery, robust elk populations and progressive public access to those amenities are among the Treasure State's proudest assets.

The hand of Ron Marcoux has touched them all and made them better.