MONTANA OUTDOOR HALL OF FAME 2020 INDUCTEES | 9

n 1971, 10 students from the University of
Montana bought a school bus they called
home for the summer and embarked on a
three-week backpack trip in the Great Burn to
study its wilderness characteristics.
During that trip, Dale Harris fell in love with the open ridgelines, cedar creek bottoms, and abundant alpine lakes of the Great Burn.
He learned its history and how it was shaped by the cataclysmic wild!res that swept through the area in the Big Burn of 1910.
Over the decades, Dale ran the Great Burn Study Group out of his garage in Missoula, funding it with pro!ts from his computer business and then from a small nonpro!t he created.
In 1973, Dale’s “citizen brigade” issued a pioneering report on intact Great Burn values compared to mineral and timber development. He met with a local retired judge to draft lawsuits against timber sales that threatened the Great Burn and won every challenge. He helped to include the Great Burn in 18 different wilder-ness bills both in Montana and Idaho.
In 1988, one of those bills passed through Congress. President Reagan let it expire on his desk—a pocket veto. It was the most devastating day of Dale’s life.
Despite the setbacks, for Dale, there was never a question of stopping his !ght for the Great Burn. He met with forest supervisors,

district rangers, loggers, out!tters, miners, and county commissioners. He always listened to and respected others’ opinions, no matter how much they disagreed with him.
Nearly everyone who knows about the Great Burn knows of Dale Harris. He is more than just a steward or an advocate; he is a peacemaker, too. His strength is in building consensus.
Dale has always loved the wind on the ridgelines of the Great Burn, the way it connects lands that should be connected, the way it sees no boundaries nor divisions. High along the stateline in the Great Burn is a lake he named Lake Many Winds, where the wind soars unencumbered, passing between states, "ying fast over the 275,000 acres of forests, mountains, and rivers that make up the Great Burn.
Dale has always thought about how the Great Burn connects one generation of people to the next, timelessly pulling advocates to it—people who want nothing more than to see it left alone. He now passes on the vital work of achieving wilderness designation to the next generation. Recognitions include the MWA Founders’ Award; the Chevron Texaco Conservation Award; Cinnabar Foundation Len and Sandy Sargent (MOHF 2018) Award; the Eddie Bauer Hero of the Earth Award; the Montana Power Company Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Award; and the USDA Lincoln Award. ✮

I

2020 INDUCTEE

Dale Harris 1947-