

Remembering Bob Nelson



Bob Nelson had a long Forest Service career, retiring as the director of the Wildlife and Fisheries staff in the Washington Office.

It is with a heavy heart that we share the recent passing of a Forest Service trailblazer. Robert (Bob) Nelson was born on January 22, 1933, in Menlo, Washington. He grew up fishing, trapping and hunting.

Bob served in the U.S. Navy from 1950 to 1955. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in wildlife biology from Washington State University, leading him to a position as a forest biologist in 1960. He served in that position for three years before serving as assistant district ranger for the Umatilla National Forest from 1963 to 1966, and a district ranger at the Wenatchee National Forest from 1966 to 1967.

Bob moved to Portland, Oregon, where he worked for the Pacific Northwest Region as a range and wildlife specialist from 1967 to 1969, regional wildlife biologist from 1969 to 1970, and range administrative branch chief from 1970 to 1975. From 1975 to 1980, Bob was the Director of Wildlife and Fisheries for the Pacific Southwest Region. In 1985, he moved to D.C. to serve as director of the Wildlife and Fisheries staff in the Washington Office until his retirement in 1997.

One of Bob's most notable achievements was the Forest Service's Challenge Cost-Share program, which provides non-federal partners the opportunity to share in shaping, funding and implementing wildlife and fish habitat management on National Forest System lands. Bob was a champion for fish and wildlife partnerships that persist and expand even today, and which have enhanced and protected a significant amount of habitat.

Bob was honored with numerous awards by the Forest Service and external organizations, including the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' "Ernest Thompson Seton Award," and the Gulf Conservation Award in 1982. He was the first recipient of the Lloyd W. Swift Award in 2000, "for a lifetime of leadership commitment and dedication to the wildlife and fisheries resources of the United States." Bob also received the prestigious Aldo Leopold Award from The Wildlife Society in 1996.

He was widely known for his belief that "There is no limit to what can be accomplished if you don't worry about who gets the credit." He was an advocate, supporter and coach,

and his legacy continues to live on in the many Forest Service employees (current and retired) who benefited from his wisdom and mentorship. A giant among men, he will be greatly missed.

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