

## Ken (1908–2007) and Florence (1911–2007) Baldwin



**K**en and Florence Baldwin, perhaps more than any other couple in Montana's storied conservation history, were responsible for organizing hundreds to get involved in protecting Montana's wildlife and wildlands.

They were irrepressible catalysts of focused citizen advocacy for natural resource conservation – and they remained at the vanguard for decades to prod fellow conservationists to get and stay involved.



Avid hunters and outdoors people, Ken and Florence trekked regularly throughout Montana's wildlands. In the 1930s and 1950s, they noticed a troubling decline in the state's wildlife populations.

As Ken continued to hone a holistic approach to conservation, the couple's observations propelled Ken to join and later serve as president of fish and game groups like the Montana Wildlife Federation and the Gallatin Sportsmen's Association. In time, Ken realized "it was necessary that wildlands be set aside to leave the habitat for those animals."

In 1958, Ken sent letters to 100 Montana friends and colleagues. He aimed to seek support for a Congressional bill proposing a national system of Wilderness areas. Within two weeks, 21 people from across Montana met at Bozeman's Baxter Hotel where they established the Montana Wilderness Association

– America's first state wilderness group – with Ken as its first president.

Florence and Ken then organized Montana support for The Wilderness Act. Evidence of their effectiveness is found in the fact that Montana's U.S. Senators Murray, Metcalf, and Mansfield were original sponsors of the bill from its beginning in 1958. Passage of The Wilderness Act of 1964 established the first permanent legal protection of wilderness in the State of Montana, including the Bob Marshall, Cabinet Mountains, Gates of the Mountains, Anaconda-Pintler and Selway-Bitterroot wilderness areas. Places like the Chinese Wall, Welcome Creek, and Red Rock Lakes will never change thanks to the Wilderness Act – and because of the foresight of Ken and Florence to create an organization that advocates for such wild places. Still, what Ken and Florence most enjoyed was sharing their outdoor experiences with others.

Two years prior to the passage of The Wilderness Act of 1964 the couple set out with a group of 40 hikers along a trail to Table Mountain in the Spanish Peaks. Their intention was to build grassroots support for wilderness by taking people to a special place that needed protection.

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– Ken Baldwin

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