

2017 Wyoming Outdoor Hall of Fame Nomination Form

Nominee Information:

Name: **Gary B. Butler**

Mailing Address: **1457 Turquoise, Cheyenne, WY 82009**

Phone Number and Email: 307-214-7310 garybutler1908@gmail.com

Nominated By: **Dave Lockman and Steve Kilpatrick**

Mailing Address/Phone/E-mail: **Dave Lockman, 4709 New Bedford Dr., Cheyenne, WY 82009**

307-635-3865 wyodave@outlook.com

Steve Kilpatrick, Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation

P.O. Box 12, Moose, WY 83012

307-413-7249 skilpatrick@wyomingwildsheep.org

Who else may we contact with questions about this nominee?

Names: **Bob Budd, Director, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust and Scott Smith, Deputy Director, Wyoming Game and Fish Dept.**

Bill Gerhart, (retired Habitat Biologist), Wyoming Game and Fish Dept.

Addresses/Phone/E-mail : **Bob Budd, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust, Hathaway Bldg. 161 C, 2300 Capitol Ave., Cheyenne, WY 82002**

307-777-8024 bob.budd@wyo.gov

Scott Smith, Wyoming Game and Fish Dept., 5400 Bishop Blvd., Cheyenne, WY 82006

307-777-4600 scott.smith1@wyo.gov

Bill Gerhart, 4524 Ocean Ave., Cheyenne, WY 82001

307-638-4920 wyo-willyboy@hotmail.com

Who can we contact for photos of the inductee for the program video and press releases?

Names: **Steve Kilpatrick and Jo Butler**

Mailing address/Phone/E-mail: **Steve Kilpatrick (address and phone as nominator)**

Jo Butler (wife), 1457 Turquoise, Cheyenne, WY 82009

307-214-7310 jo_butler@millelect.com

Information on the Nominee:

Date of Birth: **November 24, 1945**

Brief Life History:

Gary was born and raised in Gillette, Wyoming. Gary's grandparents homesteaded in the Rocky Point area of northern Campbell County. His parents, Bert and Valentine, were also raised near Rocky Point and were sheep ranchers and freighters of supplies for neighbors in that area. He had three sisters. When Gary was born his mother and father moved to Gillette, where his father worked as a coal miner. Gary spent most of his childhood working on his brother-in-laws ranch. He was drafted into the Army in 1967, and served two tours of duty in Viet Nam as a military policeman. Upon returning home he attended Casper College and the University of Wyoming. He received a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Management and a Master's degree in Range Management. His Master's thesis was a "Range Survey of Laramie Peak Elk Winter Range".

He married, Jo, in August of 1971 and they raised two children, Scott and Toni, while employed with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Since their marriage they have also added two grandchildren to their family.

Gary began work as a temporary for the Wyoming Game and Fish as a check station attendant and fish warden, and started as a permanent employee in December, 1971. While in the field he conducted studies for the Department on alternatives to feeding elk hay at the National Elk Refuge, and two elk feed grounds near Jackson, Wyoming. He worked on big game winter range studies for the Research and Development Division out of Laramie, Dayton, Jackson, and Lovell before moving to Dubois and the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep Management Unit in December, of 1973. During the next 13 years he managed the Whiskey Mountain Unit and the East Fork Elk Winter Range Management Unit. While there he pioneered many new range survey and winter habitat improvement techniques for bighorn sheep and elk; as well as being instrumental in the trapping and translocation of bighorn sheep to re-occupy historical ranges in Wyoming and other western states. He also organized and initiated the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep Technical Committee which has remained active to this day.

In January, 1986 Gary and his family moved to Cheyenne where he served as the statewide supervisor for the Terrestrial Habitat Division until his retirement in January, 2012 after 40 years of service to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. While in that position he initiated and led a statewide cadre of biologists, implementing thousands of acres of habitat improvement and development projects throughout Wyoming. The habitat management program in Wyoming became a model for implementation by many western states.

Gary remains active with many wildlife organizations and their habitat management efforts throughout Wyoming. Many of these efforts have Gary's fingerprints all over them in their early days of initiation and development. Many biologists in Wyoming were mentored and taught by Gary and his team. His knowledge of Wyoming's ecosystems were in high demand and he shared unselfishly and freely of this expertise, affecting Wyoming's landscapes for many years to come. Gary is one of those individuals whose contributions and name must be remembered in the conservation history of Wyoming.

Since retirement, Gary and his family created the Butler Family Foundation and left legacies in the form of sizeable monetary trusts to the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, the Mule Deer Foundation, and the Wyoming Wildlife Foundation a component of the Wyoming Community Foundation. These trusts are being added to from other generous supporters of wildlife and will benefit many species of game and non-game wildlife and their habitats for years to come.

Gary is not known for "trumpeting" his accomplishments. He silently joins the teams huddle, takes the field and throws the unseen block that enables the winning touchdown. Truly a quiet giant.

His wife Jo, provided a more detailed biography (attached).

Most Notable Accomplishments

Significance of Gary Butler's Accomplishments on a Geographical Scale:

Gary has championed ecosystem and watershed management principles for maintaining, enhancing, and sustaining habitat for wildlife populations in Wyoming. This was exemplified at the habitat type and ecosystem levels of wildlife habitat management. He has had a positive effect on wildlife conservation at the local, regional, and national levels.

- His testimony before congress in the early 1990's was integral to the improvement of federal land management agency policies for the enhanced management of riparian systems in the United States.

- He collaborated with the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service in the development and publication of documents for agency and public use on the management of sagebrush systems in Wyoming for the benefit of wildlife.
- His habitat management and monitoring work; as well as his publications on the management of the Whiskey Basin Bighorn Sheep and their habitat have become an important component of Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep management in the western United States. His work in this area laid an important foundation of concepts and principles still being used in bighorn sheep habitat management today.
- Gary involved many stakeholders, including private and public landowners, in the planning and implementation of habitat improvements for wildlife. He expected those he supervised and his peers to collaborate and involve all of the affected interests in the many projects to improve and maintain wildlife habitat throughout the state.
- Gary has an exceptional gift for communicating with people. He is in fact a student of people. Because of that, he is revered by his peers, friends and former employees for his insight and philosophy relative to landscape and ecosystem functionality and management. Many a mindset and life was changed after hanging out with Gary, both on the professional and personal level. He is especially renowned for his mentoring of young employees to continue his legacy.
- Gary promoted team and consensus building. He realized that habitat management on a landscape level was not easy, especially from a jurisdiction and bureaucracy perspective. Thus, he led by example on how to collaborate, gaining multiple viewpoints and perspectives, and do it efficiently and effectively. It started with his initiation of the Whiskey Basin Bighorn Sheep Working Group and evolved into the formation of a plethora of “teams” addressing habitat needs and opportunities across the state.

Specific Accomplishments in the Areas of Applied Resource Management, Policy Formation, and Public Leadership:

- Between the time he left the field in 1986 and his retirement in 2012 Gary led in the initiation and evolution of a habitat management component to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. In collaboration with the Services Division Chief and the Department’s leadership staff a Habitat Section became a part of the Department’s Habitat and Technical Services Division. Gary supervised the Habitat Section and mentored and trained a team of terrestrial and aquatic habitat biologists to plan, design, and implement high priority habitat improvement and protection projects throughout the state. This new habitat management approach became a model for state wildlife agency cooperation and involvement in private and public lands habitat management.
- He initiated collaboration with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts to acquire and cooperatively fund habitat extension biologists for two regions in the state.
- He led the WGFD in the development of a habitat improvement funding program with many partners and cooperative funding sources. Through his leadership and partnership building, the WGFD was enabled to plan and implement many habitat enhancement projects with outside funding from other agencies and organizations including but not limited to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, Wyoming Governor’s Big Game License Coalition, and the list goes on. These funding collaboratives continue today.
- He pioneered the use of many techniques for the improvement of wildlife habitat in Wyoming; including the use of range-pitting to improve bighorn sheep winter range, prescribed fire for improving plant diversity and productivity for wildlife, reseeding meadows and rangelands, the proper use of herbicides to eradicate undesirable vegetation and noxious weeds, development and protection of wildlife water sources in arid areas, etc.

- One of his most unique and outstanding accomplishments occurred while he was working on the Whiskey Basin Bighorn Sheep Management Area where Gary initiated and implemented a working group of wildlife biologists and land managers (G&F, BLM and USFS) in the 1970's to cooperatively manage bighorn sheep numbers and habitat (this group was called the "Whiskey Basin Bighorn Sheep Working Group"). This group is still active today and its work has become a model for cooperative bighorn sheep management and the concept has also been used for management of other species of big game. The team utilized annual trapping and transplanting to re-occupy historical bighorn sheep range in Wyoming and other western states. Over a period of three decades the Whiskey Basin herd became the foundation stock for the re-occupation of many former bighorn sheep habitats in the western states. The numbers trapped, annually, were based on vegetation surveys designed by Gary and conducted by the Interagency Management team. The vegetation surveys gave the team estimates of the "winter forage carrying capacity" of the herd on an annual basis, and these data were then used on an annual basis to determine the numbers of sheep that were removed from the population and used for transplanting to new areas. The vegetation survey data were also used as a basis for habitat improvement practices to be used to increase the herd's carrying capacity. NOTE: the Whiskey Basin Bighorn Sheep population is the largest single Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep population in North America.
- Gary has become widely known and respected by private landowners in many parts of Wyoming for the assistance and knowledge he has provided them and associated agricultural organizations in the resolution of wildlife habitat issues, as well as ways they can manage and improve wildlife habitat in an agricultural landscape. His team has assisted many landowners in the improvement of habitats on their operations for both livestock and wildlife.
- He is also widely known in the Wyoming land management agencies as a problem solver and leader in the arena of habitat and land management.
- He and his team have collaborated with land management agencies and private landowners in the planning and development of hundreds of habitat projects during his tenure as leader of the Department's Habitat Section.

Specific Accomplishments in the Areas of Conservation Education and Literature:

- Through his leadership example and expectations he and his personnel also participated in youth education efforts, and assisted at Department facilitated youth camps, teacher camps, and at the annual Hunting and Fishing Heritage Expo.
- He led his team of personnel in the writing, production, and distribution of a series of habitat extension publications for the layman and resource managers on specific wildlife habitats and methods for protection and improvement.
- He made numerous presentations and lead many field tours on wildlife habitat improvement methods and projects to landowners, agricultural organizations, and professional organizations (i.e. the Wildlife Society, the Range Society, and the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts).
- Gary has authored and co-authored numerous conservation and management articles and publications for the WGFD; including Federal Aid reports, range and habitat survey reports, "Sagebrush Management with Emphasis on Fire", "the Bighorn Sheep of Whiskey Mountain", and a number of Habitat Extension Brochures.

Awards and Commendations:

- Recognition at the Department and Division level for his leadership.
- Dubois-Crowheart Conservation Districts "Conservationist of the Year"
- He has received recognition and awards from the Wyoming Wildlife Society, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Society for Range Management, the Wyoming Wildlife Federation, Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, and the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts.

As an Outdoorsman:

- Gary has participated over three decades on many bighorn sheep and elk hunts, as well as many summer pack trips. He has explored and hunted in every mountain range in Wyoming, and takes pride in his knowledge of Wyoming's wild places. He only hunted and harvested a Wyoming mountain sheep once, but has taken over 30 friends on sheep hunts just to learn new country and more about wild bighorn sheep. He is known as an expert mountain horseman, packer, and outdoorsman.
- One summer not too many years ago he took a pack trip across Wyoming, following the Continental Divide.
- Gary organizes and participates in pack trips annually for his family and friends. The backcountry is truly his preferred home.

As a Philanthropist:

Gary is a well known outdoorsman and conservation champion in Wyoming. His passion and unselfish devotion to Wyoming's wildlife, wild places, and natural resources is unparalleled in our current memory and should become an important part of our historical memory.

Since retirement Gary and the Butler family have left legacies in the form of sizeable monetary trusts to the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, and the Wyoming Wildlife Foundation (a component of the Wyoming Community Foundation). These trusts are being added-to from other generous supporters of wildlife and will benefit many species of game and non-game wildlife and their habitats for years to come.

The Following Pages are Letters of Support Attesting to Gary's many Outdoor and Conservation Accomplishments