

**Concluding Statement from Stewart Brandborg's Keynote Address
To the Go Wild Flathead's Wilderness 50 Celebration
Flathead County Fairgrounds, Kalispell, Montana
September 20, 2014**

(Transcribed by Keith Hammer from the video at http://youtu.be/O_s6ApF1PWg)

(27:48 - 33:09) --- We don't have the national organizations that we had. The Wilderness Society, which I worked for following a long line of old dedicated seniors, men and women, has faded. The State groups have faded. We don't have a strong, dedicated firing-up of people all over the country from the national level. We don't have that within our federal wilderness agencies. So it's up to us, it's up to you, to bring that home.

We have a Congressional delegation, and the candidates, most of 'em don't know the word, much less any idea of fulfilling with the wild unprotected country that we need to have placed in the Wilderness System.

So the task is before us and I don't know any prescription beyond the one I've made reference to: going to local groups, building teams, having a State group - bringing back a State group - that will fight for wilderness.

There's this idea you know, we'll sort of get along with Congress, we'll find common ground. The boys and girls that are making use of the public lands for purposes of making money, they're not going to change. They're going to continue to want to extract everything they get from the land that belongs to the people. It's for us to give the hard backbone to the agencies, to tell the Congress we've got to have strong wilderness agencies and we want leadership.

So what would I tell you to do? Get ahold of those birds that are running for Congress. Ask 'em what's in their heart. Have them come to your meeting in your living room or at a restaurant, but meet with them. Say "what's in your heart. Are you going to fight for wilderness? Do you know what the legacy of wilderness is in the country? Do you know how important it is to every person that knows it?"

And if they are negative, give them the college sports - you know: BS, we know what that is; MS, more of the same; and PhD, piled higher and deeper. Let 'em have it! Talk turkey to your members of Congress and get your good people in the agencies in. There are many whose hearts are great. They got into work for the public because they love the public trust. Fire them up!

That's the task and then of course be good to the people that will come into your living room, come into the circle of a group. Don't worry about whether they are birders or alpinists or sportsmen. You know we have a grand conglomeration of folks that will

come to a party if you have a cause that is bigger than ourselves. This cause is bigger than we individually and it's a great cause for the American people.

You all have served it. You all will continue to serve it. But don't let Montana languish, as it now seems to. The Wilderness Association as we've known it is dimming out. We need to give it the strength and the conviction to fight. The people that don't want wilderness have decided they will infiltrate our old-line groups and they've had fun doing it.

But some people say "let's get along." You don't just get along. You act with confidence, knowing what you are talking to, building on the people of substance within the agency, within your own circle, and you fight hard!

Well, that's my mission in life. I'm terribly concerned about the waning of advocacy in the environmental movement and most social change movements today. It's up to us to make our democracy work for the people and for these resources we value.

So I appreciate so much your giving your time, your energies to this cause. There's nothing like this circle. As big and wonderful as it is, I leave you with the charge: let's get organized, let's do it. And I thank you for the privilege of being here today.