

LEN & SANDY SARGENT STEWARDSHIP RECIPIENT

2003

Dale Harris

The fifth Len and Sandy Sargent Stewardship Award honored Dale Harris for his lifetime dedication to the Great Burn roadless area and his active role in preserving serving it as founder and leader of the Great Burn Study Group.

More than 30 years ago, Dale's soul was captured by a vast area burned over by the fires of 1910 — 275,000 acres of wild land that straddles the Montana-Idaho border — and he began advocating for its permanent recognition and protection. Despite formal designation as "proposed wilderness" by government managers and inclusion in every appropriate wilderness bill before Congress since 1973, the Great Burn has been continually threatened by mechanized vehicle use and commodity exploitation. Dale and a handful of dedicated volunteers continue to keep these lawbreakers at bay by active, year-round vigilance and consistent advocacy.



Because of his efforts, the giant cedars of the Great Burn still age gracefully. Blackened snags, which inspired the area's name and once presided as live trees over the seasonal passage of buffalo hunters, today bear silent witness to a mosaic of rich habitat sheltering and nourishing elk, deer, moose, mountain goats, mountain lions, and wolves. Bull trout and cutthroat find sanctuary in the icy waters of pristine streams that cascade from their headwaters among the Great Burn's craggy mountain peaks.

Through the years, Dale ensured that the wild character of the Great Burn was not compromised so that wilderness classification eventually may be realized.

Dale's recognition for outstanding environmental achievement included a \$5,000 Special Award grant to the Great Burn Study Group.