

JIM POSEWITZ PROFESSIONAL CONSERVATIONIST AWARD

2019

ROCK RINGLING

The fourth *Jim Posewitz Professional Conservationist Award* was presented to Rock Ringling for his work in the nonprofit land trust sector through Montana Land Reliance.

In making the presentation, Gordon “Corky” Brittan, Cinnabar Board President, said: “As so often in the past, you are breaking new ground. Through the preservation of private land and agricultural open space that sustains the people ranching and farming it, the animal and avian populations it supports, and the countless people who both treasure it and take it for granted.”



Rock Ringling holding his award
with Gordon “Corky” Brittan

Raised in a ranch family, Rock never took either the agricultural way of life or its conservative and conservationist character for granted. He patiently worked with families for a generation or more to conclude deals, drawing on his on-the-ground experience and straightforward honesty to inspire trust among those who were initially wary of the whole easement idea.

He did not succeed at once, or by himself. Timing was everything. When Rock and his MLR colleague Bill Long hit on the idea of re-thinking tax benefits associated with conservation easements, a broad coalition of like-minded land managers were looking for a way to keep traditional forms of land ownership and use alive, in perpetuity. Rock knew those who work the land don’t typically make enough money in a single year to get much benefit from the charitable donation of a conservation easement. He also knew the key was to carry over the tax-savings for

as many as 15 years, making the donation of conservation easements a significant option for those who want their land to remain open and undeveloped. Rock lobbied for this change and won.

Rock Ringling's recognition for this transformative achievement — that helped preserve more than one million acres of private land in Montana alone, and all in the larger interest of a public good — was accompanied by a special grant of \$5,000 from the Cinnabar Foundation, which he recommended be awarded to Montana Land Reliance.