

CINNABAR FOUNDATION

TAWNEY NICHOLS HANDS OVER REINS TO BRITTAN

After 22 years of service as the Cinnabar Foundation's chair, Robin Tawney Nichols handed over the reins of the Foundation to Gordon "Corky" Brittan during the spring meeting of the board of directors. Robin began her long tenure upon the death of Len Sargent, just two years after she assumed the seat held by her late husband Phil Tawney. Commenting on her tenure as chair, Robin said, "I had no idea then that I would continue in this position for more than



Gordon "Corky" Brittan

two decades. Time does pass quickly. I am proud of Cinnabar's evolution and the direction it is moving, and have every confidence in its future under Corky's guidance."

Last December, Robin, Phil, and Len and Sandy Sargent were inducted into the Montana Outdoor Hall of Fame.

Corky Brittan assumes leadership of the Foundation having served as its vice chair since 2012. Like his predecessor, Corky and his wife Vanessa, had known Cinnabar's founders, Len and Sandy Sargent, for decades. Born in Chicago, Corky first fell in love with Montana where he vacationed often with his parents on the ranch they had purchased with friends near Livingston. Having earned an undergraduate degree from Amherst College and a Ph.D. in Philosophy

from Stanford University, Corky found a way to return to Montana and permanently settle his family on their own ranch in the same area.

Both a rancher and a retired philosophy professor who taught at Montana State University for 35 years, he brings to the Cinnabar Foundation a pragmatic, introspective and long-view approach to philanthropy and conservation stewardship. While at MSU, Corky helped create the *Burton K. Wheeler Center*, which hosts major statewide conferences on Montana's most pressing issues, and the *Wallace Stegner Professorship in Western American Studies*. "The Stegner chair was meant to focus attention on the historical, philosophical and literary dimensions of the land-use problems faced by the West," he said. Corky said Stegner, who died in 1992, told him that the biggest land-use issues are ahead of us, not behind us. "For much of the history of the West, the shots have been called by distant interests. I want Montanans to provide our own answers to Montana questions. I want our young people to be the leaders of change in

the West.” Corky sees the Cinnabar Foundation as moving in that same trajectory — supporting young Montana conservation leaders who are addressing the most pressing environmental and land-use issues facing the state.

“The beauty and strength of the Cinnabar Foundation,” according to executive director Gary Wolfe, “is the board of director’s rock-solid commitment to the Foundation’s vision and its nimble ability to adjust course as appropriate. Corky brings a wealth of experience and a sharp and strategic mind to his new position, and the board and I are eager to work with him to advance Cinnabar’s mission.”

The Cinnabar Foundation, established in 1983, by philanthropists Len and Sandy Sargent, annually awards grants to environmental and conservation organizations operating in Montana and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. At the board’s most recent meeting, the Foundation’s trustees reviewed applications from 93 nonprofit organizations and selected 68 to receive grants. Grants awarded ranged from \$1,000 to \$15,000, and totaled \$401,500.

Since its creation, the Foundation has awarded more than 2,000 grants exceeding \$8.7 million dollars in total funding.

26 June 2019