

## **Jim Posewitz steps down as first executive director of the Cinnabar Foundation**

The man at the front of the room wore a focused intensity with a twinkle in his eye. A newcomer to Montana conservation, I was struck with his easy confidence and the respect he commanded. It was 1991, and this was my first encounter with Jim Posewitz. The meeting concerned a proposed mountain-removal coal mine in the Canadian headwaters of the Flathead River, and Jim was sparking a grassroots effort to create a better solution.

Fast forward 19 years, and I'm about to step into the shoes of a giant. Jim is retiring from his founding role as executive director of the Cinnabar Foundation. The extraordinary breadth of Jim Posewitz — advocate, biologist, ethicist, historian, visionary, motivator — is embedded in countless stories across Montana. I am humbled by the opportunity to carry on the Posewitz tradition at the Cinnabar Foundation.

Jim recently penned a newspaper column about another coal mine, this one in Otter Creek of southeastern Montana. He lauded the wisdom of Land Board member Denise Juneau, who opposed the sale of coal leases on behalf of future generations. Juneau only had one vote, he wrote, “but it keeps hope alive.”

Jim Posewitz and our team at the Cinnabar Foundation are all about hope, sprinkled with equal measures of stick-to-itiveness, creativity, and the plain-spoken truth. Those are consistent qualities we observe and celebrate in our grantees.

In 1987, as the lead U.S. representative in talks with Canada, Jim laid forth a novel idea to create a bi-national conservation reserve in the North Fork of the Flathead. That vision inspired citizen activists for more than two decades. In February 2010, Montana and British Columbia finally grabbed the ring, forever banning mining and drilling and pledging to jointly address the impacts of climate change.

How did it happen? Persistence by hundreds of citizens in both countries. Friendships built around campfire stories. Community leaders stepping up as conservation champions. International pressure, and the vision of Jim Posewitz and his associates. Perhaps most compelling, the land itself finally was heard.

Fortunately, Jim Posewitz is not leaving the Cinnabar Foundation. He continues as Vice Chair of the Board of Directors, while handing off day-to-day duties. The Cinnabar Foundation will continue to be an activist philanthropy, steadfast to the call of the land and devoted to the people who protect it.

— Steve Thompson  
May 2009