



John Ifft: “Mr. BLM” 1934 - 2014

The Table Rock trails, as well as many others in the Rogue Valley, are the result of one man’s unending enthusiasm for developing trails and educating the public about the area’s natural resources. If it weren’t for John Ifft’s foresight and persistence, you wouldn’t be hiking today’s trails on the Table Rocks, Grizzly Peak, or along the Sterling Mine Ditch.

Starting his career as a forester, John Arthur Ifft later worked as an engineer, safety officer, and public affairs officer, before retiring in 1989 as an assistant Area Manager. Though John wore many hats over his 28 year career with the Medford District BLM, his favorite part was building trails and connecting with the public.

In the 1970s and 1980s, John recognized the importance of developing trails in the Rogue Valley. He was dedicated to the vision of providing public access and protection to these areas. He coordinated with landowners and government agencies to gain easements and make land exchanges, he laid out the trails, and he supervised and coordinated work crews and volunteers of all ages and walks of life, including Boy Scouts, Youth Conservation Corps, Sierra Club members, and Oregon Department of Forestry, to construct the trails. He was a visionary who saw the public need for local trails early on, and was a steady force in bringing that vision forward.

John was also very passionate about environmental education and engaging young people in forest stewardship. Even after retiring John worked for years with local schools and civic groups to connect children with the out of doors, and was known as “Mr. BLM” by school children. “I love kids and education,” he said. “I find there are a lot of benefits from relating to kids.” A natural teacher, John took pride in instilling good stewardship principles and educating youth about the forests around them. “I’m a believer in environmental education,” he said. “The more people learn about the environment the easier it is to manage the land.” When asked what he received from all the volunteer hours, he simply said, “Inner satisfaction.”

His enthusiasm for the outdoors and BLM’s growing stewardship role made John a sought-after speaker on a variety of natural resource topics for many local groups and organizations. In 1988, the Rogue Valley Federal Executive Association awarded him the Federal Employee of the Year for his outstanding community service.

The Table Rocks trails are dedicated to John Ifft, who passed away in 2014 just short of his 80th birthday. As you hike to the top of Upper and Lower Table Rock, enjoy the scenery and views and thank the farsightedness and dedication of John Ifft.