



Janet McLennan

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During her distinguished career in public service, Janet McLennan has had an unusual reach influencing everything from social issues like the death penalty, to natural resource topics including state forest policy, stream protection and land use planning. Along the way she has been a mother and wife, a legislative committee administrator, backpacker, campaign chief, Chair of the Board of Forestry, political organizer, Master Gardener, legal counsel, negotiator, fundraiser, magazine editor, world traveler, political candidate, trusted advisor and more.

Janet has worked on every notable Pacific Northwest natural resource topic of the last half of the 20th Century, and into the new millennium. As an advocate for open beaches during the 1960s, Janet was a key player in preventing highway construction on Nestucca Spit, and preserving public use of Oregon's coastal beaches. While Executive Director of the 1973-74 Legislative Interim Committee on Natural Resources, Janet helped write the first language describing the importance of maintaining forestlands as forestlands—also known as Goal 4. As Natural Resource Advisor to Governor Bob Straub in the mid 1970s, Janet was involved in virtually every natural resource decision during the Straub Administration, from timber supply, wilderness designation and scenic rivers management to

energy supply, Columbia River salmon, and drought response.

As board member and then president of 1000 Friends of Oregon in the 1980s, Janet provided leadership and expertise to this watchdog organization during the period that Oregon's new land use planning system was being defined and implemented by local government.

As Assistant Power Manager for Natural Resources at the Bonneville Power Administration in the late 1980s, Janet directed BPA's fish and wildlife division, negotiated power and transmission contracts, oversaw complex environmental analyses, and helped illuminate the economic connection between stream flow and fish migration.

As Chair of the Oregon Board of Forestry in the 1990s, Janet expanded the reach of the Forestry Program for Oregon beyond timber supply to include all the resources of Oregon's forests. She was also a strong proponent of forest policy that promotes sustainable and active management of State Forests.

As Chair of the Tillamook Forest Heritage Trust in the early 2000s, Janet helped catalyze public and private partnerships of support that led to the construction of the Tillamook Forest Center and development of educational opportunities to help Oregonians better understand forests.

Throughout this journey of natural resource leadership, Janet has maintained her high level of integrity and become known as a strategic thinker. She's formed lasting working friendships wherever she's gone, and gained the respect of peers and opponents alike. She's also become absolutely passionate about forests, which might seem a bit unusual for a city kid who grew up in downtown Tacoma.

Born Janet Watts on December 2, 1926, Janet grew up as an only child in a downtown Tacoma apartment.

Her father, Edward Stiars Watts, was a CPA who studied at Columbia University while working in New York before moving to the Northwest, where his practice included local lumber companies.

Frances Halverson Watts, Janet's mother, came West to work as a secretary for George Long, an executive at Weyerhaeuser, having worked a decade for Frederick Somers Bell, a leading lumberman at the Laird Norton Co. in Winona, Minnesota.

While she has a distinct childhood memory of watching fire burn the forested hillsides across Commencement Bay, and the gigantic, old Douglas-fir trees lining the region's roads, Janet didn't make a personal connection with forests until her teens, when she and her friends hiked in the forests around Mt. Rainier.

In 1944, Janet fledged Tacoma and went off for a year to Oberlin College before transferring to the University of Oregon. After graduation in 1948—with honors in English—Janet traveled back east to Cambridge, Mass. where she was one of the early participants in the prestigious Radcliffe Course in Publishing Procedures.

Following the course, Janet took a full-time job in New York City working as an assistant college editor at Mademoiselle Magazine. "The whole experience of being in New York and working for the magazine was remarkable for me," she recalls. Janet and four other young women rented an apartment on the Upper West Side and enjoyed New York City in the late 1940s. Her pay: \$35 per week.

But the tug of the Northwest—and wanting to be with her Oregon beau Bill McLennan, by then a CPA—brought Janet home. She and Bill were married in

Tacoma in November 1949. After a short stint in Coos Bay, the couple moved to Washington D.C. where Bill had been accepted into George Washington University Law School. Janet went to work for the Library of Congress. A peak memory during this time was attending the McCarthy hearings. Her life-long interest in politics was born.

When Bill finished law school and passed the bar, the couple was on the move again, this time to East Orange, New Jersey, where Bill took a job as controller for US Tool Co. Janet's experience in D.C., and her growing interest in law, led her to apply and be accepted at Rutgers University Law School in nearby Newark. But other priorities arose: Pregnant with their first child, Janet put law school plans on hold, giving birth to son Andrew in March 1954.

Soon after, the young family left the New York area for Bill's native Portland. Bill passed the Oregon State Bar and went to work for a Portland law firm. Janet became active in civic life and in the Democratic Party, serving as precinct committee woman and division leader. And she continued to raise her young family. Daughter Martha was born in September 1955 and Sarah in March 1958.

The 1960s were a time of growing political involvement for Janet. Two unsuccessful runs for the Oregon Legislature; successful leadership of a campaign to abolish the death penalty in Oregon; involvement in legislative redistricting and issues relating to racial and gender equality; service as senior aide to State Senator Don Willner. All of these efforts helped Janet hone her political skills and intellect.

But perhaps one of the most important developments during the 1960s was Janet's involvement in natural resource issues. In 1965, she served as executive director of the Committee to Save the Beaches, a campaign to prevent a planned relocation of Highway 101 onto Nestucca Spit. This topic galvanized public interest and thrust State Treasurer Bob Straub into the spotlight as a crusader for Oregon's environment.

In 1968, Janet and the Committee to Save the Beaches—with Bob Straub leading the charge—advanced an initiative to use \$30 million in gas tax revenue to secure public access to all Oregon beaches. Though that effort failed, she continued to collaborate with Bob Straub and in 1970 served as coordinator of his second campaign for Governor. Straub lost that election to popular incumbent Tom McCall, but Janet had become an indispensable

member of the Straub team. It was clear Straub would be an even greater political force to be reckoned with during the 1970s.

Janet's long interest in law had not waned, and in the fall of 1968—fully involved with the beach campaign—she started law school at Willamette University, transferring to the Northwestern School of Law at Lewis and Clark in 1969, and graduating in 1972. Graduation was a landmark in many ways for the whole family. In a period of a few months, Janet graduated and passed the bar, Bill was elected as Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge, Andrew graduated from high school and Sarah graduated from middle school. A new era was definitely underway.

After an assignment as Deputy State Treasurer for Bob Straub in 1972, Janet took a post first as staff counsel to the House Environment Committee in the Oregon Legislature, and then Staff Director and Counsel of the Joint Interim Committee on Natural Resources. Following Straub's landslide gubernatorial election in 1974, Janet went to work as his Natural Resources Assistant throughout his four-year term, where she was immersed in land use planning, forest practices and the Willamette Greenway, among many other issues.

Serving as gubernatorial advisor may seem like a career-topping job, but following her service in the Straub Administration, Janet went to work at the Bonneville Power Administration, serving in several high-level legal and policy posts before retiring in 1988. During this period she also served on the Oregon State University Forest Research Lab advisory committee and several years as an adjunct professor at the Northwestern School of Law at Lewis and Clark.

“Retirement” is a term to use loosely when describing Janet in the late 1980s and 90s. She was named to the newly reconstituted Board of Forestry in 1987 and then to Chair of the Board of Forestry from 1990-1995—by three different Oregon Governors in all—where she provided critical leadership, legal insight and analysis on key issues like endangered species protection, development of new stream rules, and policy direction for State Forests. As chair, Janet also advocated for forest education, and outreach to urban Oregonians.

Janet's long-time interest in the Tillamook State Forest and in the importance of public education about forests drew her into a leadership role with the non-profit Tillamook Forest Heritage Trust in the late 1990s. She chaired that organization for a decade, culminating in opening and operation of the Tillamook Forest Center in 2006.

Today, as she reflects on the past and on the future, Janet sees forests both as a thread woven through her own life, and as a special promise for Oregon that must be protected, respected and utilized.

“I want to see Oregon's forestland kept as forestland for generations,” she says about the greatest challenge facing the future of Oregon's forests.

And then, in pragmatic Janet McLennan fashion based on a career in natural resource policy and in politics, she dispenses this friendly advice: “The answer has to be creative policy that keeps our forests as healthy sustainable forests, but that also makes the economics work.”

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