

Jim Rogers

Jim Rogers, a widely-respected forester, conservationist, and beloved community member, died on August 18, 2023 owing to complications related to Parkinson's disease.

Jim was born on Feb. 23 1942 in Niagara Falls, New York. He studied forestry at Paul Smith College and Syracuse University. After graduating in 1964, he moved to the Pacific Northwest to begin his career as a professional forester. After working for Weyerhaeuser and the U.S. Forest Service, he took the job as timber manager for Western States Plywood—the cooperative mill that employed many Port Orford residents at the time. After the mill closed in 1976, Jim went on to work as a private forestry consultant.

Jim also became a renowned conservationist, dedicating his life to protection of the Elk River and its old growth forests. He'd seen how clearcut logging on steep slopes had the potential to ruin the river and so spearheaded the effort to designate the Grassy Knob Wilderness in 1984. In the face of mounting logging threats, Jim learned to survey for endangered spotted owls and marbled murrelets—seeking to find and protect their nest spots. To protect salmon spawning habitat, he led efforts to protect the Copper Salmon Wilderness in 2009 and to designate the Elk River (1988) and its tributaries (2019) as “Wild and Scenic.” All in all, Jim's advocacy resulted in the conservation of more than 30,000 acres of wilderness—the largest concentration on Oregon's coast.

Through Oregon's controversial “timber wars” of the 1980s and 90s, Jim brought a unique and important perspective to bear. After working years within the industry, Jim had knowledge and insights that gave him credibility in his call for more responsible timber harvest and also for protection of remaining old-growth forests. Also, in his efforts to conserve Elk River, Jim reached out to many different groups and inspired many people to help, becoming widely-respected for his ability to pull disparate people together to support conservation, and ultimately garnering the support of our U.S. Congressmen and Senators to champion the bills needed to protect the Elk River.

Jim was fiercely independent and relished questioning arbitrary authority. When the local sheriff cracked down on “long hairs” during the early 1970s, Jim started to wear his own hair long and encouraged others at the plywood mill to do the same. He was never afraid to stand up to injustice.

Despite his independent streak, Jim was also very community oriented, serving on numerous committees, including the Curry County Planning Commission, which he chaired for many years, and the Siskiyou National Forest Resource Advisory Committee. Jim helped start two Curry County conservation groups: Kalmiopsis Audubon Society and Friends of Elk River. He was an avid hunter and birder. He loved to study plants, trees, and local history, and was a wonderful story teller with a wry sense of humor, often delivering an unexpected punch line with a sparkle in his eye. Jim was the author of a book of essays about local wildlife: *Curry County Mammals I Have Known*, and his Elk River conservation efforts were featured in an Oregon Field Guide episode.

Jim and his wife Carrie lived for more than 40 years in a rustic cabin up Elk River, growing and putting up much of their own food and living a self-sufficient lifestyle. In recent years, they moved into Port Orford.

Jim leaves behind his wife Carrie Rogers of Port Orford; his children: Diane Rogers, Dennis Rogers, and Ian Osborne; 5 grandchildren: Steve and Allison Rogers, Chloe, Cailin and Olivia Osborne; brother Dave Rogers; and many cherished friends. He also leaves us all an incredible legacy of conservation –an Elk River with old-growth forests, clear, beautiful waters, salmon—and inspiration to continue his work.