

Mollie Beattie was a pioneering leader in conservation, whose dedication to protecting the environment left a lasting impact on Vermont and the nation. As the first woman to lead both the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, she broke barriers and set a powerful example for future generations of environmental leaders.

Beattie's conservation philosophy emphasized "land and wildlife management in ecosystem terms." By focusing on ecosystems rather than individual species, she championed biodiversity and underscored the interconnectedness of wildlife, habitat health, and human well-being. Her legacy reflects the power of thoughtful, science-based conservation leadership with long-term benefits for both nature and society.

From 1985 to 1989, Beattie served as Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, followed by her role as Deputy Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources from 1989 to 1990. She later co-authored *Working with Your Woodlot: A Landowner's Guide*, providing practical guidance for responsible forest management.

In 1993, Beattie was appointed Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where she oversaw the reintroduction of the gray wolf into the American West, the creation of 15 new wildlife refuges, and the implementation of over 100 habitat conservation plans. In recognition of her contributions, Congress designated an eight-million-acre wilderness area in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in her honor.

Mollie Beattie's life was defined by a deep commitment to protecting the natural world. She not only broke barriers but also reshaped the approach to environmental stewardship, advocating for conservation strategies that integrate science, policy, and public engagement. Her leadership set a standard for future conservationists and reinforced the essential role of public lands in sustaining ecosystems and communities.

To honor her legacy and in recognition of the centennial of Vermont State Parks, this bill establishes the Mollie Beattie Distinguished Service Award. The Commissioner of Forests, Park, and Recreation shall present this award to a State employee, retiree, or partner whose contributions uphold Beattie's legacy by advancing conservation, public land accessibility, the quality of recreational experiences, or the sustainability of Vermont's public lands.

This award will celebrate individuals who embody the spirit of service and dedication that defined Mollie Beattie's career, ensuring that her influence continues to inspire those who care for Vermont's natural resources.