

Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center's
Wilderness Investigations
High School

Wilderness Hero #8
Frank Church
1924 - 1984



Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness High Country
(from Wilderness.net; Image #516)

Common Core Standard Connections

Standards addressed will vary depending on how the teacher chooses to approach the lesson and/or activities.

Instructions for the teacher:

Federally designated wilderness is protected in the United States because the Wilderness Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President (September 1964). Many inside and outside of government worked tirelessly to help make this dream a reality. No member of Congress worked harder than Idaho Senator Frank Church. In 1964 Senator Church acted as the floor sponsor of the National Wilderness Act. Four years later, in 1968, he sponsored the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. He also played key roles in the establishment of the Hells Canyon National

Recreation Area (bordering Oregon, Washington and Idaho) and the Sawtooth Wilderness and National Recreation Area (central Idaho).

In a day when some look askew at politicians, a look-back at Frank Church is a refreshing exercise in seeing the goodness of many who participate in the political process. Frank Church quietly assisted citizens of the United States in their quest to protect wilderness. For that he surely is a wilderness hero.

To help students get to know this wilderness hero, choose one or more of the following:

- Photocopy and hand out *Wilderness Hero Sheet* to each student.
 - After studying the information found there, encourage students to find out more about Frank Church. What else did he stand for as a Senator? What is his public service legacy?
- Provide blackline maps of Idaho and the surrounding states. Have students locate key locations in Senator Church's wilderness legacy: Sawtooth Wilderness and National Recreation Area, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, Salmon River.
- Use the handout as the basis of a short mini-lesson about Frank Church and his connection to wilderness preservation.
- Have students pay careful attention to the Frank Church wilderness quote found on the *Wilderness Hero Sheet*. Have them dissect his words and outline what message they think he was trying to get across.
- Encourage students to study the process by which a bill moves through Congress and, if passed and signed (or vetoed) by the President, becomes law. Have them create a graphic that illustrates the process. After this research, have students place Frank Church's role as the Wilderness Act *floor sponsor* within the graphic.
- Create a *Wilderness Hero* classroom display or post on class website.
 - Have students create illustrations, maps, descriptive words, etc. that tell the story of Frank Church.
- Have students study and then place their copy of this *Wilderness Hero* sheet in their Wilderness Investigations Folder.

Wilderness Hero

Frank Church

1924 - 1984



Rafting in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness
(from Wilderness.net; Image #715)

Introduction to a Hero

Frank Church was born and raised in the western state of Idaho. By the time Frank came along he was the third generation of the Church family to be born there. Though his family was not wealthy they were well-respected and active citizens of their state and community.

Young Frank decided early in life that he wanted to pursue a career in politics. When Frank was a junior in high school he won a speech contest by speaking on the topic, "The American Way of Life." He was able to pay for four years of college with the money he won! He was his high school senior class president and after graduation attended Stanford University (1942). A year later Frank enrolled in the U.S. Army where serving as an intelligence officer. He returned to college in 1946. 1947 was a big year for Frank Church—He graduated with his Bachelor's Degree and married Bethine Clark the daughter of Idaho's former governor. Frank and Bethine's family eventually consisted of the two of them and two sons.

Frank next went to graduate school and graduated with his law degrees in 1950 (Stanford Law School). He and his family returned to Boise where Frank practiced law. He started running for political office in 1952 but didn't win his first election until 1956. At 32 years old he became the fifth youngest member in history in the U.S. Senate. Senator Church went on to serve in his beloved Senate for 24 years. He passed away, at 59 years of age, in 1984.

Frank Church was a behind-the-scenes supporter of wilderness. He did much of the leg work that brought Federal wilderness protection to reality. In honor of his work in support of wilderness preservation, President Ronald Reagan designated the former River of No Return Wilderness as the *Frank Church*-River of No Return Wilderness.

Learn more about *Wilderness Hero* Frank Church

- Senator Church communicated the following about wilderness:

“The great purpose is to set aside a reasonable part of the vanishing wilderness, to make certain that generations of Americans yet unborn will know what it is to experience life on undeveloped, unoccupied land in the same form and character as the Creator fashioned it... It is a great spiritual experience. I never knew a man who took a bedroll onto an Idaho mountainside and slept there under a star-studded summer sky who felt self-important that next morning. Unless we preserve some opportunity for future generations to have the same experience, we shall have dishonored our trust.”

- Conservation/Wilderness/Preservation milestones in his political career:
 - 1964: U.S. Senate floor sponsor of the National Wilderness Act
 - 1965: Senate Chairman of the Subcommittee on Public Lands
 - 1965: Idaho Wildlife Federation’s *Conservationist of the Year*
 - 1966: *National Conservation Legislative Award*
 - 1968: Sponsored the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
 - 1972: Supported creation of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area
 - 1972: Supported redesignation of Sawtooth Primitive Area to Sawtooth Wilderness
 - 1975: Helped establish the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (bordering Oregon, Washington and Idaho)
 - 1980: Played a large role in the formation of the River of No Return Wilderness