

Charles H. Montange
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Few have been as vital to the enduring success of the rail-trail movement nationwide as Charles "Chuck" Montange.

Born in Kingsley, Iowa, Montange's professional life as an attorney brought him to Washington, D.C., in 1976. Almost a decade later, David Burwell, then at the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), called Montange for assistance in preparing comments for NWF in connection with the Interstate Commerce Commission's initial rulemaking to implement the railbanking statute.

It was a timely phone call and would prove to be one of the key moments in RTC history. Just the week before, Montange had pedaled the Cedar Valley Nature Trail. He had witnessed firsthand the potential of rail-trails and was

eager to help.

The comments Montange put together helped in the formation of RTC and were instrumental to the success of countless rail-trail efforts nationwide. His understanding of railbanking and abandonment legislation, and ability to win key legal battles as a *pro bono* attorney representing RTC and other rail-trail advocates, were the catalyst for the formation of America's best known and loved rail-trails, including D.C.'s Capital Crescent Trail, the Katy Trail State Park, the Cowboy Trail in Nebraska and South Dakota's George Mickelson Trail.

Montange now lives in Seattle, Wash., where he continues to work on behalf of rail-trails. Happily, he gets to enjoy his local rail-trail whenever he accompanies his wife on her daily bike commute to Children's Hospital in Seattle.

Grant recipient: Montange has selected the Klickitat Trail Conservancy in Washington. After local trail opponents barricaded the 31-mile Klickitat Trail in 2002, supporters mobilized to protect the route and formed the Klickitat Trail Conservancy, which today provides much of the maintenance of the trail. Chuck believes that diligent and prolonged effort on behalf of this beautiful trail—and in the face of threats and adversity—deserves recognition and reward.