

Who's on Board...

Meet the Freshwater Society's Board of Directors

Bruce Bomier

A childhood spent fishing and hunting in the pristine Minnesota wilderness ignited Bruce Bomier's interest in the environment. In his teenage years, he became a land surveyor and acquired knowledge on the workings of the natural world, while gaining respect and an understanding for the land. Bruce surveyed with a transit and shovel, unlike today's technology of Global Positioning Systems. He occasionally went astray in forests where roads were scheduled to be developed. Those quiet moments in the forests helped him to appreciate his natural world and paved his future as an environmentalist.

The skills Bruce learned as a land surveyor were called upon when he volunteered as an Army Scout in Vietnam and Cambodia during the Vietnam War. He was awarded the American Air Medal and the Bronze Star for his service during the war. Memories of the beautiful Minnesota environment gave him comfort during his service in the jungles of Southeast Asia. Bruce loved the blue, green, and winter white hues of the Minnesota landscape and the peace of the Minnesota wilderness. After the chaos of the jungle war environment he was especially appreciative of Minnesota's natural environment when he returned home.

After his military duty, Bruce returned to Minnesota and earned a Master's Degree in Public Health from the University of Minnesota. Bruce worked through school as a felony investigator for Hennepin County and a planner with the Minnesota State Planning Agency. In 1972, Bruce founded the Minnesota Institute of Public Health, a nonprofit organization which applies public health research and programming services to communities through project work commissioned by federal and state agencies, foundations, and other groups. The organization's mission is to safeguard and protect the public health and well-being. Today, the Minnesota Institute of Public Health is a major division of Blue Cross and Blue

Shield. The board room at their new corporate headquarters in Mounds View was named in Bruce's honor.

In 1986, Bruce incorporated the Institute for Environmental Assessment (IEA), a for profit company committed to providing practical, cost-sensitive environmental engineering counsel and worker protection guidelines for

private and public organizations. IEA works extensively with indoor environments in facilities such as schools, office buildings, and hospitals. Today IEA has several offices in the Midwest, but works throughout the United States and Canada on resolving complicated environmental engineering issues often involving indoor air quality, waste disposal, asbestos removal, mold abatement, and worker safety.

Recently, Bruce founded the Environmental Resource Council (ERC), a non-profit organization which works with both public and private organizations

to bring awareness to environmental health issues. While managing his several companies, Bruce served 15 years on the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, receiving appointments from three Governors. Most recently, Bruce was appointed by Minnesota's Governor to serve on the state's Water Cabinet. Bruce has both experience and sensitivity to political mechanisms and environmental needs. He works to help both public and private groups collaborate in order to bring about the most effective changes to Minnesota's environment. These changes have positive effects on both environment and human health.

In 2004, Bruce became a member of the Freshwater Society's Board of Directors. He credits the Freshwater Society's Founder, Dr. Richard G. Gray, Sr., with his ideals and foresight that are of critical value to the state's environment. "Keeping with Dick Gray's founding vision for the organization, the Freshwater Society is able to work with the system and those concerned about the environment



Bruce Bomier

to bring about the most effective changes,” explains Bruce. “The Society is able to light candles in dark areas.”

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Bruce feels the most fundamental issue currently facing Minnesota’s environmental quality is the lack of collaboration between private and public sectors. He believes resources could be used much more effectively if governmental agencies and private organizations worked together with a common vision. The Extension Service at the University of Minnesota is an example of a collaborative effort between private and public sectors which achieves quiet, but solid, results by providing education and support through the public sector to gently help the private sector change their practices.

Bruce also feels the lack of sustainable energy is a serious challenge for Minnesota. Currently, 20% of the state’s energy is purchased from Canada. Bruce worked with utility company policy leaders to plan the construction of the wind towers located in southwestern Minnesota’s Buffalo Ridge area. He feels that energy production must be well



Bruce Bomier (right) as an Army Scout

thought out and be especially sensitive to environmental consequences.

When Bruce isn’t being a voice for the environment, he is usually immersing himself in the environment. He has a home on the Rum River and a cabin up the river near Princeton — a three-day trek via canoe. He studies Maya ruins and has studied ancient Maya writing and pre-Columbian glyphs. Bruce sails with friends annually in the Caribbean, downhill skis, and scuba dives. He frequently travels to Central America to scuba dive and visit Maya archeological sites.

The calmness and quietness of scuba diving give Bruce another perspective of the world and its many environments and remind him of the responsibility people have to respect and preserve natural resources.

Bruce has shared the past 45 years with his wife, Claudia. They are the parents of two adult children, Beth and Mike, and three grandchildren, Jane, Thomas and Will.

The Freshwater Society is fortunate and grateful for Bruce Bomier’s dedication to its vision and is honored to have him on Board!

Employees Establish Scholarship to Honor Founder

In 2005, the employees of the Institute for Environmental Assessment (IEA) established the Bruce Bomier Environmental Health Scholarship Program to recognize the company’s founder and his dedication to the environment. The program supports and encourages high school seniors in their pursuit of careers in environmental science, health, safety, and engineering. IEA is committed to this ongoing scholarship program in the belief that the education and training of young people will advance the goal of healthy environments.