

Catherine Thayer Nicholson

“Ye shall be stewards of the earth” was the earliest Biblical quote that set the framework for Catherine’s life goals.

This life goal led her to majoring in Biology and Geography at Macalester College in the 70’s, with a not-quite-finished major in Environmental Science due to a detour as the President of the Macalester College’s Student Government.

Always trying to represent the conservation or environmental goal to the uninitiated, uninterested, uninspired or darn right hostile, her first job out of college as a bulk liquid sales representative and bulk liquid plant manager for Cargill, Inc. taught her that most business people do really want to do the right thing, it's just that they may not know what the right thing to do is!

Subsequent job titles included Solid Waste Management Specialist, Recycling Specialist, Government Relations Specialist and Environmental Planner for the MN Department of Transportation. While working for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency she initiated and assisted in the passage of a part of an omnibus bill that changed the way consumers, and retail purchasers disposed of Spent Lead Acid (car) Batteries. Even now, consumers of car batteries can freely drop off their used car batteries at the front doors of retailers that sell batteries.

Working at the Waste Management Board, she inspired the legislative author to create a ban on the deposition of yard waste in mixed municipal solid waste (our curbside garbage). This would reduce the amount of waste going to Minnesota landfills by 8-20%. Overnight, community and county yard waste composting facilities sprang up, as if the county operations folks were just waiting for such a practical edict.

As a member of the Saint Paul Garden Club, she has participated in countless lobbying meetings in Washington, D.C. of the Garden Club of America’s National Affairs and Legislation Committee Meetings. Credits have gone to her lobbying of her state’s Republican Senator who placed one of two swing votes that passed the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Currently, she serves as a Vice Chair of Waste Management for the Garden Club of America’s Conservation Committee and National Affairs and Legislation Committee.

With her husband Ford, Catherine has raised one entrepreneur and two environmental scientists.