



## John Kent Helland, Jr.

December 4, 1944 - June 27, 2021

Helland, John Kent left us unexpectedly and peacefully on June 27, 2021. He was, first and foremost, a loving and devoted husband to his wife of 52 years, Linda. His two children, Matt and Laura, were always the focus of John's enduring affection. And he utterly cherished his four grandchildren - Thelonious, Cole, Sena, and Miles - eager to be with them every chance he got. John was born on December 4th, 1944, to John Kent Helland Sr. and Alice Noreen Helland, née Crahan, in Ottumwa, Iowa. He attended Edina High School and graduated in 1962 and then matriculated to the University of Minnesota, graduating with a BA in History. From very early on, John marveled at the natural world: woods, rivers, lakes - sacred places that spoke to him. He turned that reverence into a 38-year illustrious career as the chief researcher, policy analyst, and writer of environmental policy for the Minnesota legislature. In step with his professional work, he had a personal passion for the outdoors. During his lifetime he paddled countless rivers across the U.S. He worked to pass most of Minnesota's major environmental laws: the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Environmental Policy Act, the Outdoor Heritage Fund, the Clean Water Fund, the Parks and Trails Fund, and the constitutional amendments and legislation that created the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. In addition to all of the bills, amendments, and memos to legislators, he wrote dozens of more formal publications. He served on many boards and worked with groups committed to environmental and conservation causes, including The Rivers Council of

Minnesota, The Audubon Center of the North Woods, The Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, Friends of the Mississippi, Conservation Minnesota, and many others. Through the years, he made life-long friends from his days at the University of Minnesota, the legislature, the many environmental boards and groups he was part of, as well as the community at large. He was unfailingly loyal and his many friendships meant the world to him. John loved being a family man, old fashioned donuts, The Beach Boys, books upon books, exploring the woods, meeting people, college wrestling and basketball, canoeing lakes and rivers, and, of course, his four young grandsons. He is survived by his wife, Linda; his children Matt (Maiko Shiratori), Laura (David Piette); his sister, Kathy Royse and brother Tom (Mary); grandchildren Thelonious, Cole, Sena, and Miles; and several cherished nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his sister, Jane. There will be a celebration of John Helland's life this September, date to be announced. Memorials in John's name are preferred and appreciated: Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy American Rivers Wild Rivers Conservancy of the St. Croix and Namekagon