

# KENT BUTLER

**1951-2011**

U.T. Austin School of Architecture  
Associate Dean of Community and Regional  
Planning

Kent Butler died tragically on Friday, May 13, 2011 in an accident while hiking at Yosemite National Park in California. Sixty years old at the time of his death, Kent was Associate Dean for research and operations in the

School of Architecture at The University of Texas at Austin. He also was the Program Director and an Associate Professor for the Graduate Program in Community and Regional Planning.

A gifted teacher and administrator, Kent increased faculty and student diversity, created new international study and studio opportunities in Mexico, The Netherlands, and China, and fostered important curriculum changes to further enhance the community planning program's national reputation.

Early in his career, Kent took a leave of absence from the university for two years to establish the environmental department for the Lower Colorado River Authority. Over the following three decades, Kent continued to offer his knowledge and passion for improving environmental quality in Central Texas and Austin with dozens of projects that helped improve neighborhoods, water systems, and a multitude of infrastructure systems.

Some of his other projects of note included regional visioning and planning for the Galveston Bay Estuary Program, evaluative studies of the Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act, feasibility and development of urban rainwater collection systems, and a planning assessment of the Texas Triangle as a mega-region. Kent also worked on regional water planning and the creation of a groundwater management district for the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer.

Kent Butler's crowning achievement was the creation of the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge. Many years in the making, the refuge had its roots in his Balcones Canyonlands Habitat Preservation Plan, which was the first functional usage of the federal Endangered Species Act to prohibit development of vacant urban real estate. Today, what Kent accomplished at the Balcones Canyonlands is the model throughout the U. S. for enlightened approaches to protection of the urban and surrounding environment.

Kent was an undergraduate student in the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance, when he took the legendary Ian McHarg's "Man and Environment" course. It shifted his interest from business to environmental science. Kent completed bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in environmental science, land and water resources management, and land resources respectively at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and began his academic career as an assistant professor at the University of Texas in 1978.



# KENT BUTLER CONT'D



Over his time at the University of Texas, Kent taught twenty-one different graduate courses and one undergraduate course, with the subject matter varying among themes of water resources, coastal zone management, urban infrastructure, and a variety of environmental topics. He served on eighteen dissertation committees and over two-hundred master's report and thesis committees. His numerous consulting and research projects as well as community service projects always sought to extend the cutting edge of practice and enriched his course offerings with state-of-the-environmental-art insights.

A handsome man who always seemed to be smiling, Kent was a generous fellow, which made him an ideal thesis advisor and mentor.

His generosity was such that, when a student or colleague would seek him out for a discussion, he often lost track of the time and found himself late for meetings, arriving in good cheer, bringing a positive force to whatever was being discussed. At a time when so many feel ruled by their schedules, I'm still impressed by Kent's ability to immerse himself in ideas.

*-remembrance by Fritz Steiner*

*Frederick R. "Fritz" Steiner is an American ecologist who currently serves as the Dean and Paley Professor for the University of Pennsylvania School of Design*

**BARTON CREEK**  
  
**TIME STREAM**