

Ex-LTBMU Forest Service chief Bob Harris killed

By Kathryn Reed

Bob Harris, former forest supervisor of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, has died. He was 72.

“He was quite an environmentalist, but also a professionally knowledgeable land manager. He was able to balance environmental ethics with land and conservation knowledge,” Bill Morgan said of his friend of 47 years.

Harris led the local U.S. Forest Service office from 1988-97. He arrived at a time when the Forest Service Plan was being finalized and left as the Environmental Improvement Program was being launched.

Harris was a key figure in having then President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore visit the basin in what was the inaugural Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit in 1997.



Bob Harris

“One of the legacies of that monumental visit was some funding for the first time by federal sources to invest in the future of Lake Tahoe’s health,” Don Lane, long-time Forest Service employee, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The EIP was the legacy of that visit. Bob was very much engaged in facilitating that.”

Harris followed Morgan a bit career-wise. Both were engineers

to start with. When Morgan left the Tahoe National Forest, Harris took his engineering job.

Morgan was a supervisor of the LTBMU before Harris. During part of Harris' tenure Morgan was executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

"I think the most outstanding characteristic about him was he was a high-energy guy. He never turned down a request when someone needed something," Morgan told *Lake Tahoe News*.

They both also had a profound interest in the Tahoe-Baikal Institute; having traveled together to Russia. It was Harris who recruited Morgan to be on the board of directors.

"He would take young people from the Baikal Institute on long hikes in the mountains and tell them about forest management and the history of Lake Tahoe," Morgan said.

Harris grew up in Oakland. He graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in civil engineering.

In the last 1960s he helped design the Taylor Creek Visitors Center, including the stream profile center. He also worked on trails in Desolation and Meiss wilderness areas.

As Harris progressed up the ranks and took over the Lake Tahoe office, his love of the outdoors did not diminish.

"He liked to go in the backcountry a lot. You usually don't get people who are that physically engaged," Lane said. He remembers that time fondly – being out with the big boss, sitting around a campfire, sleeping on the hard granite, going over mountains and hiking through meadows.

Lane said it was Harris' collaborative management style that allowed him to accomplish various tasks with people of differing opinions.

Although Harris retired in 1997, he still visited the local

Forest Service office, always with a smile.

“He pushed Forest Service retirees – (saying) don’t just quit, stay involved,” Lane said. “He really pioneered a lot of education and community education programs.”

Harris died from a gunshot wound Jan. 6 at his Pollock Pines home. His 70-year-old wife, Colleen, is accused of murder.

Harris is survived by two sons and a daughter. Funeral services are pending.