

# USFS fire guru retires after 38 years



Kit Bailey has been the face and voice of all things fire for LTBMU for years. Photo/LTN file

## By Kit Bailey

After 38 years, I can retire knowing I've been a part of change and growth in the wildland fire community.

Starting out as a seasonal firefighter for California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and working my way up in the Forest Service, I set out to become a forest fire management officer within California, fulfilling that goal 15 years ago by accepting the position here in the Lake Tahoe Basin. This job, my time as a smokejumper, and then serving as

a Type I operations chief have been some my greatest career successes.

Today, on my last day, I know it's time to pass the torch to the professionals we've brought up.

Over the years, I've traveled to incidents across the nation, getting the opportunity to work alongside some amazing people on difficult and dangerous wildfires. My greatest appreciation is for the efforts done by the firefighters on the ground. Even when we work to get it right, people can still get hurt in this job. By ensuring they have necessary equipment, solid direction, and are performing their duties safely, I have put them first in every decision, every situation.

To this day, I've taken the duty of guardian and defender of the Lake Tahoe Basin very seriously. I have tremendous respect and appreciation for the chiefs and fire agencies around the lake. Our time together has created a strong bond of trust and protection we feel for the other, and know we will support when called. Success is truly about those relationships and collaboration with the fire, land management and regulatory agencies. When I got here, we all had areas to improve on, but we've come a long way and are now a national model for coordination and cooperation.

My wife, Shelly, son, Carson, and daughter, Josie, have graciously supported me through all of this. I couldn't have had the career I have with the Forest Service without them and their understanding, selflessness and sacrifice.

Though I am retiring from the Forest Service, I will continue to serve the Tahoe basin in a new role, protecting the communities in and around California for years to come.

*Kit Bailey retired June 30 as the fire chief for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.*