

**Tahoe Conservancy leader dies at conference:  
Dennis Machida dies at research conference**

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Dennis Machida, who had a calm demeanor and worked long hours to conserve and restore Lake Tahoe and create public access around it, died of a heart attack Friday while speaking at a climate research conference in Montana. He was 58.

Machida served as the executive officer of the California Tahoe Conservancy since 1985 and helped establish the organization in South Lake Tahoe as assistant secretary for legal affairs with the state Resources Agency.

Under his leadership, the agency authorized more than \$290 million in public money to acquire 7,400 acres of sensitive land on the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin and fund nearly 600 water quality, wildlife habitat, public access and recreation projects.

"His loss was a great loss, not just to his organization but to the community," said John Upton, a city councilman who worked closely with Machida for 10 years as a Conservancy board member. "He was so bright sometimes I felt I needed to record him at 78 and play him back at 33 1/3. He grasped things in an incredible way."

Machida, who supervised more than 50 employees, was not a hard-core environmentalist, rather someone who worked to find solutions that improved the environment while recognizing the needs of the community, Upton said.

"When you'd get into issues, one ethic he always brought to the table was the implementability of solutions," Upton said. "He would always talk in those terms. There would be a proposed solution and he would say 'Is this really going to work? Can it be done?' "

The California Tahoe Conservancy, an arm of the state Resources Agency, receives much of its funding from bond acts approved by voters. Machida worked at the agency in 1982 when California passed the Lake Tahoe Acquisitions Bond Act, a measure that generated \$85 million for sensitive land conservation at Lake Tahoe.

"The California Tahoe Conservancy was created through the Legislature to implement that bond act," said Bruce Eisner, program director at the Conservancy.

Machida led the state through the two years of work it took to establish the organization in 1984. Since then, he has been a strong advocate for Tahoe in Sacramento.

"He was very much a behind the scenes type of person," said Richard Solbrig, general manager at the South Tahoe Public Utility District. "Very much in tune with how politics works, how the Legislature works, where the points of influence really are - that's why he was so effective in promoting the Tahoe agenda in Sacramento."

But Machida was more than just a provider for Tahoe. Through his

broad base of knowledge and experience - which included a law degree from UC Davis - he helped the Resources Agency, which oversees eight other conservancies, function throughout the state.

"The impact of his loss on state government is profound," said Secretary Mike Chrisman, head of the Resources Agency. "He was always there. Somebody who you could turn to for advice and rely on in the thick and thin of difficult issues. He will be sorely, sorely missed."

Machida was also instrumental in the establishment of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, which Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law last September. The mission of the organization is to fund environmental preservation projects for 25 million acres in the Sierra Nevada, an area that includes El Dorado and Amador counties and stretches from the Oregon border to north of Bakersfield.

"He was helping get the board in place, with the staffing needs, and figure out what the budget is," said Joan Clayburgh, executive director of the Sierra Nevada Alliance, based in South Lake Tahoe. "Everybody knows he's a hero for Tahoe, but he's a very much a hero for the Sierra too."

Machida, a native of Sacramento, is survived by his wife, Kathie Wong; his son, Nathan; his mother Miyako Machida, of Sacramento; and his sisters, Sandy Fricker, of Chico, and Connie Gone, of Sacramento.

Notes can be sent to the family care of the California Tahoe Conservancy, 2161 Lake Tahoe Blvd., Suite 2, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.