

Chris White died on Dec. 16, 2013 of complications from pancreatic cancer, surrounded by his family and dearest friends during his last days. He passed peacefully in his sleep.

Growing up in New England and in Laguna Beach, Chris developed into an ineffably curious, positive, and enthusiastic scientist watching (and chasing) snakes and salamanders through the hardwood forests. He continued doing so during his adult years, often reaching down to grab a reptile as he supervised construction at a restoration site, or planned a wetland protection program. Even as a veteran consultant, he seldom missed 'capturing critters' moving into potential danger.

The son of Elizabeth Desmonget (Los Osos, San Luis Obispo County; Ted Shearer) and Fred White (Bozeman, MT; Pat White), Chris explored the world with aplomb and glee, wanting to understand how it all worked. He brought boundless energy to that challenge, as he did to most tasks. So, he went to college. After completing a degree in zoology at UC Davis, he continued on to earn not only a zoology masters in sturgeon culture, but also a Master's degree in agronomy, studying plant tolerances to elevated sodium and potassium concentrations, working in the salty soils surrounding Tulare Lake in Kings County.

In and amongst these various diplomas, Chris sampled life fully -- commercial farming in Maine, doing finish carpentry and cabinetry for custom homes along the southern California coast, and leading (and training) a school construction team in Gabon during 2 years in the Peace Corps. Interludes in Davis were used to help build and work in the iconic Ag Access bookstore (then a crèche of organic agriculture knowledge) and to serve as the jazz DJ on the local FM radio station, where he set the play lists.

All of this prepared him, of course, for a 23-year career in hydrology. He helped build a practice in minimizing water-quality damage to habitat, people, and farms. His own ideas were widely respected, often pioneering, yet he was mainly known for careful listening to the ideas of others, then creatively applying a mosaic of approaches suited to local conditions at a ranch or watershed scale. He led one of the first quantitative large-watershed nitrogen budgets in the state for the San Lorenzo Valley in Santa Cruz, where he designed intensely-instrumented field tests for treatments to reduce residential and equestrian nitrogen contributions. In recent years, his interests turned to control of mercury and leading-edge golf-course water quality. While these took him to assignments among Yupik villagers in western

Alaska, the deserts of southern California, and Pebble Beach, he was most excited to take on challenges in his adopted northern Foothills, where he leaves a number of ongoing innovative projects to be completed by his colleagues at Balance Hydrologics, the Berkeley-based consulting firm at which he has been a partner since 1996.

There was always time in Chris' life for good music of any and all genres. But jazz held a special place in his heart. He knew the music and discography in and out. He helped found the Oakland institution Jazz in Flight, not only serving as treasurer for six or seven years, but also leading the Eddie Moore Jazz Festival ("Oakland's festival of uncompromising jazz") during its formative summers.

In his science, Chris insisted on quality writing, even better sampling, and a common-sense approach to regulation and management based on understanding a specific stream, pond, or watershed. He was uncompromising with himself in having an honest tale to tell, telling it well, and explaining it in the context of the particular valley or stream. So, sometimes, he was not very good with deadlines. But he almost never missed sampling a storm or exploring an issue that was genuinely needed to tell the story honestly.

While demanding of himself, he was attentive and respectful of others who could contribute. His approach and findings would change where warranted. A kind and generous person, he had bottomless energy and patience to bring people into his work, his music, or his place in the world.

Chris succumbed less than three months after being diagnosed. He did not have the time he had wanted to reach out to all of his many friends throughout the state. His death comes too soon for them, as well as his family, and colleagues.

He is survived by his son, Dexter (aged 10) of Grass Valley; his wife, Wendy; his dear friend Catherine Lopez, who also helped him navigate through diagnosis and treatment; his parents, and brothers Mike and Patrick, who all rallied around him during his final weeks, as well as a broader extended family.