

Victor L. Harris

Victor L. Harris is a native of Athens, Georgia. The seventh born of 10 children, he spent his childhood exploring the forest surrounding the housing project where he grew up. That's where he gained his appreciation for nature and his love of the outdoors.

After high school, he became the first in his family to attend college when he was accepted into the forestry program at Tuskegee Institute, now Tuskegee University. Harris completed the program at Tuskegee and earned his Bachelor of Science degree in forestry at North Carolina State University with a concentration in economics.



Harris has over 35 years of experience in forest management and urban natural resource management. After graduation from NC State, he accepted the position of area forester with the Virginia Department of Forestry, becoming the first Black forester in the history of the agency.

As area forester, Harris served Henrico County and the City of Richmond. He worked one-on-one with private landowners preparing forest management plans; providing assistance on timber harvesting, reforestation, managing wildlife, and recreational opportunities; protecting and improving water quality; and improving forest aesthetics. Harris was also responsible for managing the forest fire control, insect and disease control, and the urban and community forestry programs within his work areas.

Harris joined the North Carolina Division of Forest Resources as head of engineering services in 1994 and was later promoted to assistant state forester for administration. As a member of senior management Harris and his staff were responsible for managing the Division's \$60 million annual budget and providing administrative support and direction to over 700 employees in over 100 offices across North Carolina. He led staff responsible for the Division's finances, human resources, capital improvements, purchasing, contracts, information technology, and other administrative areas.

In his position, Harris also served as the Division's outreach coordinator. He led the Division's diversity efforts by recruiting and hiring forestry students and graduates from Tuskegee University and Alabama A&M University.

Harris resigned from the Division of Forest Resources in 2005 to reestablish Cierra Publishing Company, a company he first started in 1993. He began publishing *Minority Landowner Magazine* in 2006 and serves as publisher and editor. *Minority Landowner* chronicles the challenges and successes of minority farmers, ranchers and forest landowners across the country. Its mission is to provide information to help them improve productivity of their land management operation, which can lead to increased profitability, thus increasing the chances they will maintain ownership of their land.

He also serves as a consultant and has designed and facilitated minority landowner forestry workshops; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service farmer workshops; USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station forestry workshops; and mobile information technology

workshops designed for farmers and landowners. He's been invited to speak nationally, including a keynote at the 15th North American Agroforestry Conference.

Harris is a North Carolina Registered Forester, a Fellow of the Natural Resources Leadership Institute and a Certified Public Manager. He served on the Woodlands Committee of the American Forest Foundation and is a past Board member of the Conservation Trust for North Carolina.

Among his honors is receiving the **Society of American Foresters' Outstanding Forestry Journalism Award** for 2021.

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