

Jeff A. Lerner

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Profile:

Conservation professional with over 30 years of experience with land and water conservation programs in partnership with federal and state agencies, nonprofits and foundations. Experience with leading teams, designing and managing grant programs, conservation planning, innovative conservation finance, conservation policy, program development, evaluation, project management and consulting. Projects involving habitat conservation, watershed protection and restoration, forest conservation, agricultural lands, coastal areas, outdoor recreation, adaptation, and sustainable land use in rural, urban, and suburban settings.

Supervisory Biologist, U.S. EPA (2022-present)

Office of Water, Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds (OWOW), Water Finance Center.

Senior Advisor for Watershed Partnerships, U.S. EPA, Water Finance Center

- Work with the State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs to identify opportunities to utilize SRF funds for large scale financing as a tool for watershed scale impact. Projects may include watershed protection, aquatic connectivity, agricultural BMPs or other natural infrastructure to create Watershed Financing Partnerships.
- Nutrient Funding Discussion Group Workshop in 2024 to scale up BMPs in the agricultural sector.
- Representing EPA in national initiatives including the Interagency Fish Passage Task Force.
- Partnership with NACC to merge aquatic barriers with water quality data to prioritize barrier removals.
- Chair of the Healthy Watersheds Goal Implementation Team for the Chesapeake Bay Program. Recommendations for elevating conservation within the partnership and watershed health. Transition of Healthy Watersheds into Healthy Landscapes Goal with new or revised outcomes.

Chief, U.S. EPA, Partnerships and Accountability Branch, Chesapeake Bay Program

- Acting Partnerships and Accountability Branch Chief for CBPO including 40 staff and partners.
- Led Healthy Watersheds group to develop 5 key recommendations for CBP Beyond 2025. EPA Bronze Star.
- Coordinated meetings of the Executive Council, Principal Staff Committee and Management Board. Liaison to the Local Government Advisory Committee.
- Chair of the Healthy Watersheds Goal Implementation Team for CBP.
- Chesapeake Healthy Watersheds Assessment (CHWA): <https://gis.chesapeakebay.net/chwa/?page=Overall>
- Synthesis report in 2023, *Charting a Course to 2025: a report and recommendations for the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council on how best to address and integrate new science and restoration strategies leading up to 2025.*

Chief, U.S. EPA, Partnership Programs Branch, Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds

- Directing three national partnerships: National Estuary Program, Urban Waters Federal Partnership, and Trash Free Waters, supervising 12 staff.
- Organized and executed a historic National Coastal Managers meeting of the Coastal States Organization, National Estuarine Research Reserves and National Estuary Program hosted at EPA with NOAA, USACE, USFWS, NRCS and other agencies and partners.
- Headquarters coordination role for EPA's 12 Geographic Programs, including CBP.
- National Guidance to NEP in 2022 for \$132 million of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds.

Senior Advisor/Program Officer, U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (2015-2021)

Managing grant programs toward conservation of forests, watersheds and aquatic ecosystems including grantee technical assistance and program evaluation.

- Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program: \$11 million national partnership with the EPA and NRCS, working to accelerate permanent watershed protection. Grantees protected over 1 million acres of mostly forested lands including over 5,000 stream miles with benefits to freshwater ecosystems, drinking water customers, working lands and biodiversity.

- Partnerships and coaching with water utilities, watershed groups, land trusts, Source Water Collaborative, Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water. Conservation finance tools including SRF water infrastructure funding, local water funds and private investment impact funds.
- Innovative Finance for National Forests Grant Program: \$5 million partnership between U.S. Forest Service, National Forest Foundation and U.S. Endowment providing grants to secure private or public financing to solve landscape scale stewardship challenges for forested watershed infrastructure, wildfire resilience and recreation on National Forests and adjacent lands.

Vice President, Conservation Programs, American Forests (2015-2017)

Strategic direction and team management for a suite of forest conservation programs: forest restoration, urban forests, forest policy. Partnerships with federal agencies, states, corporations, and nonprofits.

- Critical Forest Ecosystems: a new initiative to restore key threatened forest ecosystems of the U.S. Formed partnerships in different landscapes. Southeast: Longleaf pine recovery with Longleaf Alliance. Upper Midwest: jack pine forests with Michigan DNR. Appalachians: red spruce and hardwoods restoration with U.S. Forest Service. Lower Rio Grande Valley: thorn-scrub forest with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Urban Forests: Advancing goals for urban greening across metropolitan landscapes through urban canopy assessments, green infrastructure strategies, local policy interventions and restoration.
- Forest policy: Advancing the need for sustainable funding and national policy to support landscape scale protection and restoration of U.S. public and private forests including wildfire funding, urban forests, implementation of State Forest Action Plans.

Senior Advisor/Project Director, The Conservation Fund (2010-2016)

Managed adaptation and resilience projects at landscape scales in rural and urban settings.

- Blackwater 2100: In partnership with USFWS, Audubon Maryland/DC, Maryland DNR and others created a land protection, restoration, and management strategy for the future of salt marshes affected by sea level rise across a 200,000 acres landscape including Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.
- Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition: a project covering 1 million acres of the metro area focused on resiliency. Managed team from USGS, American Planning Association, USFWS, Maryland Forestry Foundation and other coalition members to apply green infrastructure principles to map natural infrastructure restoration and protection investments at different scales. Currently serve on the Steering Committee for the Coalition.

Habitat Program Officer, Environment Program, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (2008-2010)

Management of a \$130 million five-year portfolio of grants aimed at accelerating strategic habitat conservation in the U.S. in alignment with State Wildlife Action Plans.

- Portfolio included grants for multi-state collaborative land protection initiatives across 20 states, wildlife planning, adaptation, conservation funding campaigns for open space, use of key funding like Farm Bill conservation and forestry title programs, policy research, alignment of land use planning and transportation planning with habitat conservation, habitat restoration, species reintroduction.

Director, Conservation Planning, Defenders of Wildlife (2000-2008)

Creating and leading a Conservation Planning Program to integrate strategic habitat conservation into national policy work throughout the organization and in collaboration with regional field office staff.

- National expert on State Wildlife Action Plans and lead for synthesis of plans. Policy leader for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program. Guidance to USFS on State Forest Action Plans.
- Developed and published a synthesis of land conservation spending in the U.S. at federal and state levels.
- Project lead for integrating land use planning with habitat conservation. National workshop and report.
- Senior policy advisor on ESA, Farm Bill, Transportation, public lands campaigns, state funding.
- Strategic direction, team management and coaching. Secured \$2 million in foundation grants.

Conservation Project Specialist, Science Division, The Nature Conservancy (1995-2000)

Maintained a national biodiversity database and served as staff leader for data requests and special projects.

- Data partnerships with major federal natural resource agencies (USFS, USFWS, BLM, NPS, DOD, EPA), academics, non-profits, and other clients. Worked with field offices to support ecoregional planning.
- Supported Natural Heritage Network composed of programs in all U.S. states, Canadian provinces, and several tribal nations. Part of transition to NatureServe.
- Research assistance for *Precious Heritage: The status of biodiversity in the U.S.* which identified hotspots of biodiversity and documented the significance of private lands and federal lands for biodiversity conservation.

Field Biologist, U.S. Forest Service & Greenfalk Consultants (1992-1994)

- Field experience with conservation projects in major U.S. landscapes including the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, Snake River Birds of Prey Natural Conservation Area (shrub-steppe), and the Southern Sierra Nevada including work with golden eagles, prairie falcons, bald eagles, and other western raptors.

Education:

Master of Science in Conservation Biology & Sustainable Development, 1999

University of Maryland at College Park. *Honors:* Summa Cum Laude

Bachelor of Arts in Zoology; Minor in Theater, 1991

Ohio Wesleyan University. *Honors:* Summa Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa, Full tuition academic scholarship.

Publications:

Lerner J. 2019. *Healthy Watersheds Grants*. American Water Resources Association. IMPACT Journal. Fall 2019 Issue.

Lerner, J. 2018. *Can a Water Fund Bring New Dollars for Watershed Restoration? A Case Study for the Delaware River Watershed Initiative*. Open Space Institute.

Lerner, J.A., Curson, D.R., Whitbeck, M. and E.J. Meyers. 2013. *Blackwater 2100: A strategy for tidal marsh persistence in an era of climate change*. The Conservation Fund (Arlington, VA) and Audubon MD-DC (Baltimore, MD).

Lerner, J. and W. Allen. 2012. *Landscape Scale Green Infrastructure Investments as Climate Adaptation Strategy: A Case Example for the Midwest US*. Environmental Practice 14: 45-56.

Lerner, J., J. Mackey, and F. Casey. 2007. *What's in Noah's Wallet?: Land Conservation Spending in the United States*. Bioscience: 57(5) pp.419-423.

Michalak, J. and **J. Lerner**. 2007. *Linking Conservation and Land Use Planning: Using the State Wildlife Action Plans to Protect Wildlife from Urbanization*. Defenders of Wildlife. Washington D.C.

Lerner, J., B. Cochran and J. Michalak. 2006. *Conservation Across the Landscape: A Review of the State Wildlife Action Plans*. Defenders of Wildlife. Washington D.C.

Wilkinson, J., Vickerman, S., and **J. Lerner**. 2005. *Conserving Biodiversity through State and Regional Planning*. In E.A. Johnson and M.W. Klemens (eds.) *Nature in Fragments: The Legacy of Sprawl*. Columbia Univ. Press. 382 pp.

Cohn J. and **J. Lerner**. 2003. *Integrating Land Use Planning and Biodiversity*. Defenders of Wildlife. Washington D.C.