

Meryl Harrell

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SKILLS:

- Leader with experience in organizational transformation and effective management, including leading a small non-profit organization working on public lands stewardship through the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Expert on public lands management, natural resource stewardship, outdoor recreation, and other natural resource issues;
- Experienced team builder, creative problem solver and active listener, with a love of building partnerships and finding solutions that meet multiple needs;
- Passionate advocate for equitable access, inclusion, and connecting people of all backgrounds to the outdoors.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS), Asheville, NC

April 2019-present

Executive Director: Serving as Executive Director for the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS), a conservation non-profit that does stewardship work on 10 national forests in eight states, including Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Arkansas and Georgia. SAWS creates jobs in conservation for the next generation of stewards, delivers skills-based training for agency and other partners, engages thousands of visitors to public lands each year, works to support equity in the outdoors, and helps to make sure that trails are safe and accessible. Previously served on the SAWS Board of Directors from 2017-2019.

Recent work has included active management and rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including overhauling our projected field season and budget, navigating the CARES Act, supporting staff morale, and working with the Forest Service to reopen trails and address safety hazards. Work has also included leading strong engagement on the issues of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, acknowledging and working to change inequity in the outdoors, especially for Black, Indigenous and people of color. Work generally includes managing a talented team of wilderness and stewardship professionals, including both a year-round and seasonal staff; coordinating with federal land managers; developing and managing budget and cash flow; managing partnerships and relationships; fundraising; strategic planning; board engagement; and more.

Meryl Harrell LLC, Atlanta, GA

February 2017-present

Principal Consultant: Founder and principal of Meryl Harrell LLC, a consulting practice that provides strategic and policy advice to non-profit organizations, foundations, the outdoor recreation industry, and state and federal government agencies working to conserve America's public and private working lands.

Projects have helped clients to spur economic growth in rural communities, especially around the outdoor recreation economy; support public land management policies and planning; engage in Farm Bill reauthorization and implementation; invest in place-based conservation; improve opportunities for outdoor recreation; create equitable access to jobs in conservation; and address challenges including the increasing threat of wildfire. Projects have also focused on training and capacity building for government, academic, non-profit, foundation grantees, and public audiences.

Clients have included the U.S. Forest Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, REI, the Outdoor Industry Association, the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, Montana's Office of Outdoor Recreation, Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition, Salmon Valley Stewardship, the Heart of the Rockies Initiative, the Wilburforce Foundation, the Turner Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Washington D.C.

2009-2017

Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment

May 2015- January 2017

Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment

June 2013- May 2015

Special Assistant to the Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment

March 2009-2013

Served for eight years in the Office of the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). NRE was the mission area responsible for managing the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

In my policy roles, my work included:

- Creating jobs in conservation by leading an interagency team to establish the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC). The 21CSC, which is still in operation and was supported by the bipartisan 21CSC Act which passed in 2019, is a public-private partnership to provide job opportunities in the outdoors to youth and veterans. It supported more than 10,000 job opportunities with the Forest Service alone by the end of the Obama Administration. I was also the lead staff for NRE working to help manage the Forest Service's Job Corps Program.
- Leading efforts to connect rural economic development and outdoor recreation, including co-leading a team with USDA Rural Development (RD) to develop an MOU and an interagency toolkit for RD and Forest Service staff. Also led efforts to modernize the permitting process to make it easier for outdoor recreation businesses to take people onto public lands.
- Land management planning, including leading the process to develop a new land management planning rule to guide management of 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands. I was one of the lead authors of the rule, and was involved in its implementation.
- Equity, diversity and inclusion, including creating and co-leading a team to address unconscious bias in recruitment, hiring, retention, and program delivery within the Forest Service, writing a requirement for involving underserved communities into the land management planning rule, and supporting the development of a Presidential Memorandum on promoting public lands diversity and inclusion.
- Private land conservation, including leading NRE's team implementing the 2014 Farm Bill, working closely with NRCS and the Forest Service to coordinate development of related programs and regulations.
- Natural resource management, including working on climate change by developing the first Climate Change Scorecard, launching a USDA interagency team to better protect water and watershed resources, working to increase the pace and scale of ecological restoration, monitoring fire response and working towards a solution to the Forest Service's fire funding problem, and working on place-based conservation issues, including on the Tongass National Forest in Alaska.

As Chief of Staff, responsibilities included: overseeing the \$1.5 million NRE office budget and reimbursable agreements; coordinating the FY 2015-2016 agency budget requests for the Forest Service and NRCS; developing and delivering a strategic and regulatory agenda; managing the office of 15 personnel, including 3 direct reports; creating a positive office culture and inclusive work environment; managing internal and external communications, including press releases and congressional testimony; and representing the Department in meetings with stakeholders, partners and other agencies.

Barack Obama's Presidential Campaign, Madison, WI.*August-November 2008*

Wisconsin Political Outreach Director: Served as senior staff member responsible for outreach to key constituencies, including sportsmen, conservation groups, women, and rural constituencies. Responsible for communications, relationship building, event development and outreach to members of the public. Directly supervised and managed volunteers and interns, and organized and ran a Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) office with more than 40 team members and hundreds of volunteers. Also contributed to policy development as a member of the National Energy and Environment Policy Team starting in 2007, and served on the EPA Transition Team from November 2008-January 2009.

Latham & Watkins, LLP, Washington, D.C.

2007

Summer Associate: Provided legal analysis on a range of issues, primarily for the firm's Environment, Land & Resources Department. Also conducted research on international forestry and deforestation.

The Wilderness Society (TWS), Washington, D.C.

2003-2004

Public Lands Associate: Served as a policy associate and advocate on public land management, stewardship and energy issues. Responsibilities included analyzing agency programs, commenting on land management plans, conducting research, coordinating with coalition partners, conducting public outreach, and interacting with congressional staff. Also worked at TWS in 2001 as a summer intern, focused on land management plans, oil and gas leasing on public lands, and public land rights-of-way.

PROFESSIONAL AWARDS AND SERVICE:

- With the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) team, received the Bob Marshall Group Award for Wilderness Stewardship and the inaugural Wilderness Stewardship Organization of the Year award from the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance and the Society for Wilderness Stewardship (2020);
- Recognized by the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition for contributions to public lands management that support rural economic opportunities (2016);
- Received with my team the first Outdoor Access Leadership Award from the Coalition for Outdoor Access, for work to improve outdoor experiences and access to public lands (2016);
- Received with my team the Forest Service Chief's Award for work to develop the 2012 National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule (2012);
- Received The Corps Network Federal Champion Award, for work on the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) public-private partnership to employ youth and veterans on public lands (2011).

EDUCATION:

Yale Law School: J.D., 2008.

Princeton University: A.B., 2003, *magna cum laude*, Geosciences; Environmental Studies Certificate.

INTERESTS:

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Active alum of the Teton Science Schools and class secretary for my law school class. (b) (6)