

Alexis C. Erwin, Ph.D.

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Professional Experience

Trophic Advisory, Washington, D.C.

Jul. 2025 – Present

Consulting firm specialized in building political will for environmental protection, clean energy, and climate action.

Founder and Principal

Client: Megan O'Rourke for Congress (NJ-07)

- Fundraising: Designed and executed a plan to engage academia and the environmental community that yielded \$650k in donations, many from small and first-time donors.
- Policy: Determined the campaign pillars — climate and environment, labor, immigration, healthcare, and housing — and produced evidence-based policy papers on each in consultation with independent researchers in universities and think tanks.
- Public Affairs: Planned, produced and moderated a roundtable for 200 scientists that influenced discourse on the role of science in local and federal policymaking and yielded endorsements from two Congresspeople. Led a second roundtable for 60 environmental leaders, featuring an EVP of a major conservation nonprofit and high-profile environmental advocates.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Washington, DC

Aug. 2014 – Jul. 2025

Former U.S. lead agency for humanitarian assistance and international development, including climate action.

Managing Director, Policy Division, Management Bureau

Jan. – Jul. 2025

- Managed a 7-person team of professional staff. Aligned work plans to organization-wide strategic goals, streamlined operations, and improved coordination with government and NGO partners.
- Oversaw reform of a financial due diligence and oversight program, ensuring prospective grant recipients were fully vetted and funds were used as intended.
- Oversaw responsible closure of an international scientific cooperation program over 4 days using crisis management practices. Identified and executed replacement visa sponsorships and funding for 78 researchers from 23 countries, resulting in them being able to legally stay in the U.S.
- Supervised USAID's chief regulatory official and liaised with White House re: regulatory affairs.

Deputy Director, Policy Implementation and Analytics Office, Policy Bureau

May – Dec. 2024

- Worked closely with USAID's Policy Board and managed its 10-person secretariat, ensuring high-quality, timely services and accountability for goals and initiatives directed by the Board.
- Provided executive support and coordination for the 2024 Meeting of Country Directors.
- Co-managed 3 supervisors and ~25 professional staff responsible for research, development, implementation, and evaluation of all corporate policies, strategies, and position papers.
- Improved morale and effectiveness during a period of organizational change through budget transparency, collaborative planning, and strengths-based performance management for all staff.
- Initiated and maintained key relationships and represented USAID and Bureau in external fora.
- Appointed to co-lead a high-visibility initiative to train USAID's workforce in strategic engagement with funders, elected officials, and public administrators.

Senior Advisor (AAAS Fellow) → Regional Lead → Global Lead, Socio-Environmental Safeguards, Environment Bureau

Aug. 2016 – Apr. 2024

- Accountable for hiring, training, budgeting, work planning, and performance management for 3 internal specialists and 5 external contractors.
- Wrote strategic and technical reports and briefed Members of Congress and staff on the same.
- Transformed coordination among 5 federal agencies through a 2 year reform initiative.

- Managed 8 project evaluations: formed interdisciplinary teams to audit environmental risks of infrastructure projects, e.g., 2 staff -> \$250M road in East Africa; 18 staff -> \$1.3B dam in Malawi.
- Increased evaluation productivity (from 1-2/year to 5-6/year) and impact (by focusing the scope from all environmental and social aspects to core U.S. priorities: financial viability, biodiversity/habitat conservation, Indigenous Peoples rights, broader community acceptance).
- Managed 4 technical grants and contracts, ranging from \$50k/1yr/1.5 staff to \$550k/3yrs/4 staff.

National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC), Annapolis, MD

2013 – 2016 (part time)

Invited Scholar, [Translational Ecology](#) Pursuit

- Collaborated with a 10-member multidisciplinary team to create a pedagogical framework.
- Contributed to, and reviewed, 4 publications
- Presented a toolkit at the 2017 ESA Annual Meeting.

California State Senate, Sacramento, CA

Aug. 2013 – Jun. 2014

Science Advisor (CCST Fellow), Committee on Energy, Utilities and Communications

- Wrote 'SJR 27 (Padilla): Railroad safety: transportation of crude oil' and emerged as California's technical expert on environmental and economic risks of crude-by-rail. Accepted invitations to speak with various media outlets and brief the U.S. Senate Banking Committee staff on this topic.

ESA Service

Speaker and Group Leader for the Graduate Student Policy Award training program	2012, 2018, 2026
Member of the Public Affairs Committee	2013 – 2016
ESA Representative at Climate Science Day	2015
Inaugural Student Liaison to the Policy Section	2012 – 2013
Contributor to <i>An Ecologist's Guidebook to Policy Engagement</i>	2011
Graduate Student Policy Award winner and initiator of the GSPA Alumni Network	2010
Featured guest, <i>Ecologist Goes to Washington</i> podcast	2010

Education

Project Management Professional (PMP) Certification Bootcamp Project Management Institute

Postdoctoral Traineeship International Rice Research Institute

Advisor: Dr. Susan McCouch

Focus: Climate-smart cultivation practices and food security measures for smallholder farmers

Ph.D., Ecology (www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/Alexis-C-Erwin-15960881) Cornell University

Advisor: Dr. Anurag A. Agrawal

Dissertation: Patterns and ecological consequences of aboveground and belowground herbivory

Sc.B. with Honors, Geology and Biology Brown University

Advisor: Dr. Douglass H. Morse

Thesis: Comparative biology of nectar secretion in two native wildflowers