

Leda Cunningham, MA, MBA

Morehead City, NC 28557

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Program Management | **Collaborative Leadership** | **Creative Writing**

KEY QUALIFICATIONS

- ◆ Multilingual program and campaign manager with 20+ years of experience developing and implementing strategies in the public policy, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors that center stakeholder knowledge.
- ◆ Seasoned foundation professional managing a portfolio of 25+ grantees and contractors over 14 years to maximize The Pew Charitable Trusts' investment in advancing public policy, advocacy, and civic life.
- ◆ Proven track record of building trust and working productively with partners, navigating complex policy landscapes and relationships, and finding innovative solutions by focusing on shared priorities.
- ◆ Change maker and problem solver with strong analytical skills to measure the impacts of science-based policies on human and natural systems for data-driven decision making.
- ◆ Suicide widow and sole caregiver for a family of 3 with 10+ years lived experience navigating healthcare and Social Security systems and deep empathy for target populations of key social change strategies.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (a selection)

Wild East Strategies, Morehead City, NC

November 2022-Present

Founder, Principal

- Started a company to convene partners, spark innovation, and increase resources for building personal, community, and ecosystem resilience necessary to advance social progress in rural U.S. coastal areas.
- Lighthouse Environment Partners: Consultant, Co-Founder Co-Director. Led strategic planning and multi-stakeholder team applying for 3 federal climate-ready workforce development grants.
- U.S. Department of Defense, NC Division of Coastal Management, Environmental Defense Fund: Consultant. Co-developed a strategy for integrating climate change impacts into state Land Use Plans.
- University of NC School of Government: Coach. Assist with planning and facilitating Duplin County, NC health educator training with 35 participants seeking to improve meeting facilitation skills.

The Pew Charitable Trusts, Washington, DC

January 2020-November 2022

Officer

- Managed \$2M+ in partner grants and contracts to ensure that Pew-backed policies reflect on-the-ground priorities, engage stakeholders in ongoing advocacy, and promote durable conservation outcomes.
- Developed and implemented campaigns to protect 1M+ acres of coastal habitat in NC and helped implement campaigns to protect 4M+ acres of coastal habitat across other Atlantic states.
- Scoped new lines of work to advance Pew's commitment to equity in the workplace.
- Collaborated with regional military partners to move resources to projects that improve climate resilience on or adjacent to military bases, which account for significant coastal areas in the U.S. Southeast.
- Led strategic planning for new state water quality standards across multiple teams and external partners.

Manager

September 2012-December 2019

- Developed and implemented campaigns to protect ocean habitat, end overfishing, and promote ecosystem-based fishery management in 4 southeast states (NC, SC, GA, FL) and U.S. Caribbean.
- Hired and supervised 4 staff and 10+contractors with direct connections to stakeholders and communities impacted by Pew's work.
- Managed grants and contracts totaling more than \$1M.
- Advanced new rules, regulations, and projects through state, regional, and federal policy vehicles.

Senior Associate

June 2008-August 2012

- Built and managed a diverse portfolio of stakeholders to support conservation measures for 75 species of fish managed by NOAA and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC).
- Supported the Southeast team: tracked, synthesized, and shared fishery management news and developments; represented Pew at key meetings; and expanded bandwidth in all-hands-on-deck times.
- Worked across internal policy and communications teams to write clear and compelling messaging and develop strategic advocacy materials that resulted in favorable policy decisions by the SAFMC.

EDUCATION

Master of Business Administration

May 2006

American University, Washington, DC

Master of Arts, Global Environmental Policy

May 2006

American University, Washington, DC

Bachelor of Arts, Biology

May 2000

Macalester College, St. Paul, MN

CERTIFICATES AND TRAINING (a selection)

Organizational Design Certificate

December 2022

Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

Equity at Work (formerly Whiteness at Work)

October 2020

Freedom School, The Adaway Group, Asheville, NC

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS (a selection)

- Board of Directors, Governance Committee, Chocorua Lake Conservancy, September 2022-Present.
- Network Leader, Eastern Carteret Collaborative, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation Collaborative Problem Solving grant award 2019-2023, Carteret County, NC, January 2020-July 2023.
- Co-author, "Sea Change: Using Citizen Science to Inform Fisheries Management," Bonney et al, *BioScience*, March, 2021.

SKILLS AND INTERESTS

- Computer Skills: Microsoft, Google, Apple platforms; Slack, QuickBooks.
- Languages: English (first language); Spanish (fluent); Swahili (conversational proficiency).
- Interests: Mountaineering and global travel, poetry and writing, Divemaster (scuba professional).