

Eric Dannenmaier Bio

Dr. Eric Dannenmaier is a St. Louis native who attended Drury College in Springfield, Missouri and received a BA in Biology and Political Science with an emphasis in Environmental Studies. He has a law degree from Boston University, a Masters in Human Rights Law from Oxford University, UK, and a Doctorate in Law from Columbia University in New York.

Eric practiced law in Boston and Washington, DC before serving as Director of the Environmental Law Program of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) from 1996 to 2001. While with USAID, Eric and his team worked with governments and citizen groups in over 25 countries to reform and strengthen environmental and natural resource laws, build compliance and enforcement capacity, and promote public participation in conservation and sustainable development decision-making.

Eric moved to New Orleans in 2001 to direct the Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (now the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy) and to teach at Tulane Law School. That year, he also met and later married his wife, Maria Eugenia – an Anthropologist who is originally from La Paz, Bolivia and whose scholarship is focused on indigenous social movements in the Amazon basin.

Eric returned with Maria to the Midwest in 2007, joining Indiana University in Indianapolis, where he became a tenured Professor of Law, taught Environmental and Constitutional Law, and founded and directed the Law School's graduate program in Environmental, Energy, and Natural Resources Law for the next nine years. Eric has researched, published, and counseled widely on environmental democracy and transboundary resource conservation in national and international contexts. His list of clients and patrons includes United Nations agencies, NATO, the World Bank, the Organization of American States, US Environmental Protection Agency, foundations including MacArthur, Mott, and Rockefeller Brothers, and the National Audubon Society, along with, in his words, “numerous birds, fish, and terrestrial species and natural systems – always under pressure, and often on the brink.”

In 2013, President Barack Obama appointed Eric to serve on the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation's Joint Public Advisory Committee, and he was elected Chair in 2017. Eric left IU in 2016 to serve as Dean and Professor of Law at Northern Illinois University, and in 2018, he and Maria have moved to St. Louis so he can return to his roots to work on local and regional environmental law and policy issues.

Much of Eric's work in the past has addressed transboundary river and water basin conservation and governance. He chaired the Inter-American Water Policy Roundtable in 1999-2001, and more recently has directed research on the impact of public participation in watershed governance in the Great Lakes and the Columbia River Basin. In returning to St. Louis, he plans to focus on Mississippi River Basin environmental challenges, including water quality and wetland conservation priorities, transboundary governance frameworks, public education, and advocacy.