

Is This Wall Street Dropout the Future of Environmental Philanthropy?

Like [David Callahan](#)

Marine biologists and public policy wonks, step aside. There's a school of environmental grantmaking that's embracing wheeling and dealing. One practitioner is Roger Ullman, executive director of the Linden Trust for Conservation, and a former investment banker.

Okay, advocacy and biodiversity research are probably not going anywhere, but just as we've seen the rise of philanthrocapitalism, there's a branch of conservation philanthropy focused on market-based strategies and creative financing. (Walton calls it Conservationomics, but I just can't do it.) Business-friendly environmentalism often gets slapped with a greenwashing label, but Roger Ullman is a strong believer that capitalism and protecting natural resources do not need to be at odds with each other, and that many business leaders truly want sustainability. And he bet his career on it.

As he said in a [New York Times profile](#), "My credo is that economic progress and environmental progress are desirable, possible and not mutually exclusive."

Like his boss Larry Linden, who we recently [wrote about](#), Ullman is walking the walk. In 2002, after years at a highly profitable job with Merrill Lynch, he walked away from Wall Street to work on environmental issues. He surveyed the land of environmental groups and the NRDC pointed him to its coalition of business leaders called Environmental Entrepreneurs (E2). E2 recruits high-octane professionals to form their own suit-and-tie Sierra Club of sorts, requiring at least \$1,000 in annual dues from each member, and channeling their business swagger to influence policy.

That was Ullman's gateway drug to using his financial background toward conservation. He's still involved in E2, but starting in 2006 he took the reins at the Linden Trust. Larry Linden clearly saw a kindred spirit in this former Wall Street guy and put him to work toward the Trust's goal of using creative financial strategy to benefit large conservation projects. Linden's latest triumph was helping to shepherd a \$215 million fund to be administered by the WWF to protect the Brazilian Amazon.

Read more about Linden's approach to conservation, and its atypical executive director in our IP profiles below.

[Linden Trust for Conservation: Grants for Conservation](#)

[Roger Ullman, Linden Trust for Conservation](#)