



Laura Cantral

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Summary

A Partner at Meridian Institute with more than 15 years of experience designing and facilitating policy dialogues and strategy development processes. Meridian work and previous experience has focused primarily on ocean and coastal policy issues at the international, national, regional, and state levels. Among other duties, currently Director of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, a collaboration of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission. Additional expertise in the areas of fisheries, ecosystems, biodiversity, natural resources, and security. Holds a J.D. and a B.A. from the University of Mississippi.

Meridian Experience

Meridian Institute

2004–Present

Meridian Institute designs and facilitates collaborative processes that help diverse parties identify critical issues, build relationships and trust, construct innovative solutions, and implement durable decisions. The collaborative processes address challenges at the local, state, national, and international levels, and involve leaders from government agencies, industry, nongovernmental organizations, and international institutions. Meridian also assists organizations in conducting strategy development and planning.

Partner

Responsible for working with clients and team members to coordinate and assist in collaborative problem solving and strategic assessment and planning, including: convening and organizing meetings and activities as required to achieve project goals; advising on direction, strategy, and process design; drafting materials for meetings or other uses as needed; and providing coordinated facilitation, logistical, and research support for meetings and activities. Selected highlights are summarized below:

- Director of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, a collaborative effort by the members of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission to advance the pace of ocean policy reform in a manner consistent with the two Commissions' recommendations. Duties involve project management, process design and facilitation, engaging with senior Congressional and Administration staff, and coordination with Commissioners and diverse interests in the ocean community.
- Project director for a set of related projects aimed at facilitating effective implementation of the Obama Administration's new National Ocean Policy. This

policy is intended to unify and guide the actions of the multiple federal agencies with ocean management responsibilities and bring greater coherence to the numerous laws addressing ocean and coastal resources in order to facilitate better ocean and coastal resource management. Activities include developing reports and white papers on specific technical and policy aspects of the National Ocean Policy, including the use of marine spatial planning approaches; convening meetings of academic, scientific, and policy experts to discuss particular dimensions of the policy's implementation in a nonpartisan environment; and assisting state-based regional ocean partnerships as they prepare to carry out various aspects of the policy.

- Co-lead for a project known as CALAMAR, or Cooperation Across the Atlantic for Marine Governance Integration. This project, conducted in partnership with the Ecologic Institute and funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations, convened a diverse set of experts from government, industry, nongovernmental organizations, academia, and other key ocean stakeholders from the European Union and the United States to discuss shared challenges related to marine governance; strengthen networks by building alliances among key stakeholders; and contribute policy recommendations that incorporated stakeholder perspectives.
- Please see <http://merid.org/staff/lcantral> for a full list of projects completed.

Previous Experience

U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

Washington, DC 2001–2004

Associate Director for Governance

Senior policy staff for this congressionally created national ocean commission.

Responsible for process design, work group facilitation, materials drafting, report writing and editing, and project coordination.

Biscayne Bay Partnership Initiative

Miami, Florida 1999–2001

Consultant/Facilitator

Provided services to the Florida Atlantic University/Florida International University Joint Center for Environmental and Urban Problems, including process design and facilitation, materials drafting, and project coordination.

Florida Governor's Ocean Committee

Tallahassee, Florida 1997–2001

Senior Staff/Policy Analyst

Provided policy analysis, research, and document drafting, as well as assistance with overall process design, project management, and meeting facilitation.

Coastal Managers Training

Charleston, South Carolina and Lisbon, Portugal 1999–2002

Consultant/Trainer

Provided services to the Coastal Services Center of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Developed leadership and communications curriculum and trained coastal managers in the United States and Portugal.

Coastal Management Leadership Training

Stennis Space Center, Mississippi 1998–2001

Consultant/Trainer

Provided services to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf of Mexico Program, including curriculum development and training of program staff.

Florida State University College of Law

Tallahassee, Florida 1995–1997

Professor

Provided instruction on legal research and writing to law students.

University of Mississippi School of Law

Oxford, Mississippi 1988–1995

Research Counsel

Served as legal research counsel for the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Legal Program.

Education**University of Mississippi**

J.D., Law

1987

B.A., English

1984