

## **Nick Dilks - Bio**

Nick Dilks is a Partner of **Ecosystem Investment Partners** (EIP) a private equity fund manager that acquires and manages high priority conservation properties across the United States. EIP delivers competitive returns to its investors through the use of new, market-based mechanisms that reward landowners for the restoration and protection of their natural resources (such as wetlands, streams and endangered species), as well as the sustainable use of more traditional resources (such as forestry and agriculture).

Nick is a native of Philadelphia, and spent much of his childhood on his family's 5<sup>th</sup> generation farm on the Chesapeake Bay in northern Maryland. It was on the farm, and in its fields, forests and marshes, that Nick developed his profound respect for nature, and a deep commitment to conserving and stewarding the land. In high school and college, Nick spent summers working for various land trusts across the country, including the **Nature Conservancy** in Colorado, **The Natural Lands Trust** in Pennsylvania and the **Maryland Environmental Trust**. In 1996, Nick graduated from **Duke University** with a BA in Environmental Science & Policy.

After graduating from Duke, Nick opened **The Conservation Fund's (TCF)** first office in Pennsylvania where he managed the Schuylkill River Watershed Initiative and led land conservation and acquisition projects throughout the State. In 1998, Nick moved to the Fund's home office in Arlington, Virginia to manage its Giftlands Program; a core fundraising program of the Fund whereby major gifts of land are solicited, managed and sold to grow the Fund's *Revolving Fund*, which grew from \$30 million to \$80 million from 1998 to 2006. By 2001, Nick was managing the Fund's real estate program nationwide. During his tenure as Vice President for Real Estate, the Fund conserved over 2 million acres worth \$1 billion nationwide.

While at The Conservation Fund, Nick earned a reputation as an innovator in land conservation strategies. Some of his notable projects included:

- Developing the Fund's carbon sequestration program that acquired, restored and conserved over 30,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forests in the Mississippi Delta; financed through the sale of CO2 credits to fossil fuel-burning utilities.
- Financing the acquisition of the nation's second largest conservation easement acquisition; the 350,000 acre Downeast Lakes Project in Washington County, Maine.
- Establishing the Fund's private equity investment subsidiary, **Sustainable Rural Ventures, LLC**, that will utilize the US Treasury's New Markets Tax Credits Program to finance working forest conservation projects in low-income communities.

While working for the Fund, Nick earned a part-time MBA from the **University of Maryland's RH Smith School of Business**. It was during that time that Nick developed a business plan to address the need for a greatly expanded pool of capital to address the backlog of land conservation projects that non-profit capital (like the Fund's *Revolving Fund*) cannot address alone. In his efforts to capture for-profit investment capital for conservation, Nick met his partners in EIP, who share Nick's passion for developing innovative strategies for conservation finance.