



William Ross Jr.
OF COUNSEL

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Bill Ross is the former Secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and uses his experience in private practice and state government to counsel clients on a wide range of projects, cases and initiatives related to environmental law, natural resources, sustainability, and resilience.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Bill led the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources as the agency's secretary from 2001-2009. The department in those years included 27 different divisions (environmental regulatory agencies like the Division of Air Quality, natural resources management divisions like the Division of Parks and Recreation, educational institutions like the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, and administrative divisions like budget and HR), managed an annual budget of approximately \$1 billion, and had 4,000 permanent and 2,300 seasonal employees. Before serving as secretary, Bill was director of legal affairs for the department (1979-1984) and then a partner at Brooks Pierce, where he helped develop the firm's environmental practice (1984-2001).

Bill now focuses as a lawyer and consultant on projects, cases and initiatives in environmental law, environmental health, natural resource conservation, military readiness, sustainability, and resilience. The U.S. Army awarded Bill its Outstanding Civilian Service Medal in 2008. The recognition included these words:

"The Army recognizes Sec. Bill Ross "for his unwavering support of Army sustainability efforts...He worked tirelessly with the Army to spearhead efforts...to enhance the military, economic, and environmental sustainability of the southeast region." – The Outstanding Civilian Service Medal, U.S. Army

NATURAL RESOURCES LAW

Bill now provides contract support through Texas A&M University's Natural Resources Institute to the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program at the U.S. Department of Defense and to several related initiatives, including the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) and the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership. The REPI Program and these initiatives seek to advance multiple interests (including working lands, conservation, and national defense) through innovation, collaboration, and good maps.

SERVICES

Agribusiness

Construction & Development

Environmental

Manufacturing

Not-for-Profits

Real Estate

Transportation

CREDENTIALS

Honors & Recognitions

Received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, presented by the Governor of NC (2008)

Received the Outstanding Civilian Service Medal, Department of the Army (2008)

Received the 2008 Marvin Collins Outstanding Planning Award, NC Chapter of the America Planning Association

Received the Pelican Award, North Carolina Coastal Federation (2003)

Received the 2003 Environmental Excellence Award, Federal Highway Administration (presented to senior leadership at NC DENR and NC DOT)

Received the 2003 Clean Air Excellence Award, Regulatory/Policy Innovations, US EPA (presented to the State of NC and multiple partners)

Education

University of Virginia School of Law, J.D., 1972

Davidson College, B.A., 1969

Admissions

North Carolina

U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit

U.S. District Court for the Middle and Eastern Districts of North Carolina

PROFESSIONAL & CIVIC

Member (2016-present) and Vice Chair (2021), Board of Directors, Dix Park Conservancy, Raleigh, NC

Chair, U.S. EPA National Advisory Council on Environmental Policy & Technology (2012-2016)

Co-Chair, Research Triangle Environmental Health Collaborative (2012-2015)

Vice Chair, Board of Trustees, Environmental Working Group (2010-present)

Advisory Board, Audubon North Carolina (2014-present)

Former Chair, North Carolina Parks and Recreation Authority (2009-2013)

Member, North Carolina Bar Association (1973-present)

Founding chair, section council member, and member, Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Law Section, North Carolina Bar Association (1987-present)

Member, American Bar Association (1973-present)

Organizer and speaker, Environmental Law and Health, Conservation, Sustainability and Resilience Programs (1980-present)

ABOUT ME

In the 1990s, at a challenging time, I signed up for an Outward Bound trip to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks in California in hopes of finding some inspiration and rejuvenation. On the solo part of that hiking and camping adventure, in a spectacular mountain setting by a clear stream in the High Sierras, I read a number of quotations that were set out in the Outward Bound handbook. One of them, the final verses of Tennyson's poem, Ulysses, inspired me then and inspires me still:

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

NEWSROOM

News

Twenty-one Brooks Pierce Attorneys Recognized in Business North Carolina's "Legal Elite" and "Hall of Fame"

Business North Carolina, 01.04.2015

Brooks Pierce Attorneys Recognized for 2013 Pro Bono Service

10.14.2014

Ross Appointed to National Environmental Council

04.09.2012

15 Brooks Pierce Attorneys Named to Business North Carolina's 2011 "Legal Elite"

12.31.2010

Ross Joins Raleigh Office of Brooks Pierce

09.02.2010

Speaking Engagements

Brooks Pierce Attorney Bill Ross Moderates Two Panels at Sustaining Military Readiness Conference in St. Louis

09.25.2018

Brooks Pierce Presents Seminar on State of Sustainability

07.13.2011

State of Sustainability Event

06.21.2011

Publications

2013 North Carolina Environmental Legislation Summary

07.31.2013