

Lisa Rider (Class of 2025) is a dynamic public administration leader with over 15 years of local government experience and more than five years as a nonprofit executive. She has built expertise in strategic planning, budgeting, environmental advocacy, community engagement, and program development, alongside a proven track record in nonprofit board governance, and policy development. Rider is deeply committed to advancing social and environmental justice across her work. In her current role as Executive Director of Coastal Carolina Riverwatch, Rider leads water quality advocacy efforts in coastal North Carolina. Since 2019 she has overseen program development, grant writing, and partnerships with local, state, and federal stakeholders to address water pollution and protect coastal waterways. She manages the organization's staff and operations, guiding strategic initiatives that enhance organizational capacity and impact. Rider also advocates for community resilience and environmental justice through education and policy initiatives as part of this role.

Previously, Rider served in Onslow County's Solid Waste Department for 15 years, rising to the position of Deputy Director. From 2004 to 2009 she coordinated Keep America Beautiful programs, and from 2009 to 2019 she directed county-wide solid waste management operations. In this leadership role, she oversaw recycling programs, landfill operations, and a landfill gas-to-energy project that reduced emissions while generating renewable energy. She managed multi-million-dollar budgets and developed long-term strategies for waste reduction and sustainability. Rider has an extensive background in marine debris prevention and coastal environmental programs. She is the founder and director of the North Carolina Marine Debris Symposium (established in 2012), through which she created award-winning educational programming for coastal communities. In this capacity, she brings together scientists, educators, policymakers, and community leaders to address marine debris and plastic pollution. Rider has also served as the consumer debris lead for NOAA's Marine Debris Program (Region 4) and as a solid waste advisor for the Plastic Ocean Project. Her consultancy work spans collaborations with local governments, nonprofits, and initiatives like eXXpedition (an all-female scientific voyage, sailing from Recife, Brazil to Bartica, Guyana, researching ocean plastic pollution), and she co-authored the North Carolina Marine Debris Action Plan to guide statewide efforts.

Rider's professional qualifications include multiple certifications in environmental management and emergency response. She is certified by the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) as a Manager of Landfill Operations, Manager of Recycling Systems, and Zero Waste Practitioner. She also holds FEMA certification in Debris Management and is certified in Watershed Management by the U.S. EPA. In addition, Rider has completed advanced training through the UNC School of Government in effective supervisory management, public financing, and performance measurement. Lisa Rider has a B.S. in Behavioral Science at North Carolina Central University (NCCU), Class of 2025. Rider is currently enrolled in a Masters in Public Administration program at NCCU. Her academic background, combined with her professional training, reflects a commitment to continual learning and an interdisciplinary approach to leadership.

Rider's contributions to environmental management and education have earned her numerous awards and honors. She was recognized by the League of Women Voters of Carteret County with a Women in Excellence Award (2023) for her leadership and impact in coastal environmental advocacy. She also received the North Carolina Governor's Achievement Award for Conservation Communicator of the Year (2015) and Water Conservationist of the Year (2025), highlighting her effective public outreach and education on conservation issues. Under her guidance, Onslow County's programs earned a National Association of Counties Award for Community Sustainability (2015) and an ICMA Program Excellence Award (2015) for innovative solid waste management initiatives. Earlier in her career, Rider was honored as the Recycler of the Year (2014) by the Carolina Recycling Association and as Environmental Educator of the Year (2011) by the Environmental Educators of North Carolina. Beyond her primary professional roles, Lisa Rider has demonstrated long-standing commitment to volunteerism and industry leadership. She has dedicated over 30 years to volunteer work in environmental conservation and community outreach, from organizing coastal cleanups to educating the public about sustainability. She has served on the boards of several environmental organizations, including the National Recycling Coalition, the Carolina Recycling Association, and the Plastic Ocean Project. Lisa Rider is also a certified PADI Scuba instructor and loves diving with sharks. She also enjoys reading books, gardening, and traveling in her spare time.