

Mark Tercek



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Position: President and chief executive, the [Nature Conservancy](#), a global nonprofit conservation organization in Arlington.

Career highlights: Tercek worked at Goldman Sachs for more than 20 years, including as managing director of Goldman's Center for Environmental Markets and leading units including corporate finance, equity capital markets and real estate.

Age: 51

Education: BA, English literature and economics, Williams College; MBA, finance, Harvard Business School.

Personal: Lives in Arlington during the week and commutes to Irvington, N.Y., on weekends to be with wife Amy, and their four children, Alison, 18; Margo, 17; Luke, 12; and Rex, 10.

How did you get to where you are?

I had my first lucky break when I received a scholarship to attend Western Reserve Academy, a private school where I serve as president of the board of trustees. This experience helped launch a great and fortunate education at Williams College and Harvard Business School.

After college, I moved to Japan and worked in banking throughout Asia, which led me to Goldman Sachs in 1984. I had the privilege of working at Goldman Sachs for nearly 25 years, a period of tremendous growth for the firm and for me personally, as I held numerous leadership positions during that time. I learned a lot about bringing teams of hard-charging professionals together to collaborate and pursue ambitious goals.

But I reached a point in my career about four years ago when I decided I wanted to move in a different direction and apply my skills to something I cared deeply about. My interest in conservation really took off from Goldman Sachs's work with the Wildlife Conservation Society in Tierra del Fuego, Chile, in 2004. The partnership created a 680,000-acre nature preserve to protect the region's biodiversity for future generations. That was also my first real exposure to the Nature Conservancy, which was an original adviser to that project.

I approached my boss at the time, Hank Paulson (now Treasury secretary), to let him know I was considering leaving the firm to pursue a job in the public sector. He encouraged me to stay and pursue those goals with Goldman Sachs. So Hank and I created the Center for Environmental Markets in 2005.

I felt truly fortunate to lead Goldman's initial steps into the environmental arena, which turned out to be pioneering. All of this work positioned me well for a transition to the Nature Conservancy, and I quickly learned that there were practical arguments to be made for conservation and protecting biodiversity. It's about protecting nature for people, not from people. We believe that our projects can not only achieve meaningful outcomes for nature, but they can help people around the world by protecting the resources we all depend on for our survival and our prosperity.

Everything is linked to life on this planet -- from the air we breathe, to the water we drink, to the foods we eat and the soils we grow them on, to the medicines we use, to the homes we build. So as an investment banker, it's clear to me that we need to approach protection of our natural resources like we would any other long-term investment. We need to revolutionize how we finance and value conservation and protect those investments for the long term.

But that alone would be incomplete without contemplating all of the intangibles nature provides to enrich our lives. I learned this firsthand during several international trips with my wife and four children. We explored many natural treasures in places like Patagonia, Belize, Costa Rica and Tanzania. These are the places and experiences that recharge our souls and help us reconnect to what's really important in life.

I'm really excited to begin this next chapter in my life with the Nature Conservancy -- a job that combines the practical with the inspirational.

-- Judith Mbuya