

Environmental Supervisor

Job Description

Environmental supervisors work for private companies and governments to ensure that they implement best environmental practices as well as comply with federal and state environmental regulations. Supervisors may design and implement company programs to ensure regulatory compliance. They are responsible for ensuring an organization follows environmental ordinances regarding air quality, solid waste, water, natural resources, human health, and pollution.

Salary

Entry — \$35,000
Middle — \$68,000
Top — \$135,000+

Core Tasks

- Study environmental regulations and implement best environmental practices
- Ensure compliance with environmental laws and regulations in areas such as hazardous waste and stormwater
- Provide direction to staff in the specialized, technical, and engineering areas of environmental conservation
- Implement programs and procedures to facilitate a healthier environment

Workplace / Environment

- **Work hours**
Approx. 40 hours/week
(At key milestones overtime work may be required to meet deadlines)
- **Environment**
Majority of time spent in **offices**, with some time spent in the **field** to monitor projects, collaborate with partners, liaise with other agencies, or participate in outreach activities
- **Travel**
Occasional travel locally, nationally, or internationally for business purposes

Education / Prerequisites

Education Level

Degree in fields related to environmental science/studies/engineering, physical/biological sciences, biology, ecology, geography, or geology

Licensing

Usually not required

Pre-Job Preparation

Environmental science classes and technical experience through environmental groups and internships

Experience

Soft Skills

- Verbal and written communication
- Decision-making
- Critical thinking
- Personnel management

Technical Skills

- Knowledge of Earth Sciences
- Ability to interpret environmental laws, codes, and regulations
- Technical Writing



Career Path: Rowena Valencia-Gica

About Me

Environmental Supervisor at
Public Works Engineering

Ph.D. in Environmental Plant and Soil Sciences
from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2007

High School Life

"My childhood experiences shaped me and influenced where I am now. Helping my parents **farm** when living in the **Philippines** had a monumental influence on my decision to pursue an environmental-related field. It made me aware of the various environmental problems that farmers there experience. Unlike students in the U.S., I didn't have the opportunity to **explore careers** before entering the workforce."



College Choices

"I studied hard to get into the most reputable university in my birth country, the **University of the Philippines**, where I pursued a bachelor's degree in agriculture as a **horticulture** major. For my undergraduate thesis, I researched how to improve the production of a local vegetable without using chemicals, which I later learned was the basis of **organic farming**."

Joining the Workforce

"After college, my first job was with an **international tropical fruit exporter**. I learned how to supervise laborers and lead people with various backgrounds."

"I returned to the University of the Philippines to work as a research scientist on **postharvest technologies**. Soon, one of the professors I worked with invited me to join a non-profit organization that conducts market research on agricultural commodities. That job involved developing recommendations to improve farming and marketing conditions in the Philippines."

"My desire for professional development led me to pursue a **master's degree in environmental systems** at the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, Thailand. Upon completion, I was invited to work as a consultant to the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia Pacific**. This increased my awareness of various environmental problems and the urgency to address them."

"In 2000, I moved to Hawaii and pursued my **Ph.D. in plants and soil sciences**, with a minor in natural resources and environmental management. My research focused on **sustainable re-use of animal effluents**, thereby addressing Hawaii's environmental and dairy industry challenges because of its limited land for farming and other activities."

"Upon finishing my graduate degree, I moved to Seattle, Washington, where I landed an **Environmental Specialist** job at the Washington State Military Department. I worked there for nearly 10 years. Then I got promoted as the **Environmental Branch Chief** serving another three years in the agency. My multi-disciplinary team managed environmental programs regarding water quality, hazardous waste, and air quality, among others. My core tasks included budget and personnel management, and acting as a liaison to federal, state, tribal, and local governments."

"In October of 2019, I joined the City of Kent as an **Environmental Supervisor** at the Public Works Engineering. I currently **supervise interdisciplinary staff** who are responsible for managing various programs, including natural resources conservation, solid wastes management, and cross connection control."

About My Job

"I enjoy getting involved in projects and programs that deliver great community service and positive impacts to the community"

Pros

- "Being a supervisor is very rewarding in many ways. You **learn new things** every day, the **compensation** is attractive, and you forge a lot of **connections**."
- "I get to work with **talented and driven professionals**, and I handle a multidisciplinary group of diverse people with **varying perspectives**."
- "I feel good to see how our work directly helps **forests, wetlands,** and **fish habitats** look and function better."
- "I love interacting with **community members** and subject matter experts, including engineers, designers, planners, GIS analysts, etc."

Cons

- "Being a leader can be very challenging because you **can't please everybody**. There are times when you have to make difficult decisions and be the bearer of bad news."
- "Environmental supervisors, as leaders, are usually **held accountable** for their staff's steps, actions, and product delivery."
- "**Balancing** between being a manager and a leader is not easy."

Fieldwork

- "Up to **15%** of my time is spent in the field."
- "Whenever my schedule permits, I join my staff in conducting vegetation **surveying**, lakes monitoring, water sampling, or soil sampling, site visits, and conducting **investigations** about complaints or issues brought to our attention by external customers."
- "Sometimes I am asked to give a **tour** of the Green River Natural Resources area or talk about some of our completed or ongoing projects."

Skills

- "Being a supervisor takes a lot of **commitment**, taking **responsibility**, and technical and **leadership** skills."
- "It is important to be able to work with diverse people with **varying perspectives**."
- "You have to do a lot of **balancing** between being a manager and a leader."
- "Having **extensive technical skills** is important. For example, ability to interpret laws/regulations/codes, plant identification, soil sampling, soil/plant analyses, and scientific report writing."
- "**Public speaking** and **budgeting** are important skills that supervisors exercise regularly."

Office Work

- "I spend **most of my time** in the office."
- "I usually **talk to staff**, attend **meetings**, discuss project needs, conduct personnel-related activities, or group and program **planning** and **decision-making**."
- "I assist staff in **problem-solving**, **manage projects** assigned to me, **collaborate** with other managers or consultants, and liaise with regulators and other agencies."

Education/Experience

- "Take advantage of **AP and IB classes**, **Running Start**, **volunteering**, **internships**, and **job shadowing** opportunities. They are the best way to help you decide what field or major you may be most interested in pursuing."
- "If you're interested in becoming an environmental supervisor, I strongly recommend acquiring as many technical and management skills as possible. You can do this by taking **courses** related to the environmental field, taking on **team-leading roles** early on in your life, or signing up for or organizing an **environmental group**."

The Future of **Environmental Supervising**

"To conserve the environment now is to
secure humanity's future"

"There are **many opportunities** in the environmental profession in the public, private, and government sectors. Jobs such as project managers, research scientists, environmental specialists/technicians, engineers, consultants, educators, and entrepreneurs are growing with increasing concerns about the impacts of climate change."

"I believe that the **need** for the services of environmental supervisors will continue to rise in the future as nations continue to battle **mounting environmental problems** and promote **sustainable environmental strategies** and practices."