

ELAW Fellow: Bernis Cunningham, Nicaragua



Bernis at the 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Katowice, Poland.

PHOTO: Réseau Alternatif des Jeunes-Tunisie (RAJ)

ELAW Fellow Bernis Cunningham Executive Director, Nicaragua Center of Environmental

Nicaraguan attorney Bernis Cunningham comes from a new generation of environmental defenders working to protect the climate. Reflecting on his trip to Poland last year to participate in the 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP24), he said: "Mobilizing young people is the key to protecting the climate. We refuse to debate the science of climate change. We are done with that."

Bernis is also working to tackle plastic waste. He and his colleagues urged businesses in Granada to ban single-use plastics, and "we had businesses voluntarily on board before the city enacted its legal ban," he said.

Bernis traveled to Eugene for his first time in February, to work one-on-one with ELAW staff and participate in the 2019 ELAW Annual Meeting and PIELC.

"The ELAW meeting was inspirational," he said. "The best part was the amazing environmental lawyers. Their work and commitment to protecting the environment gives me hope for a better tomorrow."

While in Eugene, Bernis met with David Atkin, the Founder and Director of the Center for Nonprofit Law. David spoke with Bernis about non-profit law in the U.S. and keys to strong non-profit organizations.

Many thanks to David for providing pro bono support and to Patty and Ralph Jaszowski for hosting Bernis through the ELAW Host Family Program.