

Dr. Elizabeth Southerland (USEPA—retired)

Dr. Southerland retired from the USEPA in 2017 as Director of the Office of Science and Technology in the Office of Water following a 40-year career as an environmental engineer/scientist for Federal, State and local environmental protection agencies, including 33 years at USEPA.

At USEPA, she led or made major contributions to water quality management, drinking water protection, and hazardous waste site clean-up programs. She led the development of national regulations and guidance manuals; coordinated and negotiated with state environment agencies, industry representatives, and environmental groups; and testified before Congressional committees. Her accomplishments include the development of the following influential rules and guidance documents: the first federal controls on toxic wastewater discharges from coal-fired power plants; the FDA-EPA national fish consumption advisory on mercury contamination; national drinking water health advisories for harmful algal bloom toxins and the toxic “forever chemicals” PFOA and PFOS; and a systematic approach for deriving hazardous waste cleanup standards. In 2015, Dr. Southerland received the Distinguished Presidential Rank Award for her career at USEPA.

Prior to joining USEPA, Dr. Southerland led stormwater pollution control programs for the Virginia State Water Control Board, and she managed the development of the first water quality model of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed (covered 6 states and 64,000 sq mi) while completing her PhD research.

She received her PhD in Environmental Science and Engineering from Virginia Tech which inducted her into the Academy of Distinguished Alumni in 2013.