ENV SP: the only accreditation I will ever have

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I have been a longtime “anti-letters after my name” professional. In fact, I would often joke that I wanted to drop my last name to have even fewer letters at the end of my emails. Having jumped from the public sector to the private consulting world (via nonprofit), I was shocked at the enormous importance that was placed on having these letters. It was not as if I was against learning new things or taking tests—I actually test well in the standardized format. It was just that I never really felt that there was an accreditation that accurately captured my profession as a Climate Change Protection Specialist/Sustainability Planner. I learned everything on the job—sometimes I made things up as I went along. Twelve years ago there were a lot fewer of us talking about this stuff so we had to be resourceful!

As the first Sustainability Director for the City of Medford, Mass., I remember when the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards really started gaining traction and everyone was racing to get credentialed. Even though I was fairly well versed in the checklist and understood what needed to be done, I knew that I was never going to be an architect and I thought, “Why bother? I don’t have the time anyway. While everyone is out there studying for a test to certify green buildings, I am actually making our buildings greener by changing out lighting, adding insulation, replacing boilers, etc.”

Fast forward ten years, and I am entering the private consulting world for the second time in my career. I remained steadfast in my efforts to avoid the credentialing process. At this point, I am an established sustainability professional and I have already spoken at hundreds of conferences—actually helping so many of you get your maintenance credits. How ironic! But now, in addition to being a professional, I am a wife and a mother and I want to spend the little free time I have with my family. I certainly do not have time for letters after my name now!

Then it happened. Envision™. A rating system for sustainable infrastructure. Hmmmm. This is different. A way to apply the principles of sustainability to infrastructure projects—bringing some structure to an amorphous topic. Yes! Okay, I’m intrigued. This is a new rating system and there are less than one hundred credentialed professionals in North America (at the time). Okay, now I’m excited. I love being on the cutting edge and

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helping create something new. So after a few months of talking about it, I finally dove in.

I applied to the program on September 5, 2012. I started with the guidance document and really dug through each section wanting to fully understand the intent of each component of the rating system framework. Then I tackled the online educational modules. This took a lot longer than I hoped. Free time is such a precious commodity these days—it can be really hard to come by. Between new projects, new staff at work, sick baby, holidays, birthdays, business travel, closing out projects, sick baby, big proposals, husband travelling, no sleep, new nanny, sick baby—before I knew it December was here! I had a week of business travel at the beginning of the month and then less than ten days in the office before breaking for winter holidays, including my husband's birthday which happened to be the same day as the end of the Mayan Calendar—the APOCALYPSE. There was so much to do before I could actually enjoy my winter break. Why bother getting credentialed if the world is going to end anyway…I need to at least wait until after December 21. Then came December 22—the Earth was still here and so was I. I promised myself I would not go into 2013 without my ENV SP. Sadly I waited until the very last minute on this one. I started the test around 9:30 p.m. and finished around 11:00 p.m. All in, I would say that I spent a solid 12 hours preparing for and taking the ENV SP exam. When you spread it out over a few months, it is not that bad. I received the results indicating that I passed at 11:22 p.m., December 31, 2012! Just made it!

Then I drank a glass of champagne celebrating my accomplishment and preparing for a great 2013!

Feeling energized and excited to join the now more than 200 ENV SPs on the continent?? If I can do it, ANYONE can do it!! Here is what you need to know:

Qualifications & Costs
In order to become an ISI Credentialed Envision™ Sustainability Professional (ENV SP), you must hold a four-year degree or have a Professional Engineer or equivalent designation. If you meet those basic requirements you can apply to the program. There are fees to apply and to take the test. The table below outlines the fees.

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<th>ISI Members</th>
<th>Full Time Government Employees</th>
<th>Full Time Faculty</th>
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If I had one tip to offer, like everything else set a goal and commit to getting it done. I recommend scheduling time in your calendar to make sure it does not fall off the “to do” list!

Good luck!

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