

Laura Villalobos
Assistant Professor in Economics
Salisbury University

Office:

Perdue School of Business
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Fields of Concentration:

Environmental & Climate Change Economics
Development Economics
Applied Econometrics

Current position:

Assistant Professor (September 2021-Present)
Department of Economics and Department of Environmental Studies
Salisbury University
Maryland, United States

Education:

Postdoctoral researcher

Inter-American Development Bank, 2017 – 2021
Climate Change and Sustainable Development Sector
Washington, D.C., United States

Graduate Studies

Ph.D. in Economics, 2012 – 2017
Department of Economics, Environmental Economics Unit, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
Dissertation Title: *Impact Evaluation of forest conservation policies and the effects of weather on school attendance*
Supervisors: Måns Söderbom (principal) & Jessica Coria
Opponent: Professor Carol Newman, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

Visiting Scholar

University of Cambridge, Jan – April 2016
Department of Land Economy & Cambridge Centre for Environment, Energy and Natural Resource Governance (C-EENRG)
Supervisor: Andreas Kontoleon

M.Sc. in Environmental Economics

Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), 2008 – 2009
Turrialba, Costa Rica
Thesis: “National parks’ effects on local communities’ wages and employment in Costa Rica”

B.A Economics

Department of Economics, University of Costa Rica, San José, 2003 – 2007

Grants, Honors and Awards:

Research Grant: Bridging National Environmental Goals and Local Action in Federal Systems: Meso-Level Governance for Afforestation, Reforestation, and Restoration. Submitted to the National Science Foundation, Federal, \$1,000,000.00. (Pending).

Research Grant: Effects of Protected Areas on Human Migration. Sponsored by Perdue School of Business Summer Research Grant, Salisbury University, \$5,000.00. (May 2024).

Research Grant: Effects of air pollution on academic achievement in Bogotá, Colombia. Sponsored by Perdue School of Business Summer Research Grant, Salisbury University, \$5,000.00. (May 2022).

Research Grant. Project: The Socio-hydrological System of a Tropical Forest Frontier: Land-Climate-Water Feedbacks and Farmer Adaptation. Funded by National Science Foundation, CNH-1825046, Federal, \$1,500,000.00. (March 2022 – August 2023).

Research Grant. Project: Adaptation mechanisms against negative effects of weather on human capital formation. Funded by the Environment for Development Initiative (EfD), \$60,000. (2019-2020).

SIDA academic capacity building program, grant for doctoral studies, 2012-2017

Adlerbertska Stipendiestiftelsen Travel Grants 2012 to 2016

Siamon Stiftelsen Travel Grant, 2014

Summa cum laude 2008 Class & Distinguished MSc. Dissertation. CATIE, 2009

Publications:

Villalobos, L., Caviglia-Harris, J., Harris, D., Frey, E., (2026) Rural Electrification in the Brazilian Amazon: No Environment-Development Tradeoff. *Land Economics* (Forthcoming).

Brodeur, A., et al. (2026) Reproducibility and Robustness of Economics and Political Science Research. *Nature* (Forthcoming).

Villalobos, L., & Blackman, A. (2025) Air pollution and education in the Global South: Fine particulates reduce high-stakes test scores in Bogotá. *Applied Economics Letters*

Blackman, A., Leguizamo, E., & Villalobos, L. (2024). Points, cells, or polygons? On the choice of spatial units in forest conservation policy impact evaluation. *Environmental Research Letters*.

Blackman, A., Bonilla, J. A., & Villalobos, L. (2023). Quantifying COVID-19's silver lining: Avoided deaths from air quality improvements in Bogotá. *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, 117, 102749.

Villalobos, L., Robalino, J., Sandoval, C., & Alpizar, F. (2022). Local Effects of Payments for Ecosystem Services on Rural Poverty. *Environmental and Resource Economics*, 1-22.

Blackman, A., & Villalobos, L. (2021). Use forests or lose them? Regulated timber extraction and tree cover loss in Mexico. *Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists*, 8(1), 125-163.

Blackman, A., & Villalobos, L. (2019). Clear, but don't invest: protected areas discourage some land uses more than others. *Environmental Research Letters*, 14(10), 104002.

Villalobos, L., Coria, J., & Nordin, A. (2018). Has forest certification reduced forest degradation in Sweden?. *Land Economics*, 94(2), 220-238.

Robalino, J., Pfaff, A., & Villalobos, L. (2017). Heterogeneous local spillovers from protected areas in Costa Rica. *Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists*, 4(3), 795-820.

Robalino, J., & Villalobos, L. (2015). Protected areas and economic welfare: an impact evaluation of national parks on local workers' wages in Costa Rica. *Environment and Development Economics*, 20(3), 283-310.

Book chapters:

- Blackman, A., Leguizamo, E., Villalobos, L. (2026). Choosing Spatial Units for Geospatial Impact Evaluation. In *Geospatial Impact Evaluation (Forthcoming)*
- Damgaard, M. T., Gravert, C., & Villalobos, L. (2018). *Forgetful or Reluctant? Evidence on Reminder Response and Donor Behavior from Panel Data* (pp. 219-238). CESifo seminar series, MIT Press.
- Robalino, J., Pfaff, A., & Villalobos, L. (2012). Assessing the impact of institutional design of payments for environmental services: the Costa Rican experience. In *Ecosystem Services from Agriculture and Agroforestry* (pp. 339-352). Routledge.

Work in progress:

- Climate Sensitivity in Rainfed Dairy Systems: Evidence from the Brazilian Legal Amazon (with Katrina Mullan, Jill Caviglia-Harris, Trent Biggs, Erin Sills, Camila Abe, Rodrigo Moreira, Mariana Vedoveto, Fernando De Sales)
- Cleaner Air vs. Cooler Temperatures: Returns to Environmental Policy in Education
- Do property rights interventions in the Tropics protect forests? (with Daniela Miteva et al.)
- Effects of Protected Areas on Human Migration (with Diego Herrera)
- Heat and Test Scores: Unpacking the Heterogeneity (with Julián D. Gómez and Jorge H. García)

Professional experience:

- Workshop organizer*, Replication Games with R. Rondônia, Brazil. August 1-3, 2024
- Summer intern*, Resources for the Future (RfF). Washington, D.C. Summer 2013.
- Junior Research Fellow in Environmental Economics*. Environment for Development Initiative (EfD-CA). Turrialba, Costa Rica. January 2008- August 2012.
- Research Assistant*. Institute for Research in Economic Sciences (IICE). University of Costa Rica 2006-2007.
- Research Assistant*. Center of Economic and Environmental Studies (CIESA). Costa Rica. 2006.

Teaching and supervision experience:

- Assistant Professor* (undergraduate level courses): Environmental and Natural Resource Economics, Principles of Environmental Economics, Research Methods, Econometrics, Principles of Microeconomics, First Year Seminar
- Honors thesis advisor*: Daisy Holder (Economics)
- Senior thesis advisor*: Brendan Elliot (double major in Environmental Studies and Economics)
- Guest Lecturer*. Environmental Policy Assessment and Evaluation (Masters Level). Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge. 2016.
- Co-supervisor* of Master theses in environmental economics, University of Cambridge & CATIE, 2016.
- Teacher Assistant*. Undergraduate thesis course, Gothenburg University, 2014.
- Lecturer*. Introductory Economics & Environmental Valuation (Masters Level, in Spanish). CATIE 2011.

Conferences, workshops, and Seminar Presentations:

- Revisiting the Empirical Evidence on Deforestation. Organized by I4R and RWI. November, 2025, Cologne, Germany.
- Department of Economics (Center for Health and Society, CSS). University of Copenhagen (November, 2025) Comparing the Effects of Heat and Air Pollution on Academic Test Scores: A Systematic Review.
- Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association (NAREA). Annual Meeting. June, 2025. Burlington, Vermont. Rising Star Keynote. Quantifying externalities in the Tropical Americas

Latin American Association of Environmental and Resources Economists (LAERE). March, 2025. Bogotá. Climate Variability, Milk Productivity, and Adaptation in the Seasonally Dry Amazon Basin

University of Costa Rica (UCR) Economics Annual Conference. December, 2024. Environment or Development? Impacts of Rural Electrification on Household Income and Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon

Southern Economic Association (SEA) 94th Annual Meeting. November 2024, Washington, D.C. Climate Variability, Milk Productivity, and Adaptation in the Seasonally Dry Amazon Basin.

NAREA, 2024. Climate variability and milk production in the seasonally dry Amazon basin

MEA, 2024. Impacts of Rural Electrification on Household Welfare in the Brazilian Amazon

Department of Economics, California State University, Fullerton. October 2022 (invited virtual presentation at Seminar Series)

Southern Economic Association (SEA) 92nd Annual Meeting. November 2022, Fort Lauderdale

16th Annual meeting of the Environment for Development Initiative (EfD). Senegal, September, 2022 (virtual presentation).

Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association (NAREA). Annual Meeting. June, 2022. Mystic Connecticut

Cambridge Centre for Environment, Energy and Natural Resource Governance (C-EENRG) (November, 2020)

Economics, Finance and Statistics , Jönköping International Business School (November, 2020)

6th Biannual Meeting of the Environment for Development (EfD) Forest Collaborative Initiative, Manchester, 2019.

12th Annual meeting of the Environment for Development Initiative (EfD). Hanoi, 2018.

6th World Congress of Environmental and Resource Economists (WCERE). Gothenburg, 2018

Department of Management and Engineering. Linköping University, 2017 (invited seminar).

Institute of Public Finance, University of Innsbruck, Austria, 2017 (invited seminar).

22nd EAERE Annual Conference, Zurich, 2016.

17th Annual BIOECON Conference, Cambridge, UK, 2015.

LACEEP 10+ Event Lomas de Santa Fe, Mexico City, 2015.

21st EAERE Annual Conference, Helsinki, Finland, 2015.

8th Annual Meeting. Environment for Development (EfD) Initiative. Tanzania, 2014.

5th World Congress of Environmental and Resource Economists (WCERE). Istanbul, 2014.

North America Congress for Conservation Biology (NACCB). Oakland, California, 2012.

19th EAERE Annual Conference, Prague, 2012.

Conference “Mind the Gap: From evidence to policy impact” Cuernavaca, Mexico, 2011.

Workshop “Midiendo la Deforestación Evitada: un enfoque de Políticas Públicas” Mexico, 2011.

Camp Resources XVII. North Carolina, 2010.

4th World Congress of Environmental and Resource Economists (WCERE). Montreal, 2010.

IV Congress of the Latin American and Caribbean Association of Environmental and Natural Resources Economists (ALEAR). Costa Rica, 2009.

Professional Affiliations:

NAREA’s Executive Board (Director) 2025-
 NAREA's Scholars' Circles
 NAREA Career Advancement and Mentorship (CAM) Program
 Latin American Association of Environmental and Resources Economists (LAERE)
 Environment for Development Initiative (EfD)

Referee services:

University of Costa Rica; AMBIO; Journal of Health Economics (JHE); Journal of Environmental Economics and Management (JEEM); Environment and Development Economics (EDE); World Development (WD); Desarrollo y Sociedad, edited by the Universidad de los Andes, Colombia.

Languages:

Spanish (native), English (fluent), Portuguese (fluent), French (beginner)

Training Courses:

Certificate in Effective Teaching Practice Framework. Association of College and University Educators [2025] This certificate signifies my completion of a 25-module course in effective teaching practice framework requiring the implementation of evidence-based instructional approaches. The certificate is co-issued by the American Council on Education and distinguishes faculty for their commitment to educational excellence and student success.

Data Scientist with R (career track). Data Camp. 2019.

Machine Learning for All. Inter-American Development Bank, 2019.

Advanced Econometric Methods for Development Effectiveness by Jeffrey M. Woolridge. Inter-American Development Bank, 2018.

Research Transparency and Reproducibility by Berkeley Initiative for Transparency in the Social Sciences (BITSS). Inter-American Development Bank, 2018.

Research Methods in Sustainable Development. 6th Annual Alliance Graduate Summer School. Paris, 2017. Columbia University.

Impact Evaluation. LACEEP. Turrialba, Costa Rica, 2011.

Evaluating Social Programs Course. Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), MIT, 2014.

Economics of ecosystem services and biodiversity. LACEEP, Turrialba, Costa Rica, 2011.

Applying Game Theory and Behavioral Economics to the Environment. Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics. Montreal, 2010.

Economic experiments applied to behavioral economics. EfD-CA, Turrialba, Costa Rica, 2009.

Environmental economics with emphasis on the role of businesses on the environment and climate change issues. (LACEEP). Turrialba, Costa Rica. 2009.

Elements of Analysis. University of Costa Rica, MSc. in Applied Mathematics, 2009.

Global Positioning Systems related to information technology and applied to natural resources. National University of Costa Rica (UNA), Heredia, Costa Rica, 2008.

Environmental Policy and Resource Economics. LACEEP, Turrialba, Costa Rica, 2008.

Policy-oriented research & media coverage:

The world's rainforests are vanishing. In this one country, they're growing back. Vox. [March, 2026] <https://www.vox.com/climate/479573/costa-rica-forest-ecosystem-services>

Climate change affects school performance in tropical developing countries. EfD News. (2020) <https://www.efdinitiative.org/news/climate-change-affects-school-performance-tropical-developing-countries> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V-cgZzjQvw&t=1s>

Special Report Contribution to: Estado de la Nación en Desarrollo Humano Sostenible (2014). Efectividad de las políticas de conservación en Costa Rica. Capítulo 4 Armonía con la Naturaleza. With J. Robalino

La Nación, newspaper: "Vivir cerca de parque nacional potencia pago de trabajadores" November 19th, 2015. http://www.nacion.com/vivir/ambiente/Salario-vecinos-areas-protegidas-superior_0_1525247476.html.

Robalino, J., Lang, G., Moraes, C., Sandoval, C., Vargas, L., Villalobos, L. (2014). Evaluación de Impacto del Distrito de Riego Arenal-Tempisque Región Chorotega, Costa Rica, 1981-2011. Strategic Public Evaluation (commissioned by the Costa Rican Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy, MIDEPLAN).

- Alpizar, Francisco; Robalino, Juan; Sandoval, Catalina; Villalobos, Laura. 2012. Local Effects of Payments for Environmental Services on Poverty. RFF Discussion Paper EfD 14-12 May 2014.
- Alpizar, F., Naranjo, M., Vargas, A., Villalobos, L., and Muñoz, C. (2011). Cost based pricing tool to estimate the cost of providing non-essential services in protected areas: Case Study National Park Corcovado and Marino Ballena. The Nature Conservancy, Costa Rica.
- Chacón, A., Naranjo, M., and Villalobos, L. (2011) Evaluation of the impacts of the Mesoamerican Agroenvironmental Program (MAP): constructing the baseline. Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE).
- Robalino, J. and Laura Villalobos (2009) Conservation and welfare: Effects of National Parks on local employment in Costa Rica. Paper elaborated for the Poverty-environment publication series of the UNEP-UNDP Initiative.

Non-academic activities:

Rock climbing, hiking, yoga, lindy hop dancing, and Gamelan (traditional Indonesian music).