

## Maritza Arizaga

### Equity and Community Engagement Manager



Maritza Arizaga joined Western Resource Advocates (WRA) in 2023 as an equity and community engagement manager, where she champions the harmonious blend of environmental justice, equitable conservation, and community empowerment. Her responsibilities include coaching, facilitating, and amplifying equity principles within WRA's internal teams and with external partners to effectively advance state-level policy change.

At the heart of Arizaga's role lies the art of network weaving, a process that deepens social relationships through the practice of design thinking and equitable methodologies to drive systems change. To do this, she advises teams to embrace an intentional equity lens and fosters genuine partnerships with historically marginalized groups. Her role embodies her commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and fostering inclusivity. She sees herself as a thought partner with WRA's policy teams to drive equitable and inclusive human-centered results.

Arizaga's childhood memories trace back to a ranch in Carbondale, Colo., where the towering Mount Sopris ignited her fascination with the natural world. Raised in a family that cherished the beauty of nature, her journey as a first-generation Latina was marked by a spirit of service that enriched her community involvement in the Grand Valley and Roaring Fork regions. These experiences nurtured Arizaga's sense of belonging and catalyzed her commitment to social and environmental justice.

Although her initial path leaned towards a career in medicine, Arizaga recognized that it was path fraught with barriers, and she couldn't deny how her heart gravitated towards the environment. A college course on environmental ethics reshaped her philosophy, unveiling the interconnectedness of humanity and the Earth. This recognition galvanized her resolve to champion equity, both within her own life and in the environment. She believes that our planet is worth protecting for the intrinsic value of all living things that make up our natural systems.

Arizaga's journey serendipitously led to WRA after a transformative six-month exploration of South America. The organization's commitment to climate justice and equity resonated deeply, leading her to embrace her passion of advancing social change. She envisions a future where resilient communities coexist harmoniously with the environment. And her work at WRA allows her to translate this vision to tangible change.

Arizaga's proudest moments are intertwined with collaboration. Previously with The Nature Conservancy, she worked with a global team in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to advance conservation plans centered on Indigenous stewardship. She values learning from diverse perspectives and cherishes the opportunity to connect with Indigenous leaders worldwide.

Arizaga received a Bachelor of Science in Ecosystem Science and Sustainability from Colorado State University and an Associate of Science in Biology from Colorado Mountain College. As part of her capstone project, she led preliminary research identifying barriers and opportunities for women in conservation. Her impact extends beyond the professional realm as a volunteer leader at Latino Outdoors and with a PADI open-water scuba certification.

Arizaga resides in Fort Collins, Colo., with her partner Paul and their spirited pup, Luna. During her leisure time, she finds solace in Colorado's mountains. Whether paddleboarding, hiking, or skiing, nature is her sanctuary. Her creative spirit thrives as she crafts jewelry and explores culinary delights.

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