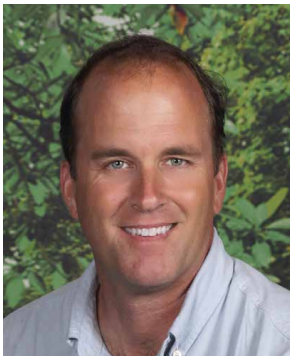


XMNR Class of 2015: Student Profiles

Each January, a new cohort of professionals begins the Executive Master of Natural Resources (XMNR), an interdisciplinary graduate degree program focusing on leadership for sustainability. The XMNR Class of 2015 includes individuals with extensive experience in business, government, and civil society. Throughout the XMNR program, students collaborate with faculty, peers, and partner organizations on applied research and service learning projects to advance innovative solutions to natural resource management, environmental conservation, and sustainable development challenges.



Bern Hoffmann is in his sixth year as the Sustainability Coordinator at The Potomac School, a K-12 school in McLean, VA. Bern's work spans several areas in the community. He maintains oversight of sustainable operational systems inside the buildings, such as student composting and recycling. In addition, he has developed new initiatives on the school's 90 acre campus, such as a sustainable cycle for utilizing wood as a resource on campus and the implementation of a meadow restoration program in support of Fairfax County Low Impact Development (LID) practices. Bern also works with teachers and staff to develop curriculum and student programs that ignite a passion in students for the natural world around them and begin to equip and habituate them to engaging life as a 'part of' rather than 'apart from' that natural world. This work ranges from helping first graders build adobe bricks and a real brick oven to cook their own pizza to introducing high school seniors to basic systems modeling as a way to explore current environmental issues. Most recently, Bern brought together a team of teachers at Potomac to design a faculty-led retreat focused on campus use and sustainability in the curriculum. Bern's enjoyment of the diversity within his job comes from a seemingly disparate array of prior experiences which include skydiving instructor, cabinet maker, public school teacher, English Language Teacher in Thailand, beekeeper, and traveler. Bern lives in Falls Church with his wife Jenni, 1 year-old son, Park, and their dog, Skyler.



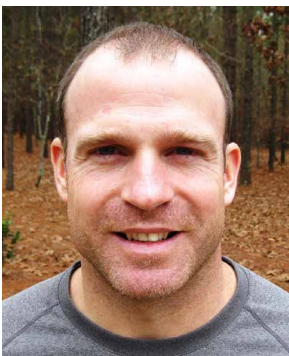
Kim Sutherland received a Bachelor degree from Michigan State University and a Master of Business Administration from Wayne State University. She started her career managing finance and administration in the small business and start-up information technology world, and then focused on human resources management in the health care industry. For the last nine years, she has been working as a human resources consultant for small to medium-sized organizations, as well as managing operations as the Chief Operating Officer for Potomac Companies, Inc., a DC Metro employee benefit brokerage and consulting firm. Her key achievements include the development of a comprehensive health care cost management analysis program and functioning as the Committee Chair for the HR Development Committee of The ProSential Group (a national network of HR and employee benefit consulting firms). She has been a certified Senior Professional in Human Resources since 2000 and a Certified Employee Benefit Specialist since 2009. After over eight years as a volunteer Keeper Aide in the Elephant House of the Smithsonian National Zoological Park on weekends, and as many years supporting a multitude of conservation and animal welfare organizations, Kim made the decision to make a career out of these passions. The XMNR program is the first step toward her goal of a new career in environmental and wildlife sustainability.



Edward Pachico received a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Sciences from UMASS Amherst specializing in the integration of eco-agriculture, waste recycling and renewable energy generation. He also has an extensive background in industrial hygiene, hazardous waste remediation, water and wastewater treatment and environmental laboratory analysis. While employed with Johnson Controls Integrated Facility Management he worked at several military bases including the US Army Kwajalein Island Missile Range in the Republic of the Marshall Islands focusing on asbestos removal, underground storage tanks and PCB cleanups. Other experience includes working for a small company using plants in phytoremediation projects to remove lead, chromium, arsenic and radionuclides from soil. He also worked as the Associate Director of Safety and Health Services for Associated General Contractors (AGC), a construction trade organization, focusing on OSHA regulations affecting the construction industry, increasing the number of contractors qualifying for the Voluntary Protection Program (VPP), and was the AGC staff contact for members that served on various OSHA and ANSI committees. For the last six years he has worked for a small facility management company on projects in DC including the National Archives and WMATA. When not training for triathlons or working on a friend's organic farm, Ed volunteers his time as a Symposium Facilitator for Pachamama Alliance whose goal is to "create an environmentally sustainable, socially just and spiritually fulfilling human presence on this planet".



Jenna Valente is the Communications Office Staffer for the Chesapeake Bay Program, a unique regional partnership that brings together leaders and experts from a vast range of agencies and organizations to set goals and make policies regarding the restoration the Chesapeake Bay watershed. She developed a passion for conservation through her outdoorsy nature and being raised in Hawaii, Washington State and Maine. A graduate of the University of Maine's Communication program, she loves any opportunity to educate the public about the importance of conserving the environment. Following her undergraduate education, she traveled to Chincoteague Island, Virginia where she completed two internships at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, one Shorebird Management Program and another in Visitor Services. Her hard work opened the door to a Park Ranger position at the refuge where she led a number of interpretive and educational programs, including archery and hunt orientations. During graduate school, Jenna is excited to make new connections and undergo personal growth and a cultural transformation.



Mike Beckner has a BSc in Wildlife Science from Virginia Tech (2001) and a BSc in Wildlife Management from the University of Pretoria, South Africa (2002). In 2003, he moved to Tanzania and took a job as a lodge manager on Lake Victoria, with the hopes of getting involved with conservation efforts. In 2006 he became a Protected Area Manager for Tanzania Game Tracker Safaris and the Friedkin Conservation Fund (FCF). He lived and worked in the Ugalla Game Reserve for two years coordinating and participating in anti-poaching efforts, community development initiatives, research projects, and tourist related activities. At the end of 2007, Beckner moved to the FCF headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania and became the organization's Anti-poaching Coordinator, a position he held until April of 2012. Duties and responsibilities included coordination and management of activities and logistics, planning and participating in special anti-poaching operations, coordination and management of advancement training, and liaising with Tanzanian Wildlife Division personnel; as well as with government officials. Beckner learned kiSwahili, worked on wildlife photography, played rugby and cricket, and travelled. He moved back to the US in June of 2012 and was fortunate to get to see a lot of the country while on an extended road trip, settling in Falls Church in June of 2013. He currently does consulting work for Conservation International in Arlington, VA.



Mike Mattox is the newly elected Mayor of Altavista, Virginia. A small community (population 3300) located in south central part of the state. Prior to serving as mayor he had served ten years as a member of Town Council having worked on various committees which made budgetary and policy decisions for the town. In addition, Mike was a charter board member of the town's Main Street program "Altavista on Track" and served on the town's Planning Commission. At a regional level, Mike currently serves as Vice-Chair of the Region 2000 Partnership Executive Committee and on the local advisory board for the Bank of the James. Mike has been a small business owner for most of his adult life and the entrepreneurial spirit runs through him. Having seen the good times and bad times of our ever changing economic cycles, during the downturn of 2002, he decided to return to school and earn his undergraduate degree. In 2006, Mike graduated Summa Cum Laude with a BS in Geology from Virginia Tech. He then spent 7 years teaching 8th/9th grade Earth Science in the public school system. His hobbies include canoeing, reading and traveling. Along with his wife Denise, Mike has two daughters (Sarah and Emily) and a grandson (Cameron).



Ellen Graap Loth is a Senior Environmental Scientist with Cardno TEC, Inc. in Charlottesville, Virginia, where she manages projects for government and private sector clients. Ellen started her career in hazardous waste management, assisting industrial clients in characterizing and identifying appropriate treatment and disposal options for their wastes. The field evolved significantly during this period, as federal regulations banned specific substances from land disposal, recycling and treatment technologies emerged and gained acceptance, and manufacturers reduced waste by identifying new uses for their industrial byproducts. As some clients sought to reduce the liability associated with the long-term disposition of their wastes, Ellen began conducting compliance audits of treatment, storage, and disposal facilities. Over time her increasing involvement with clients managing commercial properties led Ms. Graap Loth to perform environmental due diligence assessments for commercial real estate transactions and to assist clients in identifying and managing hazards. As her work expanded to include a wide range of chemical hazards, she sought and acquired professional recognition as a Certified Hazardous Materials Manager. Ellen has gained significant experience conducting multi-media compliance audits over the past 15 years and has assisted several clients in developing an environmental management system (EMS). She successfully completed ISO 14001 EMS Lead Auditor training and in 2012 became a Certified Professional Environmental Auditor. Her former company was acquired by an Australian-based infrastructure and environmental services firm, and Ellen was recently asked to serve on their Corporate EMS Implementation Committee.



Anthony Francisco received his B.S. in Accounting and MAcc degrees from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. In addition, he has gained an interest in sustainability taking classes from the Earth Institute Center for Environmental Sustainability at Columbia University. His work background has included accounting positions in telecommunications and commercial real estate. His current role as a municipal tax consultant assists cities with collecting lost tax revenue. He has volunteered for various non-profits including the Georgia Aquarium. He currently serves as a member of the development review committee for his neighborhood. This committee is tasked with ensuring that future development plans meet the transportation and zoning needs of the community.



Jason Kovac has worked in the field of commercial construction for approximately ten years. Areas of expertise are medical/laboratory construction and higher educational facilities. Primary clients have been Virginia Tech and Carillion Healthcare Systems of Roanoke, VA. While working in the industry his primary roles have been working as the project manager on several projects to recently pursuing the field management side of construction, by focusing on exterior envelope construction/performance of buildings. Prior to starting in the industry he received his B.S. in Architecture from Virginia Tech University and is currently working on finishing up his Master's of Science in Construction Management from Virginia Tech as well. Along the way some other professional accomplishments are receiving his LEED AP BD+C, becoming a member of ABAA (air barrier association of america) as a level III installer/quality control manager for fluid applied and sheet membrane air barrier installation, ASHE certification, Navisworks certification, & OSHA 30 hr./on site construction safety certified.



Kathryn Wittner is currently an Assistant Professor in the Landscape Architecture Program, Resource Management Division, Davis College of Agriculture at West Virginia University. She works to advance the application of placemaking and ecological theories in planning and design. Her teaching emphasizes the ecological and cultural basis of sustainable development in both undergraduate and graduate courses, which in turn, facilitates her research and teaching. She is a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, U.S. Green Build Council and Environmental Design Research Associates. Projects Ms. Wittner has been involved with include: sustainable landscapes and development, ecological design and stormwater management, brownfield redevelopment, designing wildlife habitat in urban landscapes, xeriscape, greenway and urban infill design, digital animation and 3D Printing. Her most current project is a digital animation of Point Park, a mixed-use riverfront park involving the Ross Foundation and the City of Parkersburg, West Virginia. Born in Oklahoma, raised in New Orleans, since childhood Kathy drew on any piece of paper she could get her hands on. Always a designer, her lifelong passion for architecture and landscape architecture has led her to work on commercial and institutional projects with a number of architects, civil engineers, planners, and landscape architects up and down the Eastern Seaboard of the United States.



Ralph Protano is the Trails Development Manager for the Cleveland Metroparks in Ohio. He designs and leads work efforts for trail improvement projects, including the construction of over twenty miles of the first mountain bike trails in the county while improving hydrology on the existing trail network. He has also started a milling initiative, repurposing fallen green and standing dead timber to use for trail structures. Previously, Ralph worked as a Backcountry Technician for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy where he monitored tracts of land from Southern Virginia to Maine, living along the trail as he worked. He began his environmental career with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) in New Hampshire. He earned certifications in tree felling, rigging, dry masonry, Leave No Trace Master Educator and Wilderness First Responder before roving between state parks to work on trail maintenance and field botany projects. After the program, he moved to Southern California to work on SCA's Pacific Crest Trail Crew. There, he spent a season working on various skilled projects in the desert backcountry. Afterwards, he moved back to New England to apprentice under a trailbuilding contractor. His favorite projects include building a 288 step stone staircase up the approach of Mount Whiteface in New Hampshire and reconstructing a failing historic retaining wall in Western Massachusetts. Originally from the Jersey Shore, Ralph is a 2007 graduate of Marywood University in Scranton, PA, where he received a B.F.A. in Design.



Zach Hoffman is currently Coordinator of Global Programs at Rare, an Arlington-based nonprofit that works on grassroots, community-driven natural resource and biodiversity conservation in the developing world. Zach received his undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies from SUNY Plattsburgh where his coursework focused on environmental justice and the history of environmentalism in the United States. Between 2009 and 2011, Zach served in the Peace Corps in Morocco where he lived and worked with indigenous Amazigh communities in the Eastern High Atlas National Park and developed a fluency in Tamazight (a Berber dialect). During that time he collaborated with the Moroccan government on a countrywide project aimed at reducing deforestation and improving the livelihoods of small business owners through the adoption of fuel-efficient wood-fired boilers at public bathhouses. Zach then moved to Washington DC where he worked with the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), a coalition of organizations from around the world that advocate for the rights of indigenous and minority communities to their land and resources, particularly forests. While working with RRI, Zach was part of a research team that conducted a comprehensive legal analysis of developing countries' national legislation on indigenous peoples' forest tenure rights. Zach's professional aspiration is to be a catalyst in the building of effective partnerships that align economic development and conservation goals to achieve holistic, integrated resource use planning and take successful marine resource management initiatives to scale.



Marlie Smith graduated from Old Dominion University with a B.S. in Recreation and Leisure Studies in 2004. A Phi Eta Sigma Graduate with Cum Laude Honors, Student-Athlete Mentor (SAM), Division I Lacrosse Scholarship, Women's Lacrosse Team Captain, and Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) Student Athlete. Smith is currently the Parks Operation Manager for the City of Richmond, overseeing the operations of City parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, trails, and courts (include 92 athletic fields; 136 tennis courts; 49 playground areas; 41 horseshoe pits; 24 walking, nature, bike/and or exercise trails totaling approximately 27 miles; 35 park or playground houses and 13 picnic shelters; 73 basketball courts; 2 disc golf courses; and 1 BMX bike trail). In her free time, she is heavily involved in mountain biking (free-riding and downhill) and yoga.



T. J. Franklin is an active duty Navy Lieutenant that has served over 17 years in the armed forces. He is a naval aviator by trade and has logged over 1,100 hours in the P-3C Orion. During his squadron tour he held various positions, but felt most gratified as a branch officer, overseeing the 14 personnel in his avionics shop. Currently, he is an assistant professor in the Naval Science department at Virginia Tech where he teaches, advises, and manages midshipmen in one of the largest NROTC units in the nation; with over 240 aspiring naval officers. As a prior enlisted, he served on the USS Peleliu (LHA-5) and was staff at Naval Special Warfare Center where he held various positions, including hazmat technician, coxswain, and boat engineer. He has deployed four times and has been to a dozen or more countries in Europe, Asia, and the Arabian Gulf. When he was picked up for an enlisted-officer program, he completed his undergraduate work at San Diego State University; majoring in Geography (emphasis in environmental analysis). He grew up in western Colorado and enjoys many aspects of the outdoor lifestyle. He also enjoys playing sports when there's a dull moment (not often enough). He lives in Blacksburg and has a wonderful wife and 3 children that tend to keep him on his toes.



Josh Nease joined Virginia Tech in August 2012 and serves as manager of the Catawba Sustainability Center. Still in the early stages of development, the Center is transforming a historic dairy farm into a resource for the research, teaching, and demonstration of sustainable practices. The Center engages Virginia Tech students and faculty, local and international communities, industry leaders, and non-profit organizations with educational programming that emphasizes the economic, environmental, and social benefits of sustainability. In 2003, Josh earned an undergraduate degree from West Virginia Wesleyan College, with a major in Public Relations and a minor in Environmental Studies. Post-graduation, Josh lived and worked in the mountains of West Virginia, and gained additional experience from seasonal employment in Colorado, California, and Idaho. From 2008 - 2010, Josh served as Program Coordinator for The Mountain Institute's Appalachia Program. There he co-managed a 400 acre campus and facilitated programming that focused on developing an understanding of, and appreciation for, the complex interaction between community, culture, and conservation. From 2010 - 2012, Josh worked for the coldwater conservation organization Trout Unlimited, where he developed a riparian restoration and education program, working with landowners, volunteers, and public schools to restore brook trout habitat in the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay. Josh currently resides in Blacksburg, VA.



Becky Long is an International Trade Specialist at the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration (ITA), where she develops study tours in the U.S. for groups of international business executives. She has implemented study tours in 14 different industries, including energy efficiency and municipal water treatment; which sparked her interest in environmental sustainability issues. Becky recently completed an assignment with ITA's Office of Energy and Environmental Industries, where she worked with ITA and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency colleagues to promote exports of U.S. environmental technologies. In 2012 Becky received a Professional Certificate in Renewable and Sustainable Energy from the University of Colorado at Boulder by completing graduate courses in renewable energy technologies, policies, and business models. She is also a LEED Green Associate. Before working at ITA, Becky spent nearly four years as a Peace Corps Volunteer focusing her efforts on non-profit organization capacity building in Kazakhstan and Moldova. She worked with local non-profit organizations on creating revenue-generation strategies and gained fluency in Russian. Becky graduated with honors from the University of Maryland with a bachelor's degree in Business Information Systems. In her spare time Becky enjoys practicing yoga and learning languages.



Mark Wieder is a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania native who graduated from Central Dauphin High School in 2004. As a State Champion in track and field, Mark enrolled at Virginia Tech and ran as an NCAA Division I student athlete while attending the Pamplin College of Business. Upon graduating from Virginia Tech in 2008 with a B.S. in Finance, Mark decided to follow in his father's footsteps by becoming an attorney. After Mark returned to Harrisburg, he enrolled in classes at the Widener University School of Law where he received several honors, chaired a variety of boards, and mentored four law school students. His roots in running calling him, Mark also began coaching the middle distance and long distance track teams at his former high school. Upon graduating from Widener in 2011, Mark began his legal career as Assistant Counsel to Commissioner Wayne E. Gardner at the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission where he provided legal and policy advice on electric, gas, and telecommunication matters pending before the Commission, the State legislature, and the federal government. Mark is currently transitioning from a career in utility law and policy to a career focused on solving sustainability and environmental issues – particularly those related to water quality and energy law. He looks forward to starting his own boutique firm in the future and has a number of ideas which could become successful business opportunities.



John Irizarry has been working with the Federal Government in different capacities for fifteen years. He is currently an Environmental Protection Specialist with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Emergency Management in Washington DC. Prior to this, John worked as a Natural Resources Technician for the USDA Forest Service, as a Soil Technician for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and an Electronics Technician in the U.S. Navy. Other federal temporary assignments include Department of Energy's Office of International Affairs and Department of the Interior's Office of Emergency management. Other work experiences outside the federal government include working for Ely Lilly Pharmaceuticals as an Environmental Control and Utilities Operator, handling hazardous and non-hazardous wastes for storage treatment and/or disposal, and an environmental research student for the Interamerican University's Center of Education, Conservation and Environmental Interpretation. John holds a Bachelor degree in General Sciences, with a concentration in Biology from the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico, and completed all the credit except for the thesis towards a master degree in Environmental Sciences with a concentration in Water Resources from the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico; evaluating the infrastructure and water quality of small drinking water systems in rural areas of Puerto Rico. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, John enjoys all kinds of outdoor and water related activities, but since moving to the D.C area in 2006 he's been doing a lot of camping in the summers and snowboarding in the winters.



Katherine Sheppard has extensive international experience and is well versed in micro-political and environmental issues faced by developing nations. She has worked at Counterpart International since 2011 backstopping USAID funded civil society strengthening programs. From 2008 to 2010, Katherine served as a Coastal Resource Management volunteer with the United States Peace Corps in the Philippines. Among her many roles as a volunteer, she assisted rural communities in developing local capacity for performing environmental assessments of coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds; developed community environmental education programs; organized a year-long crown-of-thorns starfish clean-up program; and engaged local government, people's organizations, and citizens in waste management planning and programs. Prior to serving with the United States Peace Corps, Katherine worked as a Scientific SCUBA Diver in South Florida doing benthic assessment of seagrass beds for the USGS. She has a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Florida International University and a Graduate Certificate in Planning Dispute Resolution from Florida State University. She is a proud mother, addicted to knitting, curious about food preservation techniques, and enjoys globe-trotting with her husband.



Chris Perry currently serves as Legislative Director for Congressman Buck McKeon, where he handles a wide legislative portfolio including: resources, lands, water, environmental issues, foreign affairs, workforce, labor, and education. As Legislative Director he is responsible for developing and executing the Member's legislative strategy. He holds a Master of Public Policy degree from George Mason University's School of Public Policy and has over seven years of federal legislative experience. In addition to his federal service, Chris worked four years in state and local government in California with a State Senator, Assemblyman, and Los Angeles County Supervisor. Originally from California, Chris received a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science with a minor in History from California State University, Northridge. He currently resides in Washington, D.C. In his spare time, he enjoys snowboarding, hiking, reading, exercising, spending time with his wife, and yelling at the television while watching soccer games from around the world.



Hugo Mogollon has a B.A. in Science from the Catholic University of Ecuador. He completed one year of an Environmental MBA at Los Andes University in Colombia and was a fellow at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, The Field Museum of Natural History, an Associate Researcher at Duke University, and a Grantee at WWF's Russell E. Train Program and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Mogollon is a founder of the Amazon Tree Diversity Network and a member of the UICN Tapir Specialist Group and Palms Specialist Group. He is also part of the Scientific Committee for the Ecuadorian Amazonian ecosystems at the Ecuadorian Ministry of Environment. Mogollon spent time studying and working, in Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, Panamá, and Colombia; which has given him a wide understanding of the conservation issues in the Tropical Americas. Mogollon has sixteen years of experience working with conservation nonprofits. He recently was the Executive Director of the U.S. organization, Finding Species, whose campaigns protect habitats and species by raising awareness, advocating for conservation policies, and creating protected areas and buffer zones. For each campaign, Mogollon built strong, diverse coalitions with local communities, scientists, governments, multilateral organizations, nonprofits, parks, corporations, and universities in both countries. As part of that work, he participated at high-level meetings, workshops, and conferences in the United States (including at the United Nations), Ecuador, Korea, and Malaysia. After three years, he increased Finding Species' campaigns from two to six, and the funding by 800%.



Alessa Stabile lives in Panama City, Panama where she grew up. She now works for the City of Knowledge Foundation, a non-profit NGO that manages a 296 acre former U.S. military base; which hosts academic programs, international organizations, and R+D firms. As part of the Urban Development Department, she works on implementing the Foundation's urban sustainability policies through various projects, which include LEED certified buildings, a campus wide recycling program, integrated sustainable mobility, as well as rainwater and landscape management. Alessa is a LEED AP and was also among a small group of professionals that helped establish the Panama Green Building Council. Prior to moving back to Panama, Alessa lived in Seattle, Washington where she participated in an Americorps program working for an environmental restoration organization that specializes in removing invasive plant species and restoring native landscapes. She received her bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Affairs from Florida State University.



Scott Neill currently works for Bartlett Tree Experts, a leading firm in scientific plant care. In addition to acting in the capacity of a Plant Health Care Technician, Scott is currently studying for the ISA Certified Arborist and IPM Certified Applicators License. Scott's passion for arboriculture evolved from a life long enthusiasm and concern for environmental resources. This concern having been fostered by the Boy Scouts, he progressed through to earn an Eagle Scout award and Order of the Arrow mark of distinction. After graduating with a degree in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Mary Washington, Scott's studies of specific tribal societies, such as those of North America and the Amazon, brought him to Guyana, South America. There Scott lived with the Makushi people of Surama for a summer to apply anthropological theory/methods. While learning about crop cultivation, beliefs, kinship systems, and ecotourism he developed a project to study social relationships and attitudes toward the environment- specifically, ethnobotanical beliefs regarding the use of plants. After returning to the states he worked as an Assistant Horticulturist at Columbia Country Club, applying knowledge of ornamental plant cultivation in theory as well as practice. Scott also acquired an intermediate level of Spanish proficiency. The investigative nature of anthropologic practice, as well as plant care, yielded a greater desire to learn the theoretical and material issues of environmental stewardship. Scott's goal is to integrate social and environmental concerns into his professional career.



Robert Henry is a dynamic leader with over 20 years of experience in the area of business and professional career and workforce development with non-profit, government, and corporate organizations. Robert is Virginia State Certified as a Professional Development Facilitator for Youth and Adults and is a New Jersey Certified Business Services Supervisor. Robert currently is the Workforce Operations Manager for the Cary Street One Stop Career Center; under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program. He has been providing workforce leadership for over 11 years. Robert prides himself in connecting people to resources and services to better their future endeavors. Robert received his baccalaureate degree in Business Marketing from Delaware State University and just completed and received certification in Program Management for Workforce Development Professionals from Dynamic Works Institute. Robert is an active member of Kappa Alpha Psi, Fraternity Inc. and served on Urban Leagues Young Professional and Richmond City Catholic Charities Boards in Richmond, VA. Robert has served as Councilman for local County Government in Monroe Township, New Jersey; as well staff support for local Workforce Investment Boards in New Jersey and Virginia.



Mary Anne Morrison received a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Old Dominion University in 2011, with a minor in Psychology. After some soul searching and life experiences Morrison decided to gear her studies towards the conservation and sustainability of our environment. As a resident of Virginia Beach, she has witnessed many consequences of the growing human population in the area, regarding human interaction with the natural environment. Morrison volunteers for the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center on the Stranding Response Team; working with marine mammals and sea turtles. Part of this work includes assisting with live sea turtle rehabilitation, particularly turtles that have been struck by boats or entangled with fishing lines and nets. As a part of the XMNR program, she hopes to integrate her background in biology, as well as her work and volunteer experiences, with knowledge gained from the program and peers to work towards a career that focuses on finding sensible solutions for humans and nature to thrive together in a more harmonious way. In her spare time she is a runner, training for her first full marathon in March, and an avid yoga practitioner. Mary Anne lives in Virginia Beach, where she has been for the past 12 years.



Ryan Walker has worked in the land conservation field since 2005, primarily in the Mid-Atlantic region. Currently, he is a Conservation Easement Planner for the Maryland Environmental Trust and his primary responsibility is processing easements across Maryland in cooperation with landowners. Formerly, Ryan was the Stewardship Specialist at Northern Virginia Conservation Trust where he monitored and enforced conservation easements. He also spent several years as Stewardship Specialist for the Virginia Outdoors Foundation in Blacksburg, Virginia. Ryan worked for the Accokeek Foundation coordinating the Mount Vernon Viewshed Protection Program, a partnership designed to protect the scenic corridor visible in Maryland from the Mount Vernon Estate, along with site planning for the Foundation property. In 2010, he completed an AmeriCorps term focusing on stream restoration with the U.S. Forest Service in California. He has also volunteered with the Anacostia Watershed Society and Defenders of Wildlife. Ryan's professional expertise includes natural resources conservation and restoration, land stewardship, and GIS mapping. He received a B.A. in Public and Urban Affairs and an M.S. in Urban and Regional Planning, both from Virginia Tech. Ryan is a native of northern Virginia and Ryan enjoys traveling, biking and hiking. He is particularly interested in land conservation possibilities in urban corridors and how land conservation organizations may diversify in the future.



Peter Burke is an Associate Broker with Long & Foster Realtors. Peter entered real estate after working in the satellite communications industry for over 20 years. As President of Innovative Communication Solutions, he provided consulting services to some of the largest corporations and government agencies in the United States and to several of the largest satellite communication service providers. He still provides occasional consulting services through his consulting firm ICS. Peter became a Top Producer his first year in real estate and was invited to participate in Weichert's Management Awareness Program. The second year, he served as a management intern and helped Weichert expand into a new office in Northern Virginia. He obtained his Brokers license in his third year in the business after meeting Virginia State experience requirements. Currently Peter has multiple residential and commercial listings in Northern Virginia. Over the last 9 years he has sold and leased over 100 properties and assisted new agents in hundreds of purchase and lease transactions. In 2009, Peter became one of the first Realtors in Virginia to complete the "Green Designation" offered by the National Association of Realtors. NAR was the first Association in Washington, DC to build a LEED Silver Certified Headquarters Building. He is now refocusing his Real Estate business on sustainable residential and commercial buildings. Peter received his Bachelors Degree in Business from Virginia Commonwealth University and went on for a Masters Degree in Communication from Michigan State University. He has lived in Reston Virginia for over 20 years and enjoys spending time with his family on the Chesapeake Bay.



Samantha Wangsgard is an Urban Forester in Fairfax County, Virginia. In this role she reviews a variety of site plans and zoning applications for compliance with county tree and landscaping regulations. Ms. Wangsgard and her coworkers were recently recognized for their part in a partnership between several government agencies, nonprofit organizations and individual volunteers during an Arbor Day planting project. Previously, she worked in South Dakota and Minnesota dealing primarily with community forestry as well as state land and stormwater management issues. Ms. Wangsgard has been recognized for her expertise in the use of geographic information systems as part of the South Dakota Mountain Pine Beetle marking program and for her role in a tree inventory at the South Dakota State Fairgrounds. While in Minnesota, she received individual recognition and her work area received an award for her work in preparing forest stewardship plans. Ms. Wangsgard began her career as an AmeriCorps member serving with Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa. After her term of service, she gained invaluable experience with environmental issues and policy for stormwater management as a Stormwater Technician. She is an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist and a Qualified Tree Risk Assessor. Ms. Wangsgard is also a Certified Master Naturalist with Fairfax County and a Project Learning Tree workshop facilitator. Ms. Wangsgard is a graduate of the University of Minnesota, where she was a varsity letter winner with their Division I rowing team and was awarded the Donna Olson Endowed Scholarship for leadership and competitive spirit.



Jonathan Lipinski works as Conservation Technician for the Shenandoah Valley Soil and Water Conservation District in Virginia. Lipinski has been in the Army for about eight years, five of which were in the active duty and about three in the reserves. He currently serves in the reserves as an Environmental Science Officer, dealing with environmental factors. Lipinski received a B.S. from Bridgewater College in Environmental Science. During his last year at Bridgewater, he worked as an intern for the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) as a Soil Conservation Technician.