

# *EXECUTIVE* MASTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES (XMNR)

## CLASS OF 2017 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 2017 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.



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**Gail Kulisch**, CAPT USCG (ret) is a Certified Hazardous Materials Manager (CHMM) with over 28 years developing and implementing pollution prevention and regulatory initiatives at the federal, state, and local levels. She led offshore, coastal, and inland environmental enforcement, oversight, and response operations working closely with state and local authorities, community leaders, and non-profits. She led four Coast Guard commands including a Coast Guard cutter in the Pacific and 27 deployable worldwide hazmat, pollution, incident prevention, and response teams. A 2004 Harvard National Security Fellow, she holds a B.A. in Chemistry from Holy Cross College and a M.S. in Chemical Engineering from University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).



**Rocco Saracina** advances environmental responsibility, healthy economies, and thriving communities by enhancing market recognition of sustainable practices. He serves as Conservation Coordinator for the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), a nonprofit that oversees the largest forest certification standard in North America. Rocco's focus includes strengthening relationships with conservation organizations and universities and administering SFI's Conservation Grant Program. His experience includes fire ecology research with the USFS and freshwater systems assessment through environmental consulting. Rocco is Chair-Elect of the National Chapter, Society of American Foresters, where he is responsible for strategic direction. He has a BS in Environmental Science from Humboldt State University.



**Susan Apollonio** is a non-profit professional with over twelve years of experience working in organizations that focus on land use design, development and stewardship, real estate development, and architecture. Susan's background encompasses program management, professional education, marketing, and strategic partnerships. As the Education Director for the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), Susan is part of a senior management team. She curates education programs that advance the professional development of over 15,000 ASLA members. She is passionate about connecting diverse talents and building cross-disciplinary partnerships to create innovative approaches to complex issues.



**Mark Kessel** is a senior drinking water analyst at Suffolk County Water Authority, a nonprofit, public benefit corporation serving 1.2 million residents. Previous to SCWA, he worked as an environmental field manager, an aquarist for the Wildlife Conservation Society, and a fisheries technician for Virginia Tech's Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation. Mark earned his B.S. in Fisheries Management from Virginia Tech and is an active member of American Water Works Association. Looking to follow his passion in both water resource management and low-impact, high-yield aquaculture, Mark lives with his family at Artspace Patchogue, a green energy, mixed use, affordable living/workspace building.

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**Andrea Walker** has 23 years of water resource planning experience with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. As a Community Planner, she conducts policy compliance review of decision documents associated with civil works navigation, coastal and riverine flood risk reduction, ecosystem restoration, hydropower, water supply, and recreation projects. She is an instructor of water resource planning and public involvement. She received a B.S. degree from York College of Pennsylvania in Recreation & Leisure Administration and completed graduate work at Towson University in Geography & Environmental Planning. Andrea maintains her Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP) certification. She resides with her husband and their son in Sparks, Maryland. In addition, she enjoys gardening, reading, and counted cross-stitch.



**Randy Rowel, Jr.** received a B.S from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Randy is also a 2015 graduate of the Master Watershed Stewards Academy. He is employed as Director of Development for Anne Arundel County Community Action Agency, consultant for RER Energy Group, and RR associates, a family-run business. Randy is a grant writer and specializes in developing programs in and for urban youth and adults. He is also the proud father of two children; Kingston, and Hillary.



**Erica Reed** has a special interest in protecting the planet's biodiversity and has a keen interest in learning how to personally make a difference in reversing environmental damage caused by the Human factor. She earned a B.S. in Biology and a Virginia teacher licensure in Biology from Roanoke College and has an associates in Environmental Science. Although teaching is an admirable profession, her interests lie in conserving and wisely using our natural resources. Her teaching background and work experience acknowledges the fact that people management is the key to successfully accomplishing this goal. Erica also manages our nation's forests during the summer for the U.S. Forest Service as well as conservation of land where she is an outdoor educator for the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy.



**Brian Macnamara** has 25 years in public, private, and governmental accounting, including as the controller of one of the nation's largest hospitality companies, has made him appreciate the value of individual contributions to every solution. In addition to remaining current on accounting standards and lodging industry issues, his role requires adaptive leadership and communication skills to work with a diverse group of individuals ranging from the Board of Directors and senior management to industry groups and peers across the lodging industry. Also a licensed electrician and National Outdoor Leadership School graduate, he brings a diversity of experience and a passion for learning.



**Abbi Huntzinger** is a dedicated landscape steward with over ten years of professional experience in both the private practice and non-profit worlds. She spent the beginning of her rewarding career as a Landscape Architect focusing on restorative landscape practices. In her current position at the Chesapeake Bay Trust, she combines her knowledge of sustainable landscapes with an ability to build teams and partnerships to leverage resources to restore and protect the waterways throughout the Chesapeake Bay region. She is a Pennsylvania native and holds a Bachelor's of Landscape Architecture from Penn State University. In her free time, she enjoys exploring the parks and trails of Annapolis with her dog, volunteering for local community organizations, and daydreaming about traveling around the world.

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**Jessica Rogala** likes problem solving, cultural adaptation, community development, and project management. She applies her skills at the Environmental Protection Agency in the Office of Pesticide Programs. There she has been part of many groups that aim for efficiency in the workplace. She is also a member of a workgroup that is piloting Spanish language pesticide labels to ensure safety to humans and the environment. Her international development background began as a Peace Corps volunteer in El Salvador where she worked closely with a youth group to facilitate environmental and economic growth opportunities in their community namely a recycling and waste removal program.



**Nasser Abdelhadi** has been a significant team leader on many top environmental projects in southwest Virginia. As an active Earth Team volunteer for USDA NRCS, he's been instrumental in laying the ground work of an intensive soil mapping project in Grayson County, as well as developed a 3D map of the Carvin's Cove watershed in Roanoke, VA which is used for ongoing environmental research at Roanoke College. Nasser is the Roanoke Rescue Mission Ministries' first and only Environmental Officer, formulating new recycling programs to address sustainability and the immediate needs of struggling community members through volunteer assistance, all while addressing the requirements of the environment are his top priorities. He has saved as much as \$18,000 per month by modifying trash disposal and altering recycling programs.



**Ashley Aversa** holds a bachelors of science in speech pathology with accompanied coursework in the environmental sciences. She has worked in the special needs community as an applied behavior analyst as well as works with therapy dogs and therapy horses. She has many professional goals related to conserving our natural resources and working to heal our surrounding environment. Her many interests range from sustainable agriculture to wetland and forest conservation with a specific affinity for the pine barrens of her homeland and its future health. Ashley hopes to bring a diversity of people together with community outreach projects and experiential learning centered on gaining independence and life skills while working towards sustainable initiatives -- combining her love for helping people through helping the environment.



**Robert Knapp** is an active duty Navy Lieutenant that has served for six years in the Surface Warfare community. He graduated and received his commission from the State University of New York (SUNY) Maritime College in Throggs Neck, NY with a B.S. in International Transportation and Trade. He has been on three deployments with the Navy in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and MARTILLO, serving aboard the USS BUNKER HILL (CG 52) and the USS VANDEGRIFT (FFG 48). He currently is an assistant professor in the Naval Science Department at Virginia Tech.



**Molly Brown** is an attorney who specializes in alternative dispute resolution systems and government program administration. She has a background in environmental and regulatory law and has represented individuals, businesses and government entities in a broad range of issues throughout her practice. Molly seeks to utilize her knowledge and skills in negotiation and mediation to promote communication and dialogue between entities, both public and private, necessary to the promotion and implementation of sustainable land use.

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**Mellisa Rios** aspires to leverage her professional experience and education to benefit society through sustainability efforts. She started her professional career in the U.S. Air Force as an imagery analyst, analyzing images collected by various remote sensing platforms using geospatial and GIS software applications. She now provides consulting support as an imagery analyst for the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. While earning her bachelor's degree in sociology, she developed a desire to understand how individuals relate to and interact with nature regarding sustainability and environmental issues. Melissa hopes to find ways to evoke positive interest in how others view their connections with nature.



**Robert Eaton** is currently a Deputy Fire Director for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. He is a senior leader who strives to find consensus and common ground to achieve positive results relating to complex resource management issues across the landscape. He has worked for the federal government for over 32 years and served in numerous key leadership positions with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in the Southeast Region. Bob also served in various natural resources management leadership positions for the U.S. Forest Service in Alaska, Washington, Arkansas, Mississippi, Colorado, and Tennessee. He has served in various wildland fire/emergency management positions in his career which included ten years as a Division Supervisor and Safety Officer on the Type 1 Southern Area Red Team. He holds a B.S. in Natural Resources from North Carolina State University.



**Kelly Watkinson** is a resource and land conservation professional with 11 years of experience protecting and restoring lands of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. As Executive Director of the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust, Kelly is responsible for all aspects of running the nonprofit and implementing their conservation programs which include conservation easement and fee simple acquisitions and stewardship of 14,000 acres in West Virginia. As a Peace Corps volunteer, Kelly worked with indigenous Mayan communities in Guatemala to implement conservation projects and promote sustainable natural resource management. Kelly has a degree in Environmental Science and Management from Indiana University.



**Bewket Berhie** has a passion for achieving disaster risk reduction through sustainable development worldwide. He had been working for headquarters of Ethiopian Red Cross as a manager of various types of disaster risk management and humanitarian development projects which saved the lives and livelihoods of many vulnerable peoples across the country. Bewket received both his BSc. and MSc. degree in Disaster Risk Science and Sustainable Development from university of Bahir Dar and Arizona. He has a strong professional expertise along with six years of progressive practical work experience. And he is always excited to involve on alleviating poverty and environmental degradation worldwide.



**Colette Linton** is an experienced editor, translator and writer. She's played many roles and acquired many hats while working and interning in the US and abroad over the last six years. Most notable were her roles as a copy editor at one of Moscow's esteemed business news wires PRIME Business News; as the Business, Education and Front Page Editor of a weekly news publication in Saratoga Springs, NY; and as an editor and translator of RK Marketing's agricultural publication FruitNews. She also has video editing skills, basic web programming, and an aptitude for foreign languages. She currently coordinates with a group of civic-minded journalists on a media project to provide analytical and adventurous works in various digital platforms, training for free-lance work, and professional development while maintaining open-door access to the public.

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**Katherine Osterman** graduated with a B.S. in Mathematics and Applied Physical Analysis from Creighton University. She began her career as a Sustainability Engineer at Kiewit Corporation, but she has since transferred to Kiewit Building Group, where she is a Commissioning Engineer. Katherine is knowledgeable about sustainability in the built environment with LEED AP BD+C, ENV PV, and Greenroads STP credentials. Her interest and passion for sustainability is visible throughout her career with experiences including energy efficiency audits, project waste tracking, LEED project administration, calculating retrofit cost savings, preventative maintenance management, and functional performance testing for mechanical, electrical, and plumbing equipment.



**Richard Kirby** received his Bachelor's in Geography from Virginia Tech and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army. Richard served as Armor Officer for over six years at Fort Bragg, NC. He left active duty to pursue a career in Geospatial Information Systems and currently works as a GIS Technician for AMEC Foster Wheeler, an environmental consulting firm. At AMEC, Richard conducts wetland and streams surveys ensuring clients are compliant with the latest Waters of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulations. He continues his military service as a company commander in the North Carolina National Guard. He hopes to combine his experience and passion for the environment with the skills he learns to help develop environmentally sustainable policies for our future and expand the number of protected areas across the globe.



**Jennifer Wills** is an environmental lawyer with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Her work involves examining the legal ramifications of Agency regulations and enforcement actions, directly contributing to the development of national environmental regulation and policy. She collaborates with government officials, political figures, and other stakeholders to achieve mutual goals with respect to environmental protection. Her work has advanced the EPA's mission of protecting human health and environment, especially in the area of chemicals regulation. Jennifer has also participated in a Brookings Institution fellowship at the U.S. Senate where she advised on environment and energy issues.



**Alex Sanders** is passionate about protecting and restoring our lands and waters through collaboration and creative solutions. He has ten years of experience managing conservation efforts in the Rock Creek watershed of Washington, D.C. and Montgomery County, MD, through planning and implementing dozens of on-the-ground projects, including an innovative partnership between the DC Government, non-profits, businesses and property owners to reduce stormwater runoff in two District neighborhoods. He also serves on several commissions on sustainability and the environment in Arlington County, VA and Washington, D.C. Alex holds a B.A. and M.A. in History and has extensive experience in research and writing on environmental history.



**Rachel Studebaker** grew up in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, where love and respect for nature and the environment was instilled in her at a young age. She received a B.S. in Environmental Sciences from Virginia Tech, where she interned with the USDA Forest Service Center for Aquatic Technology Transfer. She has over eight years of experience in the environmental consulting field and almost five years of management experience. Rachel plans to utilize her passion for the environment and knowledge gained from the program to advance her career in natural resources sustainability both domestically and abroad, with interest in rainforest or coral reef conservation and education, or running Virginia's first biodynamic vineyard. She volunteers with Habitat for Humanity and Virginia Blood Services and enjoys traveling, hiking, and beach time with her husband and dogs.

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**Rachael Moxley** is driven by compassion and uses systems thinking to maximize harmony. She aids in resource conservation as a professional engineer and sustainability consultant with Ecology & Environment, Inc. She analyzes, designs, bids, and manages engineering projects focusing on groundwater and sediment remediation, stormwater management, and erosion and sediment control. She assists her clients in earning LEED certification on development projects and incorporates sustainability principles into feasibility analyses to deliver net beneficial remedies. She received her B.S. in Civil and Environmental Engineering from Cornell University.



**Kyle Haynes** is the District Manager at Tri-County/City Soil and Water Conservation District in Fredericksburg, VA. He provides leadership, environmental education, and technical conservation programs for citizens and local governments in the three counties and one city in his District. He aspires to be a community leader that establishes partnerships to implement conservation practices and sustainable development. Previously, he was an Environmental Specialist at an environmental consulting firm providing stormwater management and erosion and sediment control services for land developers and home builders. He also interned with the Bureau of Land Management in Yuma, Arizona and with the National Park Service in Yosemite National Park focusing on natural resource management. He received his B.S. in Geography at Radford University.



**Allison Mihalich** is an energetic Program Analyst at the Environmental Protection Agency in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer. Her work focuses on sustainability strategic planning, performance management, budget formulation, and execution. She has significant experience in leading strategic planning efforts, coalition building, and collaborating with a wide array of stakeholders having worked also at the Department of Energy for four years. Allison holds a B.A. in Environmental Studies and Geography, and a certificate in Geographic Information Systems from George Washington University where she assisted in constructing the first green roof and initiated a university wide eco-challenge. Allison lives in Arlington, VA with her husband and hound dog.



**SoYoung Lee** is a LEED Accredited Professional (LEED AP BD+C, O+M) with experience in the on-site internationally collaborative CM team for the New Songdo International City development project in Korea, which was a LEED ND pilot project of a master-planned site with 350 commercial, institutional, retail, and residential buildings. Until recently, she worked for companies specialized in consultancy for green building certification and green building education. She majored in social work but stepped into a totally different field 10 years ago. Venturing into a new career enabled her to explore new knowledge and abilities. She believes sustainable development is our common challenge to address in the various fields, requiring integrated work among people with different backgrounds. Her life-long goal is to attain a sustainable lifestyle.