



Executive Master of Natural Resources (XMNR) – Class of 2022

**CHARLES
NEWBORN**



CHARLES NEWBORN currently serves as the Energy Equity Programs Supervisor leading the Minnesota Weatherization Assistance Program. Charles has a 12-year track record of managing cross-functional teams in the execution of complex energy efficiency initiatives, including multi-stage energy retrofit projects and utility demand-side program implementation. He holds a BPI Building Analyst Professional certification, BPI Proctor designation, and Home Energy Rating System (HERS) certification from the Residential Energy Services Network, and has completed Commercial Energy Auditor, Spray Foam Technician, Weatherization Crew Chief, and Lead Safe Renovator trainings. Charles holds a Bachelor of Science degree in interdisciplinary studies from Liberty University.

**ALEXANDRA
STRONG**



ALEXANDRA STRONG graduated with a B.S. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and a minor in Science Education from the University of Tennessee. During undergrad, she worked in the utility board environmental compliance office and saw how management of natural resources affected the community she lived in. Currently working for Knox County Schools as a science teacher, she develops lessons to educate students on the impact of people on the environment and how vital environmental stewardship is for the future. She aims to grow her leadership skills and explore natural resource management strategies during her time in the XMNR program.

**CHRISTOPHER
(CHRIS) GIBSON**



CHRISTOPHER (CHRIS) GIBSON is a lifelong student and patriot with nearly three decades of service in the Department of Defense. Fortunate to have lived in multiple countries, Chris' travels have allowed firsthand observation of the positive impact diversity and proactive inclusion have on creating healthy and prosperous environs for all creatures great and small. Chris holds a master's degree in Military Operational Studies, a Bachelor of Arts in English, and degrees in Chinese studies as well as Intelligence Operations. When free, Chris enjoys cycling, hiking, and spending time with spouse and their fur family exploring the world.

KATELYN HART



KATELYN HART is a certified Project Management Professional with Federal and Private Sector program experience. Katelyn has an M.B.A. from the University of Mary Washington and a B.S. in Information Systems Operations Management from George Mason University. She has spent 10+ years working alongside program and business management professionals, serving internal and external clients. Her strengths include working in cross-functional teams, financial planning and reporting, compliance, communication, and program analytics. Katelyn is known for being a reliable and collaborative teammate with excellent communication, process development/improvement, and presentation skills. Katelyn enjoys outdoor adventures with her two daughters and her two labs.

JILL SHIFFLETT



JILL SHIFFLETT is a senior project engineer with 25+ years of leadership and problem-solving experience in the pulp and paper industry. She received her B.S. degree in Pulp and Paper Science and Technology from North Carolina State University, and her A.A.S. degree in Pulp and Paper Technology from Dabney S. Lancaster Community College. In her current role, Jill is responsible for project management functions including developing project scopes, cost estimation, and implementation of capital projects. She appreciates being involved in the life cycle of projects from inception through execution, leading collaboration among stakeholders and impressing upon those involved the impact of their actions upon the sustainability of the facility. Jill resides in Alleghany County, VA, and enjoys being outdoors and spending time with family and friends.



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ELENA
THOMPSON



ELENA THOMPSON holds a B.A. in Political Science with a paralegal option and business minor, and is a retired Colonel from the United States Air Force/USAF Reserves/Air National Guard. She is truly disheartened by what is currently happening to our world at the global level, and extremely concerned about our planet, its natural resources, and humanity. In order to sustain humanity, we need to become informed and knowledgeable about our natural resources. She feels it is important to obtain and share knowledge to create awareness and stimulate inspiration, not only to sustain natural resources but to generate abundance, as well.

AMADOU
SAIKOU DIALLO



AMADOU S. DIALLO, a Guinea (Conakry) native, received his bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from Gamal Abdel Nasser University. The environment as a field had always fascinated Amadou, since his undergraduate college days. The prolific research he performed in his final year project involved a complete analysis of water treatment, and how that process could produce renewable domestic energy. He worked in his hometown with a volunteer NGO to help against poverty and climate change. In the United States, Amadou has 18 years' work experience as Business Manager at Walmart Inc. and Gap Inc., and the past two years as Health Care Manager. Very passionate about strategy change and driving sustainability initiatives, he deeply appreciates seeing how sustainability can help make people's lives and jobs better.

KAYLEE
CARICO



KAYLEE CARICO received her undergraduate degree from Christopher Newport University with a major in Environmental Studies and two minors, Philosophy and Communications. While at CNU Kaylee participated in campus activities such as Panhellenic life, honors fraternity, and the equestrian team. Having grown up on a farm, Kaylee has hands-on experience working with various animals, cultivating crops, and maintaining soil. Kaylee's understanding of sustainability and respect for ecological functions were enhanced at CNU where she studied a wide array of topics including biology, chemistry, and sociology. In seeking a Master of Natural Resources, Kaylee hopes to broaden her opportunities for a future in sustainable development.

ELI MEYER



ELI MEYER is an early career engineer who is passionate about implementing sustainable and appropriate technology to combat climate change. His goals are to further the transition away from the old ways of doing things and towards renewable energy and a circular economy. He is something of a jack of all trades and has had experience in high volume manufacturing. He is currently working in Virginia Tech facilities, implementing a utility monitoring system.

VANESSA
DAVILA



VANESSA DAVILA is a veteran of the Army where she trained as a Broadcast Journalist (46R). Post-military, she continues to work as a video producer. In her current role at the Democratic Attorneys General Association she has had a front row seat to how policy and governance at the state level can affect issues like clean water and clean air for communities. Vanessa wants to pivot her work exclusively to environmental issues that affect our planet and the people living on it, and looks forward to beginning that career change with the XMNR program.



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IRENE WHITE



IRENE WHITE is an enthusiastic business leader with a 20-year career in GTM, Brand Development, Marketing Strategies, and Business Development as a Chief Marketing Officer and Strategic Consultant. Irene has diverse experience driving change at global companies, innovative startups, and non-profit organizations focused on CRE, Technology, and Mission-Driven Tech. Irene is happiest solving unstructured challenges, inspiring creativity, and fostering amazing teams. Irene holds a BFA in Design from the Art Institute of Chicago and an Executive Scholar designation in Marketing and Sales from Kellogg. Recently, she completed her permaculture certificate and is pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Climate Change, Hazards, and Green Infrastructure at UMass Amherst. Irene is a passionate hiker and loves exploring the trails of Northern California and beyond!

ROBERT M.
SMITH



ROBERT (BOB) SMITH is the Deputy Director of the Office of Strategic Operations (OSO) at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA). OSO develops NGA strategy, measures progress, and incorporates data analytics to manage implementation efforts across NGA to strengthen the enterprise's focus on achieving future capabilities. Mr. Smith was previously the Chief of the Data Analytics Division within OSO. In addition, Bob served in the U.S. Army as an Infantry Officer and ORSA, retiring at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Bob earned a B.S. degree in Mathematical Statistics from the University of Alabama and an M.S. degree in Applied Mathematics from Clark Atlanta University.

EMILY SCRUBY
IRVINE



EMILY IRVINE graduated from Virginia Tech in 2004 with a bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. Soon after, she went to work for Facility Dynamics Engineering, a consulting engineering firm specializing in Building Systems Commissioning. Eventually becoming a project manager, Emily spent 15 years at FDE helping to achieve LEED certification for many projects across the country. Emily is also the leader of the Charlottesville, VA chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby, a volunteer-led nonprofit that advocates for effective, federal-level climate policy. Through the XMNR program, Emily hopes to pair her passion for building a livable future with the leadership skills needed to help others envision that future, too. Emily is also a mother to two awesome kiddos, a life-long lover of the outdoors, and an urban gardener.

MACKAY
PIERCE



MACKAY PIERCE is an organizer by trade, currently working with the Rachel Carson Council as their Associate Director. A recent graduate from Roanoke College with degrees in Environmental Studies and Sociology, he has long been focused on the climate crisis. Now, with the Rachel Carson Council, he primarily oversees their campus programs, where he works to support student organizers across the country as they execute projects in their communities to promote sustainability and address issues of environmental justice. With the XMNR program, he hopes to expand his knowledge about sustainability solutions to our most pressing societal challenges.

MUHAMMAD
(NAJEEB) KHAN



MUHAMMAD (NAJEEB) KHAN is a Forest Governance Specialist with the Environment and Natural Resources global unit at the World Bank. Najeeb's work focuses on monitoring and quality control of the unit's forests and landscapes portfolio at a global level and in the Bank's client countries. Previously, Najeeb has worked with the Global Environment Facility, the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Food Programme. Najeeb holds a master's degree in Governance and Development from the University of Sussex, and a bachelor's degree in International Development Studies from the University of Toronto.



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FARAH IMRANA
HUSSAIN



FARAH IMRANA HUSSAIN is a Senior Financial Officer at the World Bank Treasury. She works with central banks, ministries of finance, and securities commissions to mobilize private sector financing for sustainable investments in emerging markets. She led the World Bank's engagements that resulted in the issuance of the first green sukuk in the world (Malaysia); first sovereign green bond by an emerging market (Fiji); first sovereign green bond in the Middle East (Egypt), first domestic sovereign green bond in Latin America (Colombia), etc. Before joining the World Bank Group, Ms. Hussain worked in investment banks in London, UK.

TIMOTHY
VAUGHN



An experienced entrepreneur, TIMOTHY VAUGHN has over 20 years of experience originating and managing M&A transactions for architectural, engineering, and construction (AEC) firms, as well as government contractors. He successfully facilitated nearly 100 M&A transactions and performed hundreds of business valuations, and is currently leading Bowman Consulting's strategic M&A initiatives to help manage the expansion of company operations, geographical presence, and service offerings.

BRENDLE WOLFE



BRENDLE WOLFE holds a bachelor's degree in International Relations with a focus on Peace and Justice Studies from Roanoke College. She has over 10 years of experience building relationships with diverse non-profits, program management, and advocating for public healthcare needs. She currently serves an administrative role in the faculty affairs department for the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. In addition to her healthcare work, she is actively involved with a variety of grassroots environmental organizations. She is passionate about the environment, and natural resource management and stewardship. She hopes to obtain the leadership skills and knowledge to further her interest in the field of natural resources, and is eager to engage in the work of global sustainability.

STEVE
POLLARD



STEPHEN (STEVE) POLLARD has over a decade working in the private, security, and law enforcement sectors. He holds a B.S. in security studies and an M.S. focused on international economics. He is a member of the Archeological Society of Virginia and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. Stephen hopes to study the environment and climate change from a security perspective, while learning more about leadership in sustainability and conservation of our shared natural resources.

KAYCI WILLIS



KAYCI WILLIS graduated from North Carolina State University with degrees in Natural Resources Policy and Administration, Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology, and a minor in Forest Management. While pursuing her degrees, Kayci worked at an environmental law firm where she assisted with environmental litigation, principally settlements for pollution morbidity and damages. After graduation, she worked for the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources as a Prescribed Fire Technician, contributing to fire adapted ecosystem restoration and management through prescribed fire implementation and timber stand improvement. Kayci aspires to leverage her holistic background in natural resources to support and expand inter-organizational collaboration among stakeholders across the conservation community.



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ABHINAV
KUMAR



ABHINAV KUMAR has over 14 years of combined work experience in energy and industrial gases sectors. He is currently an operations manager with Linde PLC based out of the greater Chicago area. He is responsible for installing large size industrial gas supply systems in the Midwest for different applications such as CO₂ for food and beverage and medical oxygen for hospitals. Previously he has worked in the oil and gas industry, predominantly on the deep-water exploration side. Abhinav appreciates the challenge of meeting the needs of a rapidly evolving world while reducing stress on the climate and our natural resources. He wants to take up this challenge and work passionately towards finding and maintaining this delicate balance.

DALEY BURNS



DALEY BURNS is a passionate, outgoing conservationist who has been working at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for the past four years. She is currently the Senior Coordinator for Regional Conservation Programs, managing more than \$30 million in funding disbursed through grants working to advance on-the-ground grassland and sagebrush ecosystem conservation on public, private, and tribal lands throughout the country. Daley was born and raised in DC and earned a B.S. in Zoology and Ecology from James Cook University in Queensland, Australia. In her free time, Daley enjoys a variety of activities including ultimate Frisbee, softball, skiing, bicycling, and hiking, and likes to spend her rainy days reading or painting.

KATE LEFTIN



KATE LEFTIN earned her Master of Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis, with a concentration in Social and Economic Development. She was a cofounder of the Environmental Social Work Initiative on campus, which raised awareness of environmental justice issues. She plans to use her communication skills to scale up solutions to environmental challenges through increased community engagement. This includes motivating the public to act sustainably and helping environmental professionals understand how behavior change principles can be effectively and equitably applied to conservation work. She currently volunteers with Citizens' Climate Lobby and The Nature Conservancy's community engagement team.

BRANDE
GORACKE



BRANDE GORACKE is a 2001 graduate of Virginia Tech with a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry with a concentration in Environmental Resource Management, and a minor in Leadership. She is an Army veteran with more than 17 years of domestic and international experience in diverse industry sectors including the federal government, premier management consulting, and the U.S. Army. She currently works for the Army Reserve as a program analyst for future years financial programming. She looks forward to refocusing her career towards sustainability, environmental resource management, and climate change solutions.

SUZETTE
RISACHER



Suzette Risacher is a tyro in all aspects of life with a continuous passion to engage with new environments. She, at various times in her adult life, has held the following positions: a soldier, a bus driver, firefighter, EMS personnel, a lifeguard, a Burner, a potter, a watercolorist, a quilter, a cellist, a traveler, an Irish dancer, a grower of food (using aquaponics, hydroponics, raised-beds, and hugelkultur), a hospice volunteer, a woodturner, a furniture maker, a straight ally, a substitute teacher, and mom to three brilliantly awesome humans. Suzette Risacher took thirty-two years to graduate from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University with a B.S. in Biological Science. She hopes to combine her passions and knowledge to create a place where all are welcome to come to play, learn and experience life in harmony with nature in nature.



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MEENU
HOCHWALT



MEENU HOCHWALT is a creative professional with over ten years of work experience within the fashion design and IT business consulting industries, with a Fashion Design degree from Parsons The New School for Design and Business Information Technology and Global Business degrees from Virginia Tech. Her roles working on product development and operations with organizations big and small opened her eyes to the deep need for change in business practices to create a more environmentally responsible and socially just world. Meenu is also the proud mom of two young environmentalists and is enthusiastic about inspiring the next generation.

HANK AMATO

HANK AMATO retired from the Army in 2014 and currently works in Arlington, Virginia as a civilian Emergency Manager. His program management work focuses on communications resiliency, natural hazards mitigation, and organizational readiness. During his 35+ years of government service he worked in diverse assignments including operations, personnel policy, and financial management. Hank and his wife Karen have two adult daughters. He enjoys biking, swimming, and home improvement projects.

TRACEY COE



TRACEY COE has over five years' experience sharing her enthusiasm for the natural world. She has worked as a Park Ranger with the Department of Conservation in New Zealand, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. She built an astronomy program at Big Bend National Park and loves sharing the night sky with anyone willing to listen. She holds a B.A. in International Relations. Prior to her Park Ranger career, she served nearly a decade in the U.S. Army and Ohio National Guard as a medic. Currently Tracey is enjoying time as a stay-at-home mom.

NATHANIEL
HUMPHREYS



NATHANIEL HUMPHREYS is a native of Southwest Virginia and recently graduated from Virginia Tech with a B.S. in Natural Resources Conservation with a focus on Recreation Management. While pursuing his degree at Virginia Tech he completed internships with both Virginia and Florida State Parks. During his internship experiences he became wildland firefighting certified and assisted AmeriCorps with multiple population and reintroduction surveys as well as invasive species management. Nathaniel looks forward to gaining knowledge that will allow him to lead his peers and coworkers in pursuit of a sustainable future to support generations to come.

KRISTEN
MURPHY



KRISTEN MURPHY graduated from Virginia Tech with a B.S. in Biology (minor in Chemistry) and a B.A. in English, and from Virginia Commonwealth University with an M.B.A. She has over 20 years' experience working in the environmental field. She began her career in drinking water at Fairfax Water Authority, then moved to wastewater at Prince William Service Authority. She then joined the state government working for the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) in Richmond. Currently, she is an analytical chemist for the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Her current project is implementing the revised EPA PAMS program to monitor ozone precursors in ambient air. In her free time, Kristen enjoys volunteering at the local food bank and her sons' Boy Scout troop.