

Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteers Contribute to Natural Resource Education, Citizen Science, and Stewardship with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Program Overview



The Virginia Master Naturalist program is a volunteer training and service program providing education, outreach, and service to benefit natural resources and natural areas in Virginia. Volunteer training includes 40 hours of classroom and field time in natural history and natural resource management. To become a Certified Virginia Master Naturalist, each volunteer must complete 40 hours of service in education, citizen science, or stewardship. The program currently is sponsored jointly by Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and the Virginia Museum of Natural History, with additional support from the Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment and the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation. In addition, the **30 program chapters** across the state work with more than **300 local partners**, including schools, nature centers, nonprofits, and local governments.



In 2010, these volunteers contributed more than 44,400 hours of volunteer service to education, citizen science, and stewardship projects to benefit Virginia's natural resources. They also contributed more than 15,700 hours towards the administrative work of running the local chapters. In total, the **more than 60,000 hours of volunteer service just in 2010** is worth **more than \$1.2 million dollars**.*



2010 Sample Projects with Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

VDGIF Sponsored Projects: In 2010, the projects that chapter reported doing directly with VDGIF included wildlife surveys (WildlifeMapping, Frog and Toad Calling Survey), education (programs at VDGIF-sponsored festivals, an interpretive trail at a fish hatchery, Habitat Facilitator presentations), and stewardship (trail and invasive plant management work on several Wildlife Management Areas.) Chapters listed at least 1300 hours associated with these projects, but this figure is vastly underestimated because many chapters did not list the specific hours with VDGIF. The reported volunteer time can be valued at \$27,209.* Our new online Volunteer Management System will help us more accurately quantify the volunteer activities in 2011 and future years.



Other Wildlife-related Projects: In addition, VMN volunteers are involved in many wildlife-related projects that are not specifically associated with VDGIF. These include nationally-organized bird surveys such as the FeederWatch and the Christmas Bird Count, nationally-organized butterfly surveys, monitoring of nest boxes for Eastern Bluebirds and Prothonotary Warblers, wildlife habitat restoration projects, education of homeowners about landscaping for wildlife, and a UVA/Trout Unlimited study of water quality in Virginia trout streams. At least 3000 hours, valued at \$62,790, were reported in 2010 for these other projects that further the VDGIF mission.

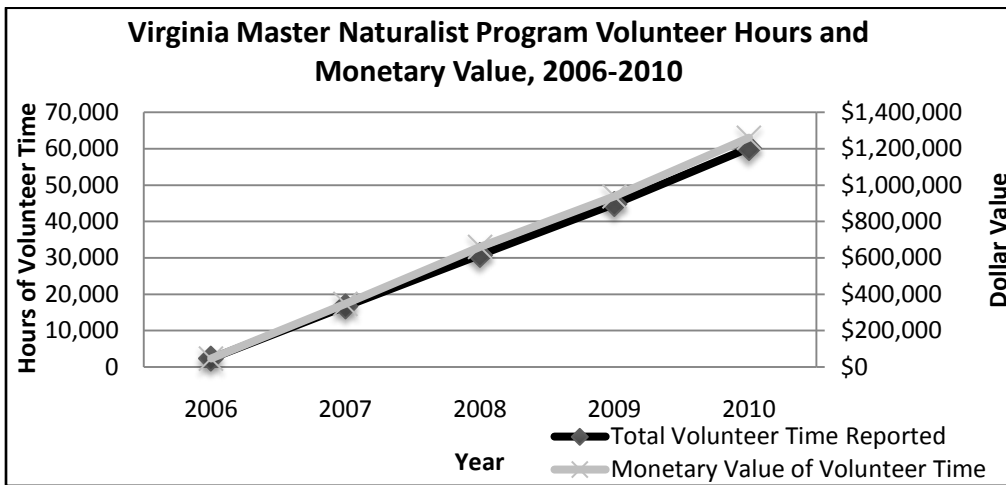
Chapter Advisors: There are 4 VDGIF staff members who serve as chapter advisors to VMN chapters. These individuals assist with volunteer training and management and provide an important link between the local chapters and the state agency sponsors.

WildlifeMapping has become one of the Chapter's foremost volunteer service projects. Several Chapter members are WildlifeMapping workshop facilitators and have certified over 100 new WildlifeMapping participants. In 2010, we contributed over 298 volunteer service hours to WildlifeMapping at Chapter approved sites. We have developed a dedicated Web page to allow members to access WildlifeMapping datasheets and maps specific to individual parks, refuges, wildlife management areas, and other public lands within the Historic Rivers area. Members are encouraged to "champion" one or more of these sites and to schedule visits routinely to them for WildlifeMapping.

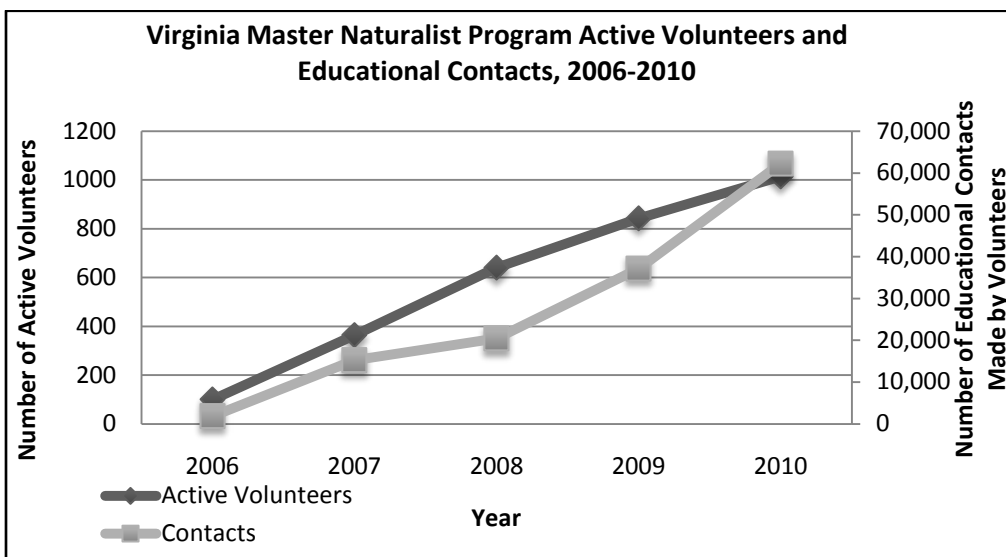
From the Historic Rivers Master Naturalist Chapter 2010 Annual Report

*The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), Economic Information Services Division, uses the Current Employment Statistics annualized average hourly earnings for all production and non-supervisory workers on private non-farm payrolls in Virginia." (<http://www.vaservice.org/go/volunteer/statistics/>)

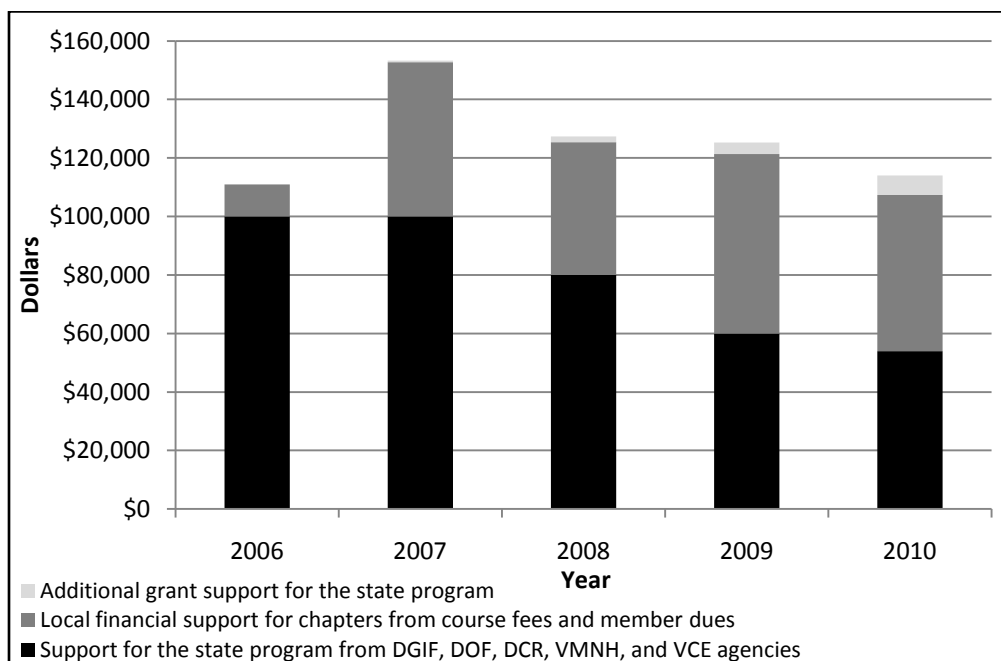
Virginia Master Naturalist Program Statistics At-A-Glance



Over the lifetime of the program, Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers have contributed a total of 154,932 hours of service, valued at more than \$3.2 million.



While the number of active volunteers has grown, so has the number of other Virginians reached through the program. Through their educational programs in parks, schools, and beyond, the volunteers have made more than 136,000 educational contacts.



At the statewide level, the Virginia Master Naturalist program has been funded mainly by a partnership of 5 state agencies. This critical funding supports statewide events and initiatives and a program coordinator. Some additional grants have funded special projects. At the local level, the program is self-sufficient through course fees and member dues.