November 5, 2020

Dear VMN Chapter Board Members and Chapter Advisors,

First, we want to say thank you for all that you and our other VMN volunteers do to benefit Virginia’s natural resources. For 2020 especially, we are grateful for your dedication, adaptability and creativity in finding ways to continue VMN volunteer efforts. We and our program sponsors are eager to know what you have been able to accomplish this year!

That’s right! It is time to put together your chapter’s Annual Report and to request recognition items. We know that Virginia Master Naturalists are making a huge difference for Virginia’s natural resources and the annual reports are an opportunity to gather real data from you to support this claim.

As most of you are aware, there are two documents that each chapter needs to submit to the State Office annually. These items are your chapter’s Annual Report and your chapter’s Certification Spreadsheet. The Annual Report is a chance for us to learn about everything your chapter has been working on this year and the Certification Spreadsheet is how we track certifications and milestones.

Attached, you will find more details for each of these two documents. It is quite a bit of information so please make sure to read through everything.

Please note that we will be hosting a continuing education webinar on ‘Navigating the Annual Reports Process’ on December 7 at 1:00pm. Please pre-register for the webinar. We will record it as well.

Due dates:

2. January 31: Updated Chapter Certification Spreadsheet

Please contact Tiffany with any additional questions you may have. Thank you so much for all you do! We are very appreciative, and we know all our sponsors, partners, and volunteers appreciate your leadership as well.

Cheers,

VMN State Office Team:
Michelle Prysby, VMN Program Director
Tiffany Brown, VMN Project Assistant
Terri Keffert, VMN Volunteer Coordinator
Annual Reports

Necessary Documents
On the VMN website, you can find the following documents:

- **The 2020 Annual Report template**: Please fill in this template with your chapter’s information. Please do not use the 2019 template, as it has been revised for 2020. The template is a .docx file. If you are unable to open it, please let Tiffany know and she will provide you with a different version.

- **Getting Annual Report Data from the VMN-VMS**: This document guides you through getting much of the quantitative data from the VMN-VMS that is needed for the Annual Report. Although we are transitioning to the new VMS, you will need to use the old VMS to get the data for your report.

If needed, you may request an emailed copy of your chapter’s **2019 Annual Report** from Tiffany.

How We Use Your Report

Your chapter Annual Reports will be compiled into an Annual Report for the entire program and used in reports to every Sponsoring Agency, federal reports required for Virginia Cooperative Extension, and communications with other program partners. We use information from your reports for reports to external grantors as well. We also use your annual reports to develop infographics for each chapter that you can use for marketing and share with your local partners.

By giving all parts of the report your best effort, you are helping us keep the program funded and supported throughout the Commonwealth. Your reports help demonstrate how the Virginia Master Naturalist Program is a cost-effective strategy for accomplishing natural resource education, citizen science, and stewardship. You also are helping us comply with state, federal, and grant requirements for documentation.

When and Where to Send Your Report

**Annual Reports are due to the State Office by JANUARY 13, 2020.** We must have your Annual Reports by this date in order to include them in required reporting to federal and state agencies. This deadline only gives us a few days to compile the data before it is due, so it is very important that you get it in on time. Please email reports to Tiffany Brown (tiffany.brown@vt.edu).

Tips for Completing Your Report

- **Make it a joint project.** The annual report should not be the sole responsibility of any one person. Our suggestion is to have multiple people, such as the Chapter Advisor, the Membership Chair, the Chapter President, and the Service Projects Chair work together. Other chapter members who are not on the board may contribute as well.

- **Complete all sections of the report thoroughly and accurately.** We need all of the information that we’ve requested, and we may have to send it back to you if there is missing or incorrect information.

- **Attach photos.** We ask that you choose a few photos to illustrate your chapter’s work and impacts. Please attach these as separate files rather than embedding them in your annual report document. In your report, let us know any caption information and photo credits.
• **Ask for Help.** Please do not hesitate to contact us for assistance if you have any questions about filling out the report or how to get the data you need. We would rather work with you on the front end rather than having to make corrections after the deadline.

• **Use your updated chapter member demographic spreadsheet for Section 11.** Do not use last year’s Annual Report numbers, as these will not be correct for this year. As you know, it's important that we submit the most accurate data we can for our civil rights compliance requirements.

Certification Spreadsheet and Requesting Recognition Items

Necessary Documents
Tiffany will send the most recent copy of your chapter’s Certification Spreadsheet to your current Membership Chair, President, VMS Administrator, and Chapter Advisor by December 10, 2020.

When and Where to Send Your Certification Spreadsheet

**Certification Spreadsheets are due to the State Office twice annually, in January and July.**

• **Deadline for Current Cycle:** JANUARY 31, 2021 (reporting on certificates, re-certifications and milestones through December 31, 2020)
  - You may send in your updated Certification Spreadsheet any time between January 1 and January 31, 2021. However, none will be accepted after January 31, 2021. Certification Spreadsheets will be reviewed and approved as they come in.
  - Packages will include certificates and milestone awards and be put together and mailed out in February 2021. If you miss the January deadline, it is unlikely that we can provide you with the recognition items until after the July deadline.

How We Use Your Certification Spreadsheet
The Certification Spreadsheet is all about recognizing volunteers for the contributions they have made to the program over the previous year. We use these spreadsheets to assemble pins and certificates for volunteers. While there is not a 2020 recertification pin, we **DO** want to know who recertified so that we have those records.

We use this spreadsheet to compile lists of milestone achievements for our newsletter. We also sometimes need it as a way to confirm volunteer status or history.

Tips and Information for Completing Your Certification Spreadsheet

• **Be aware of 2020 changes.** To qualify for recertification in 2020, previously certified VMNs needed to log 20 volunteer hours and 4 hours of continuing education between January 1 and December 31, 2020. Recent trainees will still need to complete 40 hours of service and 8 hours of CE to earn their first-time Certified Virginia Master Naturalist status, but your chapter may have granted an extended time frame for completion. You can find the details for this policy change on our website.

• **Ask for Help.** Please contact us if you need help with running reports in the VMS to gather these data.
- **Include all data.** Please make sure to include all recertification data on your spreadsheet along with first-time certifications and milestones. Even though we are not sending recertification pins this year, we want to keep a record of who recertified.