

Virginia Master Naturalist



Photo by John Stanley



2011 Annual Report



Photo by Beagle Ridge Chapter



Photo by Carol Hammer



Dear Virginia Master Naturalist supporters,

Happy 5th Anniversary, Virginia Master Naturalist program! In the beginning of 2006, we were holding meetings across the state to try to start our first ten chapters, and now we have 30. At the end of that first year, we had just 100 active volunteers, and now we have ten times that number. The volunteer service hours have grown at an even faster rate, with 2010 showing more than twenty-five times the number of hours as 2006. The number of people reached by the program is thirty-five times what it was in 2006.

The numbers are impressive, but more impressive, to me, is how so many of our chapters and volunteers have come to "own" the program. The leadership at the local level constantly amazes me, even as we totally rely upon these leaders to keep the program going and growing. As they gain more experience, chapters are ever more creative and ambitious in developing their own projects based on both members' interests and community needs. From starting their own Junior Naturalist youth programs to restoring habitat in local parks to establishing a program to educate their neighbors about invasive plants, Virginia Master Naturalists are becoming Virginia's natural resource leaders.

Recently, I was speaking with some of the representatives from our state sponsoring agencies who helped to get the program started and funded. They talked about how one of their founding principles was to let the volunteers choose their own directions in terms of service. There is not a requirement that every Virginia Master Naturalist must do a certain number of hours of service with any specific agency or project. It takes a lot of vision and trust to launch a program that's so open-ended and driven by grassroots interests and needs. Clearly that vision was a sound one, though, because the program has taken on a life of its own. It is wonderful to see volunteers empowered to dream up their own projects, and even more wonderful to see those projects carried out every day. Thank you, Virginia Master Naturalists, for all you have given to help Virginia's woods, wildlife, and water!

Sincerely,

Michelle Prysby
Virginia Master Naturalist Program Coordinator
Extension Associate, Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation, Virginia Tech

Working with the Master Naturalist chapter is one of the most enjoyable activities with which I have been associated.

Don Hearl, VMN volunteer
Photo by Eric Johnson, Rivanna Chapter



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The Virginia Master Naturalist Program: An Overview

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is a corps of well-informed volunteers dedicated to the beneficial management and conservation of natural resources within their communities for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The program consists of a network of 30 chapters across the state. Each chapter is responsible for training volunteers and working with partners to coordinate volunteer service opportunities. Local partnerships are a cornerstone of the program and include more than 300 public and private organizations involved in conservation and education.

To become Certified Virginia Master Naturalists, volunteers complete 40 hours of basic training in natural history and natural resource management with a local chapter, 8 hours of advanced training that provides more specialized skills and knowledge, and 40 hours of volunteer service. The volunteer service falls into the broad categories of education, citizen science, and stewardship. Education includes interpretive hikes, classroom presentations, and development of educational materials. Citizen science focuses on collecting data about natural resources and includes stream monitoring and wildlife surveys. Stewardship projects improve natural resources and include habitat restoration, invasive species management, and trail maintenance. Volunteers also organize and run the local chapters. Their volunteer service makes an enormous positive difference for Virginia's natural resources.



VMN volunteers learn in the field as well as the classroom.
Photo by Pocahontas Chapter



VMN volunteers have improved thousands of acres of land with their stewardship projects, such as this habitat restoration project at a state Natural Area Preserve.
Photo by Eastern Shore Chapter



VMN volunteers share their enthusiasm for Virginia's natural resources with thousands of other people!
Photo from Historic Rivers Chapter

Recertifications and Milestone Achievements in 2011

More than 450 individuals renewed their status as Certified Virginia Master Naturalists for 2012, earning the special 2012 re-certification pin, a dogwood flower design based on artwork by Virginia Master Naturalist Betty Gatewood of the Headwaters Chapter. In addition, the program recognizes Virginia Master Naturalists who have achieved the special milestones of 250, 500, 1000, 2500, and 5000 service hours. Below is a list of individuals who achieved 500, 1000, and 2500 hour milestones during the year since the last annual report. Our list of 250 hour milestone achievers is too long to print here! Congratulations to all, and thank you for your service and dedication to the Virginia's natural resources.



These names were compiled from the 2011 annual reports submitted by chapters. If any volunteers believe they should be added to this 2011 list, please contact your chapter's record keeper.

New 500-hour service awards

Michael Arrowood (Central Blue Ridge)
 Judi Booker (Fairfax)
 Linda Bowman (Banshee Reeks)
 Joella Buffa (Eastern Shore)
 Guy Buford (Blue Ridge Foothills & Lakes)
 Margaret Chatham (Arlington Regional)
 Jim Clark (Arlington Regional)
 Linda Cole (Historic Rivers)
 Donna Cottingham (Riverine)
 Bill Cour (Banshee Reeks)
 Yvonne Dinish-Noble (Central Virginia)
 Bob Dinse (Fairfax)
 Linnie Dudley (Central Virginia)
 John Ford (New River Valley)
 Ann Garvey (Banshee Reeks)
 Ruth Gibbons (Arlington Regional)
 Ralph Hall (Rivanna)
 Denise Hayes (Riverine)
 Jim Hurley (Arlington Regional)
 Victoria Keenum (Blue Ridge Foothills & Lakes)
 David Kirk (Alleghany Highlands)
 Chris Lewis (Shenandoah)
 Patty Maloney (Historic Rivers)
 Clyde Marsteller (Historic Rivers)
 David McCarthy (Banshee Reeks)
 Robert McSwain (Central Blue Ridge)
 Susan McSwain (Central Blue Ridge)
 Marsha Miller (Tidewater)
 Rebecca Minor (Rivanna)
 Keith Morrison (Pocahontas)

Jeanette Navia (Historic Rivers)
 Pam Owen (Old Rag)
 Bill Plyler (Central Virginia)
 Peter Poulos (Banshee Reeks)
 Lisa Quigley (Pocahontas)
 Larry Riddick (Historic Rivers)
 Marilyn Schroeder (Fairfax)
 Lori Seidmeyer (Banshee Reeks)
 John Stanley (Alleghany Highlands)
 Richard Stromberg (Shenandoah)
 Marney Terrill (Pocahontas)
 Lois Ullman (Historic Rivers)
 Margaret Wester (Shenandoah)
 Jim Wilcox (Fairfax)
 Frank Wilczek (Old Rag)
 David Youker (Historic Rivers)

New 1000-hour service awards

Felice Bond (Historic Rivers)
 Mary Lee Epps (Rivanna)
 Les Lawrence (Historic Rivers)
 Clyde Morris (Eastern Shore)
 Rodney Olsen (Arlington Regional)
 Tony Russell (Rivanna)
 Robin Williams (Old Rag)

*The
program
has exceeded my
expectations and is a
great success story.*
Joe Elton, Virginia State
Parks Director, VDCR

*2 chapters assisted DOF staff with cone
collection in the 3rd cycle loblolly pine seed
orchard at the New Kent Forestry Center. In
all, over 260 bushels of valuable advanced-
generation seedlings were collected, which
will produce over 5 million seedlings for
Virginia forest landowners to plant in 2012.
With the Master Naturalists' help, DOF
saved over \$5,000 compared to the cost of
contracted cone harvesting."*

Jerre Creighton, Research Program Manager,
VDOF

**I want you to know how
delighted I have been by this
opportunity to become a VMN.
This program is amazing!**
Sally Chamberlin
VMN volunteer (Riverine Chapter)

*I want to say a big "THANK YOU" to you and
all of the Old Rag, Rivanna and Shenandoah
Master Naturalists who came out to
Montpelier and labored over two days to pull
so much garlic mustard out. Your group was
certainly a breath of fresh air . . . I love it that
all of you actually enjoy doing this!*

Sandy Mudrinich, Horticulturist
The Montpelier Foundation

Program Statistics

These data, provided by the chapters, show how our volunteers are making a difference. These figures represent a minimum; volunteer hours and impacts tend to be underreported. We greatly appreciate our volunteers taking the time to report on their activities so that we can see how the program is growing each year. Even more, we appreciate all of the chapter record keepers and membership chairs who track and report all of these data for the local chapters!

Virginia Master Naturalist Program Statistics for 2011	
Number of Basic Training Courses Held	25
Number of Volunteers Trained	467
Number of Active Volunteers	1133
Number of Currently Certified VMNs	675+
Number of Advanced Training hours completed	16,376+
Number of Educational Contacts Made by VMN volunteers	84,868+
Number of acres positively impacted	1286+
Number of miles of trails built/maintained	1048+
Total number of volunteer hours	74,626+
Monetary Value of total volunteer hours	\$1,644,011+

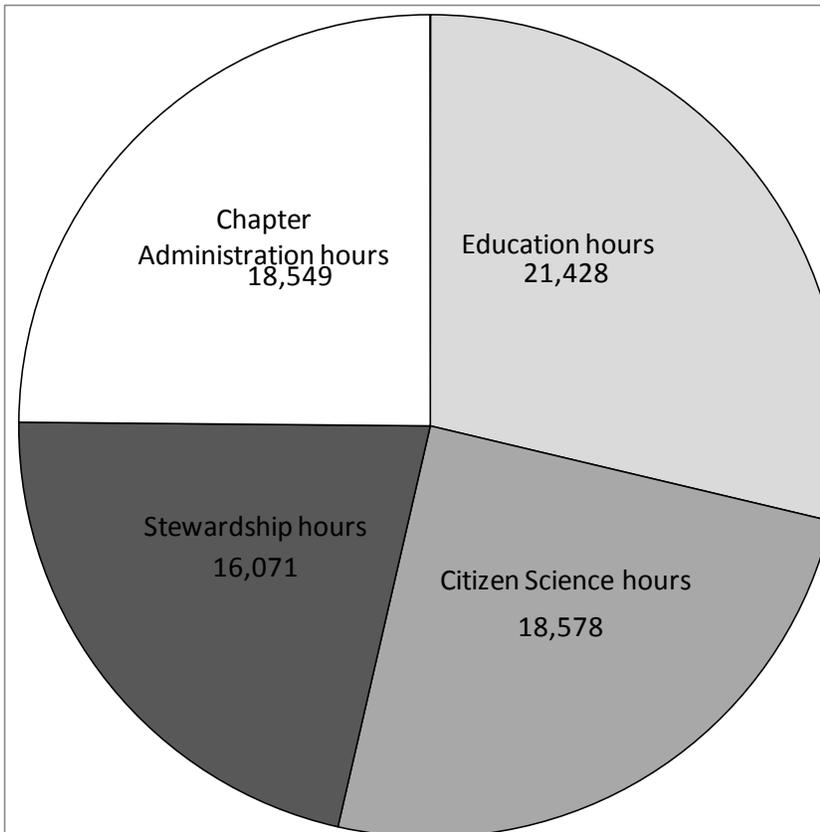


Figure 1. Volunteer hours by category for 2011. In 2011, Virginia Master Naturalists contributed 74,626 hours of volunteer service towards education, citizen science, and stewardship projects, as well as towards running their local chapters.

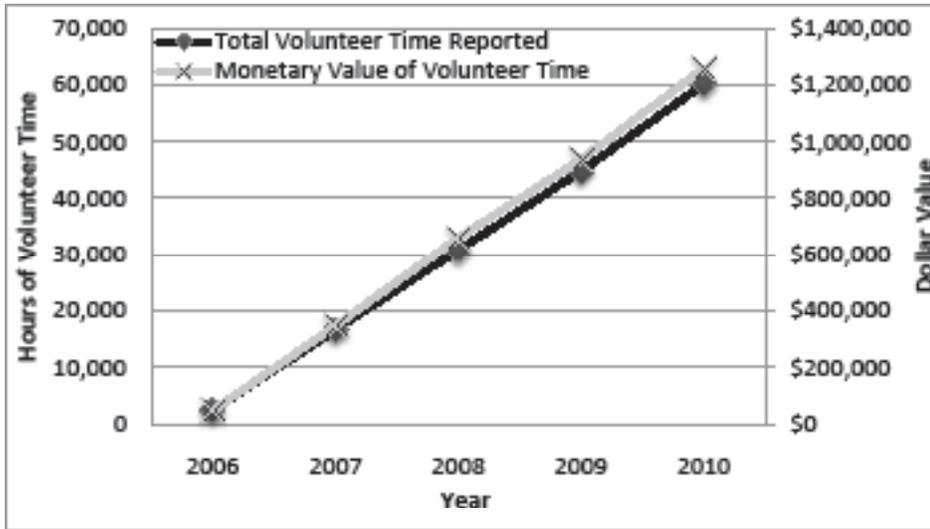


Figure 2. VMN program volunteer hours and monetary value, 2006-2010. Over the lifetime of the program, Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers have contributed a total of 154,932 hours of service, valued at more than \$3.2 million.

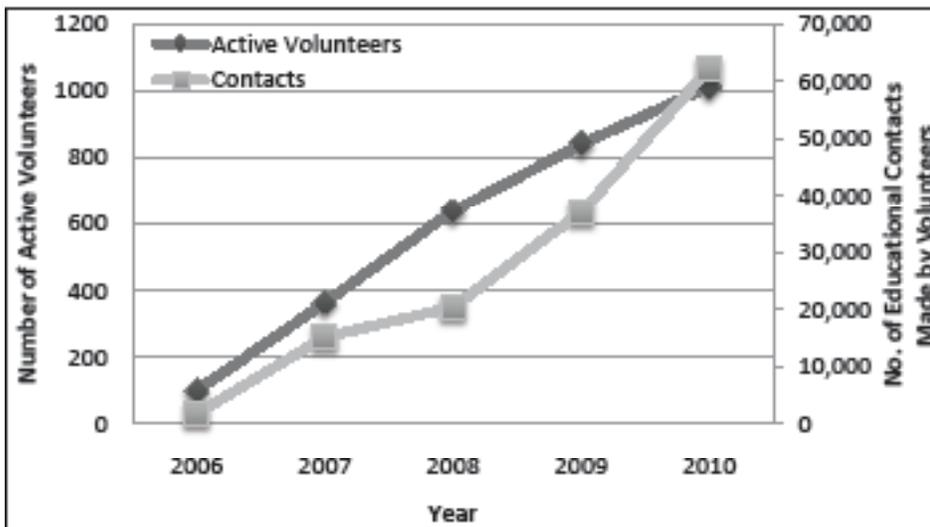


Figure 3. VMN program active volunteers and contacts, 2006-2010. Through their educational programs in parks, schools, and beyond, VMN volunteers have made more than 136,000 contacts.

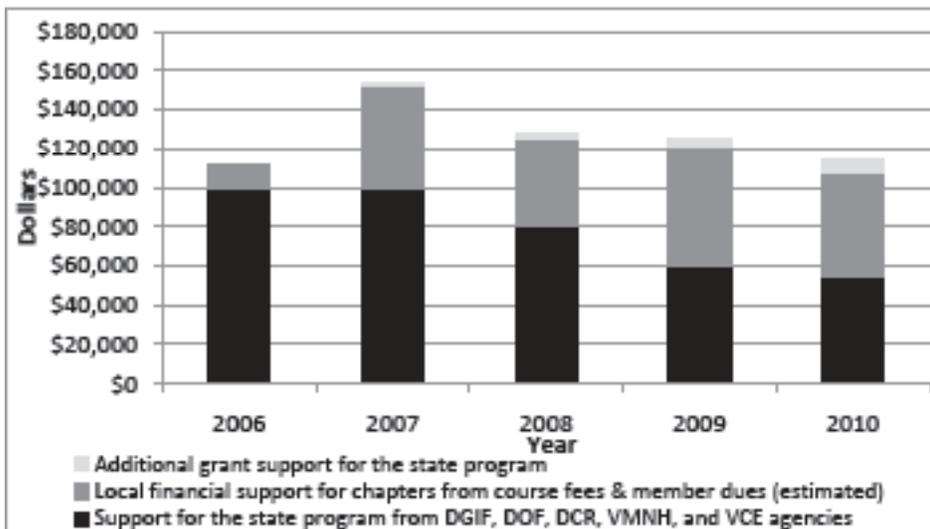


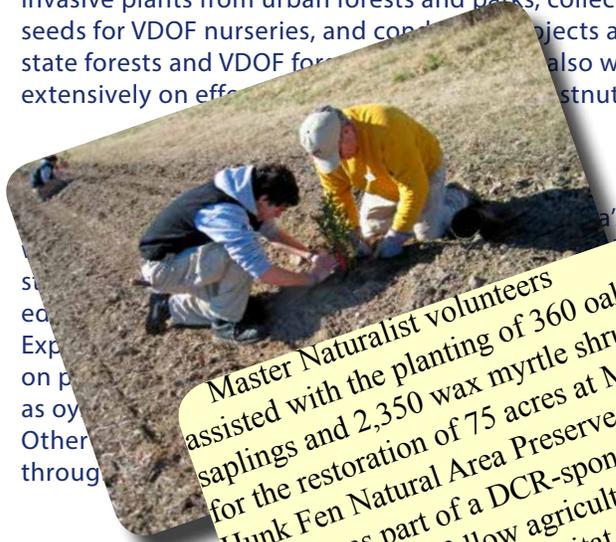
Figure 4. Financial support. Centrally, the program has been funded by a partnership of 5 state agencies that supports statewide initiatives and a program coordinator. Some additional grants have funded special projects. At the local level, the program is self-sufficient through course fees and member dues.

2011 Project Highlights

Our Virginia Master Naturalist chapters have hundreds of active projects in our core program areas of education, citizen science, and stewardship. These projects benefit Virginia's woods, wildlife, and waters. Some reach adult audiences; others are focused on youth, our future natural resource stewards. Some are connected to a statewide or even national project, while others are unique local projects led by the chapter from start to finish. Some projects take place in Virginia's most urban environments, with others happening in remote areas of wilderness.

Woods

Virginia Master Naturalists helped improve Virginia's forest resources and educate the public about the importance of trees and healthy forests. They planted trees, removed invasive plants from urban forests and parks, collected seeds for VDOF nurseries, and conducted projects at six state forests and VDOF forests. They also worked extensively on efforts to protect Virginia's



Master Naturalist volunteers assisted with the planting of 360 oak saplings and 2,350 wax myrtle shrubs for the restoration of 75 acres at Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve. This project was part of a DCR-sponsored effort to restore fallow agricultural fields to migratory songbird habitat on the Eastern Shore.

Virginia Master Naturalists contributed 13,058 volunteer hours on projects directly related to wildlife and habitat. Over half of this work focused on collecting data for wildlife-related citizen science projects, including surveys of birds, butterflies, dragonflies, crayfish, box turtles, diamondback terrapins, fish, flying squirrels, frogs, quail, and salamanders. These citizen science efforts expand our knowledge of the Commonwealth's wildlife populations and raise awareness of many wildlife species. In addition, the volunteers contributed thousands of hours of service on habitat restoration and enhancement projects and programs to educate the public about wildlife.



The Rivanna Master Naturalist chapter worked with the North American Butterfly Association to establish a new butterfly survey area in Albemarle County. The two lead volunteers delineated the survey area and identified a diversity of butterfly habitat sites within it. They conducted a workshop to train Master Naturalists and other members of the public how to do the survey and how to identify common butterfly species in the area. On June 25th, they held their first survey, and the volunteer crew documented 291 individual butterflies of 28 species. Master Naturalists also conduct NABA butterfly surveys in Nelson and... counties.

2010 Project Highlights, continued



Master Naturalists are a key partner in the Working Woods at James Madison's Montpelier. They have worked with Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Foundation, and other partners to develop an interpretive program to teach visitors about sustainable forest management practices. The volunteers lead quarterly Working Woods guided hikes and are adding additional features to the interpretive trail, such as tree identification signs with QR codes so that smart phone users can link to the Virginia Tech Tree ID site.



On November 16, a project that involved 49 volunteers, 2000 hours of service, and more than a year of work came to fruition at the Freedom Park Interpretive Center in James City County. The idea for an educational exhibit that could make use of the amazing photographic talent that exists in the Historic Rivers Chapter had been brewing for years, but finally became a reality when the Superintendent of James City County Parks requested Master Naturalist help with providing information on local flora and fauna for a touch-screen electronic kiosk at the park. In the last year, the volunteers have provided information on 353 species of animals and plants, including 835 photos and 15 audio recordings. The kiosk is used to enhance park visitors' experiences by....

Twelve Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers participated in the 2011 DEQ Watershed Educators Institute. Together, they have reached more than 2000 youth through Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences and other watershed education programs for students.



2010 Project Highlights, continued

Chapter Spotlight: Historic Southside

Spotlight on a Chapter—Historic Southside

Tucked away in a part of the state that most folks don't travel through very often is the stomping grounds of one of our newest Virginia Master Naturalist chapters, the Historic Southside Chapter. The chapter is working to be active in Surry, Isle of Wight, Southampton, and Sussex counties and the City of Franklin. Though they neighbor the highly populated parts of Hampton Roads, the Historic Southside chapter's area is mostly rural. They boast a VDCR State Park, three VDGIF Wildlife Management Areas, a VDOF State Forest, at least four VDCR natural area preserves, and a 4-H Center, so there is a lot of potential for projects on public lands!

As with several of our chapters, the Historic Southside Chapter originated from the energy and interest of one person who wanted to participate in the program, but did not have a chapter that served her area. This volunteer, Terri Cuthriell, started working in early 2010 to build a coalition of potential chapter members to serve as a local coordinating committee that would get the chapter up and running. Gaining a committee member who writes for a local newspaper helped with publicity to draw in additional prospective members, and by August 2011, the chapter was holding the first session of its basic training course.

The Historic Southside Chapter graduated the 22 members of its first training cohort in January. At this point, more than 75% of those volunteers have recorded volunteer service, which is a fabulous record, especially for a brand-new chapter. In

addition, more than half of the members have taken on board positions; this involvement will help ensure that the chapter's momentum stays strong. Janet Spencer, Isle of Wight Extension agent, provides assistance as the chapter advisor.

Some of the chapter's current volunteer projects include English ivy eradication at a local park, water quality monitoring in the Nottaway and Blackwater River watersheds, and installing wood duck boxes at a Wildlife Management Area. We can look



Save the Date for the Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Conference and Volunteer Training

When: September 7-9

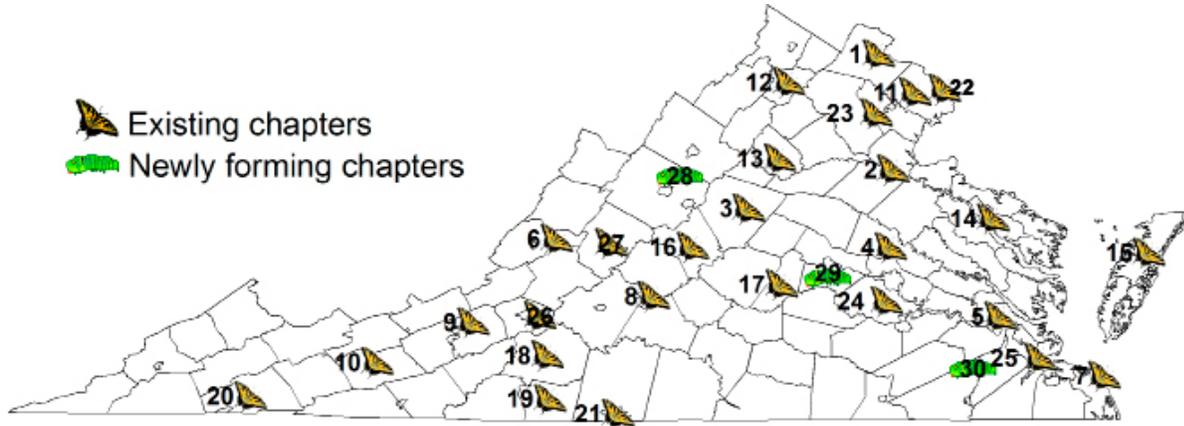
Where: Hosted by the Southwestern Piedmont Master Naturalists at the Virginia Museum of Natural History (Martinsville) and Fairy Stone State Park.

What: A full weekend of advanced training opportunities, networking with other Master Naturalists, and, of course, having fun!

More details and registration information will be posted on the program Web site in June.



Master Naturalists practiced interpretive skills during the 2011 conference at Camp Friendship.



- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Banshee Reeks | 12. Shenandoah | 22. Arlington Regional |
| 2. Central Rappahannock | 13. Old Rag | 23. Merrimac Farm |
| 3. Rivanna | 14. Northern Neck | 24. Pocahontas |
| 4. Riverine | 15. Eastern Shore | 25. Peninsula |
| 5. Historic Rivers | 16. Central Blue Ridge | 26. Roanoke Valley |
| 6. Alleghany Highlands | 17. Central Piedmont | 27. Rockbridge |
| 7. Tidewater | 18. Blue Ridge Foothills & Lakes | 28. Headwaters |
| 8. Central Virginia | 19. Southwestern Piedmont | 29. James River |
| 9. New River Valley | 20. Holston Rivers | 30. Historic Southside |
| 10. Beagle Ridge | 21. Dan River | |
| 11. Fairfax | | |

Steering Committee

Michelle Dickerson, VCE	Carol Heiser, VDGIF	Ellen Powell, VDOF
Denise Hayes, Volunteer	John Munsell, VCE	Ellen Reynolds, Volunteer
Beth Hawse, VDCR	Michael Lachance, VCE	Lou Verner, VDGIF
Michael Hayslett, Volunteer	Ann Mallek, VMNH	Carol Zokaites, VDCR
	Jim McGlone, VDOF	

Executive Committee

Dennis Casey, VMNH	Joe Keiper, VMNH	Bob Smith, VCE
Dean Cumbia, VDOF	Chris Ludwig, VDCR	Dave Slack, VDOF
Bob Duncan, VDGIF	Keith Morgan, VDCR	David Whitehurst, VDGIF
Denise Hayes, Volunteer	John Munsell, VCE	

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2010 Virginia Master Naturalist Sponsoring Agencies



Additional support from Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment,
Virginia Tech Dept. of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation, and
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality