March 12, 2018

Dear VMN Steering Committee, Executive Committee, and Chapter Advisor representatives from VDCR,

Thank you for your continued support of the Virginia Master Naturalist program in 2017. I am excited to share with you some of our program outputs and impacts from the year. In 2017, VMN volunteers conducted service projects at 21 State Parks and 11 Natural Area Preserves, contributing 8,901 hours of volunteering on these DCR-managed public lands. This figure represents a 15% increase in service hours on DCR-managed lands compared to 2016. Their service equates to $239,971 in monetary value (IndependentSector.org).

VMN volunteers provided significant staffing for education facilities at Douthat and Claytor Lake state parks. At Douthat, 14 volunteers staffed the Nature’s Outpost, sharing information about the park’s flora and fauna with visitors two days a week during the summer. Without these volunteers, the park would not be able to have the Outpost open as often. The VMN volunteers contributed 367 hours of service at the Nature’s Outpost in 2017 and made more than 600 educational contacts. The VMN volunteer presence at Claytor Lake State Park grew substantially in 2017. Twenty-five volunteers provided 488 hours of service at the Discovery Center, operating it a total of 51 days during the summer and interacting with more than 4,700 park visitors.

In addition, VMN volunteers continue to provide stewardship at many Natural Area Preserves. In one example, the VMN-Northern Neck Chapter had its training class of new volunteers collaborate with Chesapeake Bay Region Steward Zach Bradford to develop a class project that would benefit Bush Mill Stream Natural Area Preserve. After learning what work was needed at the preserve, the volunteers planned and completed a variety of stewardship activities. They also began a new citizen science project to document wildlife at the preserve using camera trapping. Bradford wrote, “This Master Naturalist project has been great. It has helped us get a lot of overdue stuff done (trail maintenance, new trail markers, blazes, property boundaries) and hopefully increased the profile of this little used natural area preserve.”

In the attached infographic, you will find the program-wide 2017 statistics. These statistics reflect many more hours that were not directly with DCR, but that align with your agency’s mission and programs. For example, VMN volunteers volunteered with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, built and maintained trails that helped increase Virginians’ access to the outdoors, and conducted BioBlitzes and species inventories to learn more about their local natural resources.

With your monetary and in-kind support, we continued to grow our program and make positive impacts for the Commonwealth’s natural resources. Your monetary contribution supports two part-time staff members, Tiffany Brown and Terri Keffert, who are vital for program and volunteer coordination. It also supports volunteer recognition items and other program supplies, program communications tools, staff travel to teach and meet with volunteers, training events, and other important functions of the statewide program. Your in-kind contribution of staff time for training
volunteers, leading projects, advising chapters, and serving on our committees is also a critical part
of our program.

On behalf of all our volunteers, I thank you for your support. Please let me know if you have any
questions about this report or our volunteer activities, if you would like me to provide you with any
other materials, or if you would like to discuss additional opportunities for collaboration.

Thank you,

Michelle Prysby
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Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers assisting with stewardship at Bush Mill Stream Natural Area
Preserve.
Virginia Master Naturalist Program

2017 Statewide Annual Report Snapshot

1,841 ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS
155,992 HOURS OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE
$4.21 MILLION VALUE OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE

2017 Accomplishments

Chapter Administration
Trained and graduated 415 new volunteers from basic training courses

Education
Made 127,888+ contacts through educational programs for youth and adults

Stewardship
Provided stewardship at 350+ parks, natural areas, and other sites

Citizen Science
Contributed to 100+ studies of water quality, wildlife populations, and other natural resources

Volunteer Time, in Hours

2017 Highlight: Habitat Enhancement, Education, and Monitoring

Volunteers contributed more than 4,000 hours managing invasive plants at dozens of local, state, and national parks. They also spread the word about invasives with presentations and publications.

Volunteers educated property owners about conservation landscaping through programs such as Audubon At Home, DGIF Habitat Partners©, and the Smith Mountain Lake Buffer Advisory Service Team.

Volunteers documented the effectiveness of habitat improvements through butterfly and bird counts that also contributed to larger citizen science studies.

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Virginia Master Naturalist programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; M. Ray McKinnie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.