



DEPARTMENT OF
WILDLIFE RESOURCES
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2023 Commonwealth Fellowship Host Office Descriptions

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) and Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) are soliciting applications for the 2023-24 Commonwealth Coastal & Marine Policy Fellowship. This twelve-month paid fellowship provides educational and professional development opportunities for post-graduates interested in Virginia's coastal and marine resources. In addition to learning about state-level policy and management processes, fellows receive on-the-job training with a Virginia state agency, working to address important coastal and marine resource issues. Selected finalists for the fellowship will interview with prospective host offices to find the best match. VASG, VEE, and their partners anticipate supporting two to three post-graduate fellows starting on September 1, 2023. This announcement and guidance on how to submit your application can be found at: <https://vaseagrant.org/commonwealth-fellowship-applicants/>

PARTICIPATING HOST OFFICES

Each office listed below has expressed interest in hosting a fellow during the 2023 fellowship year. Additional host offices and projects may be added before the fellowship application deadline. Please visit <https://vaseagrant.org/fellowship-research-funding/commonwealth-fellowship-home/> for the current list.

Department of Environmental Quality

Department of Wildlife Resources

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

Applicants are strongly encouraged to visit host office websites for more details on their missions and activities. Descriptions of projects are included below.

VIRGINIA SEA GRANT PARTNER UNIVERSITIES





VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

LOCATION: 1111 EAST MAIN STREET, RICHMOND

DESCRIPTION OF HOST OFFICE:

Virginia's abundant natural resources provide a rich environment for people, plants and wildlife...and benefit agriculture, industry, commerce and economic development. To ensure the continued vitality of these precious and valuable resources, DEQ carries out its mission to protect and improve the environment for the health, well-being and quality of life of all Virginians. The mission of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is to protect and enhance the environment of Virginia in order to promote the health and well-being of the Commonwealth's citizens, residents, and visitors in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

DEQ administering laws and regulations related to air quality, water quality, water supply, renewable energy and land protection. In addition, DEQ's programs cover a wide variety of other activities, such as assisting businesses and local government agencies to go "above and beyond" regulations, encouraging volunteer actions and offering technical and financial support for improvements to our air and water.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

1) PROPOSED PROJECT TITLE: Chesapeake Bay Technical and Policy Assistance

Names/Titles of Host Office Mentor(s): Ryan Green, Water Supply Planning and Analysis Team Lead

Location: 1111 East Main Street, Richmond

Description of Host Office (general overview): The DEQ Office of Watershed and Local Government Assistance Programs provides policy and strategic leadership and implements agency activities related to watershed plan development, such as Total Maximum Daily Loads or TMDLs, TMDL and nonpoint source program implementation, the implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (Bay Act) and related local government initiatives for the protection of the Chesapeake Bay. The Office works closely with the DEQ Chesapeake Bay program coordination team and collaborates within DEQ and with other agencies and stakeholders, such as local governments, Planning District Commissions, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts, to facilitate implementation and associated tracking and reporting activities in support of Virginia's Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan and local TMDLs.

PROPOSED PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Commonwealth Coastal and Marine Policy Fellow will work with DEQ Water Planning Division staff to provide assistance with a variety of Chesapeake Bay-related activities such as guidance development, watershed implementation planning and prioritization, and work in support of developing No Discharge Zones. The Fellow may be responsible for independent and joint analyses of new and existing information, guidance and implementation tools related to the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and the

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Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan milestone, monitoring and implementation activities. There will also be an opportunity to perform data analysis and other activities related to on-going efforts to develop local no-discharge zones in the Chesapeake Bay.

2) PROPOSED PROJECT TITLE: Water Supply Planning Technical and Policy Assistance

Name/Title of Host Office Mentor: Justin Williams, Director, Office of Watershed and Local Government Assistance Programs

Location: 1111 East Main Street, Richmond

Description of Host Office (general overview): The DEQ Office of Water Supply is responsible for providing policy and technical support to assure statewide consistency in all agency activities related to water supply planning, groundwater and surface water withdrawal management, water withdrawal reporting, and water conservation. Staff in the office establishes and maintain water supply planning regulations, policies, and procedures consistent with the water supply planning requirements of the Virginia State Water Control Law, the Surface Water Management Act, the Groundwater Management Act, surface water withdrawal requirements of the Virginia Water Protection Permit program, Water Withdrawal Reporting Regulations, and applicable State and Federal laws and regulations related to water supply planning and management.

PROPOSED PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Commonwealth Coastal and Marine Policy Fellow will work with DEQ Water Planning Division staff to provide assistance with a variety of water supply planning-related activities to support DEQ in managing the availability of water resources throughout Virginia. The Fellow may be responsible for working with modelers in the area of communicating modeling results to permit applicants, interested parties and the public, working on guidance and associated DEQ data product development (i.e. ways to convey information to localities to support water supply planning efforts), or identifying strategies and working with stakeholder to increase annual report registrations for a subset of water withdrawals.

3) PROPOSED PROJECT TITLE: Water Division Guidance Review and Policy Assistance

Name/Title of Host Office Mentor: Scott Morris, Water Division Director

Location: 1111 East Main Street, Richmond

Description of Host Office (general overview): The DEQ Division of Watery is responsible for providing policy and technical support to assure statewide consistency in all agency activities related to water supply planning, groundwater and surface water withdrawal management, water withdrawal reporting, water conservation, clean water financing, VPDES permitting, VPA permitting, land application, and wetland & stream protection.

PROPOSED PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Commonwealth Coastal and Marine Policy Fellow will work with DEQ Water Division staff to provide assistance with a variety of water guidance document reviews. The Fellow may be responsible for working with program staff in Offices of Water Supply, Office of Watershed and Local Government Assistance Programs, Office of Ecology, Office of Clean Water Finance, Office of VPDES Permits, Office of Stormwater Management, Office of Land Application Programs, Office of Water Compliance, and Office of Wetlands and Stream Protection to review, repeal obsolete guidance, and modify existing guidance to enhance guidance clarity and understanding by the public.

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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

LOCATION: DWR HEADQUARTERS, 7870 VILLA PARK DR., HENRICO, VA 23228

DESCRIPTION OF HOST OFFICE:

The Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is responsible for the management of inland fisheries, wildlife, and recreational boating for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The agency has statutory responsibility for threatened and endangered wildlife in Virginia and exercises conservation, management, regulatory, and enforcement jurisdiction over all state and federally listed wildlife, including protected marine species. The DWR manages public access and wildlife habitats on 44 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) totaling more than 225,000 acres and provides access to Virginia's waters at approximately 250 boating access sites. The mission of the DWR is to conserve and manage wildlife populations and habitats for the benefit of present and future generations; connect people to Virginia's outdoors through boating, education, fishing, hunting, trapping, wildlife viewing and other wildlife-related activities; and protect people and property by promoting safe outdoor experiences and managing human-wildlife conflict. The agency is organized into six major work units (Wildlife, Fisheries, Planning & Finance, Law Enforcement, Outreach, and Executive Director's Office) to support its mission.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

PROPOSED PROJECT TITLE: Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan - 2025 Revision

Name/Title of Host Office Mentor: Jeff Trollinger, Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator

Proposed Location of Work: The selected Fellow will be located at the DWR's headquarters office in Henrico County.

Proposed Project Description, Activities and Goals (300-500 Words):

State Wildlife Action Plans serve as the blueprints for conserving the nation's fish and wildlife resources and preventing species from becoming endangered. Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan (Plan) was first developed in the early 2000s in response to a Congressional mandate associated with the new State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program. The Plan was approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 2005 and has been formally updated once, with the revised Plan approved by the USFWS in 2015. The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is beginning the formal revision of the Plan for submission and approval in September 2025.

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The Plan must identify and be focused on the “species of greatest conservation need” (SGCN) and address eight Congressionally-required elements:

1. Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife;
2. Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to these species;
3. Descriptions of problems which may adversely affect these species or their habitats;
4. Descriptions of conservation actions proposed to conserve these species and habitats;
5. Proposed plans for monitoring species and habitats and the effectiveness of conservation actions;
6. Descriptions of procedures to review the Plan;
7. Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review and revision of the Plan with governmental agencies and tribes; and
8. Plans to ensure board public participation in the Plan.

The proposed project is intended to advance the DWR’s 2025 revision to the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan. Strategic focus will be placed on identification, review and prioritization of potential and necessary conservation actions needed to address threats to the species of greatest conservation need and the habitats that support them. The participating Fellow will lead efforts across the organization to accomplish a number of supporting initiatives:

- Catalog conservation actions and measures taken to address threats to SGCN in the existing (2015) Wildlife Action Plan;
- Engage with experts within and outside of the DWR to identify, quantify, and spatially locate on-going and/or new conservation actions to address threats to SGCN and habitats for the 2025 revision;
- Initiate and coordinate the review and prioritization of these conservation actions with the DWR’s Taxonomic Teams, led by the DWR’s subject matter experts, for fish, herpetofauna, birds, mammals, freshwater mussels, and other aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, documenting the outcomes of the review process and providing the updated resulting species list;
- Engage with experts in marine conservation and plant conservation to identify, quantify, spatially locate and prioritize conservation actions needed to address threats to newly-added SGCN, particularly marine wildlife and plants, documenting the outcomes of the review process; and
- Using GIS, develop spatial data layers representing, to the degree possible, locations, types, quantities, etc., of conservation actions by priority and collaborate with the DWR’s GIS team to develop online and document maps illustrating these needed actions.

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VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION, HABITAT MANAGEMENT DIVISION

LOCATION: 380 FENWICK ROAD, BLD. 96, FORT MONROE, VA 23651

DESCRIPTION OF HOST OFFICE:

VMRC serves as stewards of the Commonwealth’s marine and aquatic resources. The agency manages saltwater fishing, both recreational and commercial, and works to create and maintain sustainable fisheries for the benefit of all anglers and the ecosystem. The agency also manages the state’s submerged bottomlands, tidal wetlands, sand dunes, and beaches in order to preserve and protect Virginia’s natural resources and the habitat our saltwater fisheries depend on.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

PROJECT TITLE: Agency Scoping Comments Review Coordinator & Habitat Management Division Permit Tracking Database Fellow

POTENTIAL FELLOWSHIP PROJECT

The Commonwealth Coastal and Marine Policy Fellow will assist VMRC’s Habitat Management Division with coordinating agency reviews between the Fisheries and Habitat Management Divisions necessary to draft scoping comments on environmental documents provided to VMRC for review of project activities potentially affecting marine fisheries and habitats. Examples of documents submitted for review include Environmental Assessments, Environmental Impact Statements, and Federal Coastal Zone Management Consistency Determinations. The Fellow will be responsible for initial assessment and coordination of the document reviews between agency divisions and departments.

Additionally, the fellow will work directly with VMRC’s Director of Coastal Policy, Restoration and Resilience. The Director serves as the chief science and policy advisor to the Commissioner on matters of climate change, coastal resilience, and habitat restoration and represents the Commissioner on matters related to the Chesapeake Bay Program and Virginia Watershed Implementation Plan, the Coastal Resilience Master Plan and the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program Coastal Policy Team.

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