



# CNR NEWS

## A Great Transformation

COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Although anyone associated with Virginia Tech would easily recognize the phrase “Invent the Future,” it is rare that someone takes this responsibility into his or her own hands. David Trauger is an exception. His lifelong professional accomplishments can be calculated by the number of awards he has received, the progress he has made to the National Capital Region’s Master of Natural Resources program, and most importantly, the way he has touched the lives of his students and colleagues.

Trauger, who recently retired after seven years at the college, tackled the unending local and global challenges that natural resource professionals face with persistence. Following a 32-year career in natural resource agencies of the Department of the Interior, and after serving on the college’s Advisory Committee for 14 years, Trauger was appointed director of the Master of Natural Resources program at the National Capital Region in Northern Virginia. He also served as associate dean of the Graduate School and was a professor in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences.



*Trauger, standing beside the maple tree planted in his honor, will continue to serve the college as a part-time faculty member.*

“In addition to having a profound impact on the growth and accreditation of the college itself, I experienced first-hand the individual ways David Trauger has influenced students,” stated Dean Mike Kelly. “It was clear to me from the reaction of the students during the college’s recent National Capital Region graduation ceremony that they greatly appreciate what David has done on their behalf. He is truly a unique individual who will be impossible to replace, but his legacy in the college will carry on and serve as an inspiration for others.”

Trauger assisted in fostering and developing the Natural Resources program from originally offering only one or two courses to more than 15 courses per semester. This advancement allowed for the program to accept more than 53 graduate students and enroll over 160 students for fall 2008, a giant leap from the handful of students the program could accommodate when it started offering courses in 1997. In response to this substantial growth, the university’s graduate school increased Trauger’s budget to hire additional faculty members and postdoctoral fellows. “Few have such a unique opportunity to build a new and innovative program literally from the ground up,” he reflected.

*Students, staff, and faculty gathered at the Natural Resource Program Annual Meeting beside a maple tree planted on the grounds of the National Capital Region’s Northern Virginia Center in commemoration of Dave Trauger’s (standing, center) retirement.*



To add to his list of personal and professional achievements, the National Capital Region Faculty Association honored Trauger by selecting him as the first speaker in the college’s Last Lecture Series, in which speakers present a topic of their choice to an open audience including current and former colleagues, alumni, and friends. Trauger’s lecture was titled “The Great Transformation: 2001-2030.”

In tune with his character, Trauger chose a topic that provided insight into the current state of the environment, economy, and society; he delved into the implications these would have on future generations without masking or undermining the truth. Trauger discerned what he calls the coming “perfect ecological and economic storm.” Throughout his lecture, Trauger focused on the increasing challenges the global community faces regarding sustainability, natural resources, and climate change. With supporting research, he predicted how these issues will play a leading role in shaping the upcoming decades of the federal government and, consequently, American society.

He discussed the foundations behind the widespread panic that collapse is on the horizon and that the end of civilization is near, owing to severe climate change and the imminence of peak oil, and he warned to not underestimate either of these.

“Earth’s inhabitants in the early 21st century are entering the most dangerous era in all human history . . . Our present way of life, so dependent on the use of fossil fuel, is hanging on the cliff edge,” cautioned Trauger.

In addition to addressing the challenges that society faces on a national and global level, he also described a few challenges for the university: to increase sustainability efforts, to strengthen its commitment to the growing Natural Resources program, and to sign the Talloires Declaration, a ten-point action plan for incorporating sustainability and environmental literacy in teaching, research, operations, and outreach at colleges and universities.

Trauger concluded, “I came to Virginia Tech to contribute to the education of the ‘Next Generation’ of natural resources professionals. I leave the Natural Resources program with serious concerns that these students may be the ‘Last Generation.’ I only hope that leaving a personal legacy will stimulate these students to become the next ‘Greatest Generation.’”

Throughout Trauger’s lifelong career in natural resources, he has inspired, motivated, and challenged colleagues and students to achieve their personal potential while positively impacting society. Trauger led by example – an example that will be imitated in the wake of his retirement and for years to come.

*Trauger with members of his staff (L-R): Xiaohui Helen He (Administrative and Program Specialist), Mansi Grover Vyas (Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow), and Margie Burks (Program Assistant). Xiaohui Helen He and Margie Burks are Master of Natural Resources graduates who are now are involved in administering the program; Mansi Grover Vyas teaches several courses in the curriculum.*



The fall semester on campus is a time of excited activity. The sense of rebirth associated with the beginning of a new school year always creates a stir as we get things underway and settle in for the balance of the term. The warm days and cool nights of the autumn season add a sense of urgency to the energy generated by the many campus activities. At the same time that we welcome new students and colleagues to our midst, we refresh our existing relationships and look forward to new adventures as we continue our individual and shared journeys down life's highway.

Early in the semester I communicated to our faculty and staff some very positive news relative to our student enrollment and our successes in other arenas as well. I now want to share some of that information with you. First, and very importantly, overall enrollment in the college has continued to increase for the third year in a row. We have a total of 520 undergraduate students enrolled for the fall semester along with 238 graduate students, representing 10-percent and 17-percent increases, respectively, over 2007 enrollment. All of the undergraduate programs experienced double-digit growth. The overall increase in graduate student enrollment is in large measure due to the recognition of the strength and superior standing of our advanced training programs.

I am also pleased to report that our research activities remain strong and well funded in spite of increased competition for a limited pool of resources. College-wide grants and contracts totaled \$11.3 million for fiscal year 2008. This continued level of success is a direct function of the high quality of our faculty and the hard work they put into helping to make our research efforts both timely and relevant. Along similar lines, the College of Natural Resources, in conjunction with the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, moved up four positions to sixth place nationally in combined research expenditures for colleges of agriculture and natural resources as determined by the National Science Foundation. I am also pleased to note that the college ranks second, behind the College of Engineering, on several of the internal research benchmarks used by the university to evaluate research productivity. I have said before, but it bears mentioning again, that this is a tremendous accomplishment for a relatively small college that still places considerable emphasis on its teaching programs and personal interactions with students.

In the past year we have done much to transition our outreach thinking from an Extension-based focus to a more engaged focus. Building on our historical constituencies and partnerships, we have sought to engage with an expanded network of



*Dean Kelly shared news of the college's successes and increases in student enrollment with faculty and staff in August.*

constituents in order to more effectively meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population as we manage and utilize the broad spectrum of natural resources across the commonwealth. One excellent example of this new approach is an evolving community partnership in the development of educational programs in support of the secondary wood processing industry in the Southside region in conjunction with the nationally recognized WoodLINKS USA program. Similarly we seek to combine student learning experiences with community needs through focused class projects in urban forestry and the application of geographic information system technologies.

The excitement that we feel at the beginning of another academic year is both contagious and energizing. This annual revitalization is important to our continued ability to meet or exceed university as well as constituent expectations. I am more than confident in our ability to continue to be the best college of natural resources in the nation given our excellent faculty and staff and our outstanding students.

*J. M. Kelly*



COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
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Dean Mike Kelly Announces His Retirement in Fall 2009

J. Michael Kelly, dean of the College of Natural Resources, has announced his retirement effective September 2009. Kelly was appointed as the college's second dean in 2004. During his tenure, the college has seen the number of new students doubled, programs expanded to reflect Virginia Tech's strategic plan, and external research dollars increased by more than 60 percent.

Kelly has also worked with Virginia Tech colleagues to establish preferred partner agreements with the College of Forest Sciences at the Universidad Austral de Chile and the College of Forest and Environmental Sciences at Kangwon National University in Korea to encourage a wide spectrum of opportunities, including academic programming such as study abroad, internships, practical training, distance learning, and cooperative education; exchanges for research, training, or teaching; collaborative research projects, workshops, or conferences; and exchange of other institutional professionals or information.

This year Kelly hosted the highly successful North American Forest Soils Conference on its 50th anniversary. He has served on the University Academic Advisory Committee, the University Committee on Athletics, the Commission on Faculty Affairs, and was the lead dean for Virginia Tech's hosting of the 18th Annual Conference of the Society of Environmental Journalists on Oct. 15-19 at Hotel Roanoke.

Prior to joining Virginia Tech, Kelly served as chair of the Department of Forestry and later the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management at Iowa State University. He also spent 20 years with the Tennessee Valley Authority, and worked as a research associate at Purdue University, an associate ecologist for the NUS Corporation in Pittsburgh, a pre-doctoral research fellow at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and an assistant professor of biology at Ferrum College.

A Fellow of the Soil Science Society of America, Kelly has authored and co-authored over 100 articles for professional journals and is a Certified Professional Soil Scientist. He sits on the editorial board for *Forest Ecology and Management* and has served as associate editor for *Forest Science* and the *Soil Science Society of America Journal*. He has been listed in *Who's Who in Science and Engineering*, *Who's Who in America*, and *Men and Women of Science*.

Kelly has been active in numerous professional organizations and activities, served as technical reviewer for numerous grants programs, and chaired both the Iowa Chapter of the Society of American Foresters and the North Central Region of the National Association of Professional Forestry Schools and Colleges. Both the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Electric Power Research Institute presented him with special awards for bridging the gaps between research and policy applications.

In addition to his professional activities, Kelly is an active pilot and has been a chapter president of the Experimental Aircraft Association, a member of the Iowa Conservation Congress Planning Committee, a head referee in Region 390 of the American Youth Soccer Organization, a volunteer craftsman at the Museum of Appalachia in Tennessee, an organizing committee member for the American Cancer Society Relay for Life, and a volunteer train crew member for the Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad.

ALUMNI, SEND US YOUR NEWS

Please let us know what is happening in your life so we can include the news in our next college newsmagazine. Send your information to Helen Thompson at [hthompson@vt.edu](mailto:hthompson@vt.edu) or 324 Cheatham Hall, Blacksburg VA 24061. We would love to hear from you. As a courtesy, please send address changes directly to Ruth Graves at [ruthg@vt.edu](mailto:ruthg@vt.edu). Thanks!

## Leadership Changes in National Capital Region's Natural Resources Program



Michael  
Mortimer

The College of Natural Resources announced that Michael Mortimer is the new director of the Master of Natural Resources program in the National Capital Region. Mortimer, a former faculty member in the college's Department of

Forestry on the Blacksburg campus, most recently served as director of forest policy for the Society of American Foresters in Washington, D.C. His new position will be based at the Northern Virginia Center in Falls Church, Va.

"Dr. Mortimer has taught in the Master of Natural Resources program and brings considerable experience and expertise to the position," said Robert Bush, associate dean for research and graduate studies. "He knows the political landscape in the Washington, D.C., area and will be an effective leader of the program."

Mortimer follows David Trauger, who recently retired after seven years as director of the Master of Natural Resources program (see related article, p. 1). The program, which has rapidly grown in size and reputation, is targeted to serve natural resources government agencies and non-profit organizations, most of which are headquartered in the Washington, D.C., area. Trauger will continue to serve the program as a part-time

faculty member, advising students and teaching both in-class and distance learning courses.

Gary Evans stepped down as director of the Natural Resources Distance Learning Consortium in the National Capital Region in October. Evans led the development of the consortium, which was initiated through a joint venture agreement with the U.S. Forest Service. The consortium now includes 10 universities and agencies offering close to 150 courses, as well as masters programs and graduate certificates. Kieran Lindsey, who has served as a post-doctoral teaching fellow with the program for the past year, took over the administrative duties of Evans, who will also stay on as a part-time faculty member.

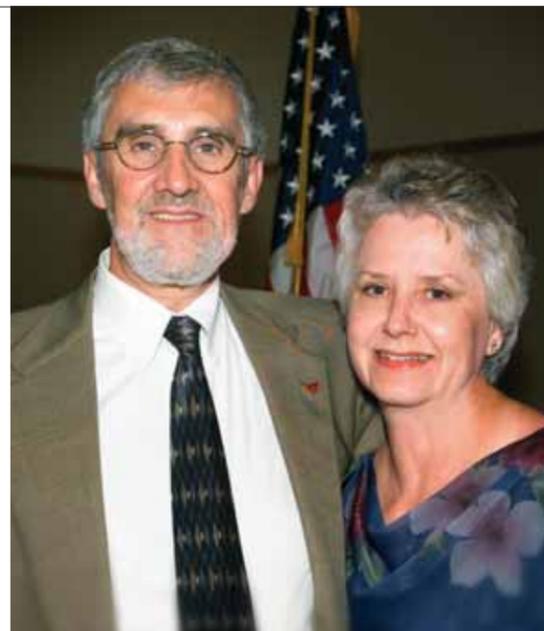
"Both David Trauger and Gary Evans have contributed greatly to the College of Natural Resources. The programs they led and grew have put us on the map in the Washington, D.C., area," Bush noted.

## Dean Emeritus Honored by FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway

Greg Brown, dean emeritus of the College of Natural Resources, received the Board Achievement Award from the FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway. An active volunteer in many of the organization's projects, Brown is currently developing an Asheville FRIENDS chapter, as well as working with the organization's youth education program in western North Carolina. One of his many efforts includes partnering with youth groups such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the Boy's and Girl's Clubs of America, and 4-H to recruit youth volunteers to assist with tree planting and interpretation for park visitors.

"Greg has provided a presence and level of involvement in the Asheville area that we have never before enjoyed," said FRIENDS President Richard Wells, in presenting the award to Brown. "He exemplifies the highest standards of our small working board, and his efforts are an inspiration to the entire board."

Brown, who retired in 2004, lives in Asheville, N.C., with his wife, Laura.



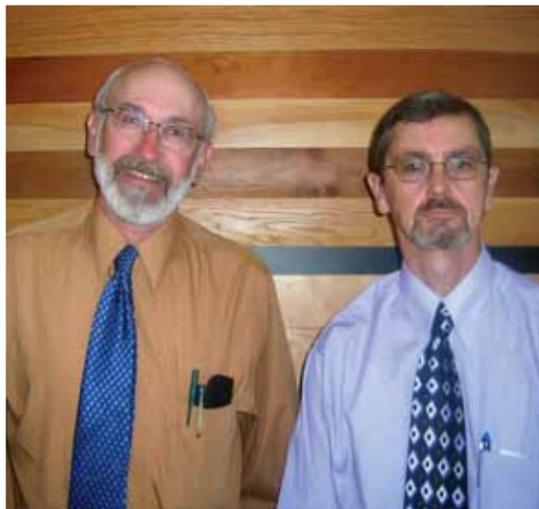
Greg and Laura Brown

## Director General of World Agroforestry Centre Visits Virginia Tech

Dennis Garrity, Director General of the World Agroforestry Centre, presented a seminar about tackling key development challenges in agroforestry to university faculty and students this summer. "It was a wonderful experience meeting with Virginia Tech faculty to discuss new collaborative projects," he remarked. Prior to the seminar, Garrity spent the afternoon with Professor Robert Bush of the wood science and forest products department, discussing possible projects with several other professors in the college.

As a systems agronomist, Garrity focuses on the development of small-scale farming systems in the tropics and has spent a significant portion of his career in the Philippines. "One of the most important things I learned while working at the Rice Research Institute in the Philippines was how much science can increase the production and yield potential of a crop such as rice. This science was a miracle that gave food and income to a people who were slated for famine. It was an economic juggernaut!" Garrity explained. "We are now trying to do the same thing in Africa." Garrity, who currently lives in Nairobi, Kenya, also serves as the chair of the Inter-Centre Working Group on Climate Change within the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research.

Virginia Tech already has several ties with the World Agroforestry Centre, most notably through the LandCare Center. The World Agroforestry Centre aims to use and advance the science underpinning a massive increase in the use of trees in agricultural landscapes by small rural households for improved food security, nutrition, income, health, and environmental sustainability.



Dennis Garrity (L) and Robert Bush

## Trauger Attends Inauguration of Strayer President

Dr. Sondra Stallard, former dean of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies at the University of Virginia, was recently inaugurated as the 13th president of Strayer University. Professor David Trauger represented Virginia Tech at the ceremony, while serving as acting dean for the National Capital Region. "The inauguration was a very moving and enlightening event in many ways, especially the awareness of the common missions and close ties between Virginia Tech and Strayer University," Trauger observed.

One of the largest universities of its kind, Strayer University pioneered distance education and online learning focused for working adults seeking to advance or change their careers. The university has more than 10 campuses in the greater Washington, D.C. metro area alone.

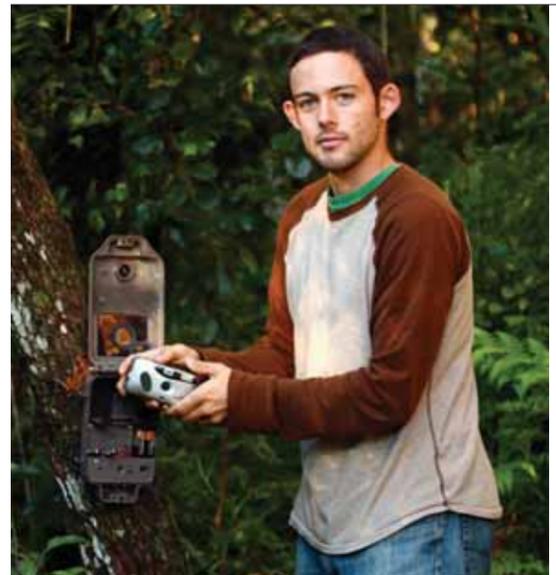
## Madagascar Carnivores Are Focus of NSF Funded Student Research

Brian Gerber has combined his passions for travel and wildlife research by working as a wildlife research technician in Thailand, Angola, South Africa, and across the United States. Now, with a prestigious National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, the master's degree candidate in fisheries and wildlife sciences is leading his own research project – studying carnivores in Madagascar. The fellowship provides three years of funding support to graduate students in disciplines relevant to the mission of the National Science Foundation.

Gerber has served as a graduate teaching assistant with Sarah Karpanty, assistant professor of fisheries

and wildlife sciences, doing research on shorebirds on Virginia's Barrier Islands with a Sigma Xi grant. Gerber is spending six months in Madagascar this year, using trail cameras to research habitat preferences and estimate populations of four carnivores: fossa, Malagasy civet, ring-tailed mongoose, and broad-striped mongoose. He is based at the international research station, Centrel Valbio, and Ranamofana National Park and is coordinating with another Virginia Tech graduate student, Mary Kotschwar, who is studying anti-predator behavior of lemurs in the same area.

*Brian Gerber uses trail cameras to study carnivores in Madagascar.*



## New Chief Justice Appointed for Graduate Honor System



*James Freeman*

James Freeman, a graduate student in the forestry department, has been appointed as chief justice of

the Graduate Honor System for the 2008-09 school year. The Virginia Tech Graduate Honor System (GHS) is a student-run organization charged primarily with promoting honest and ethical behavior in all academic pursuits of graduate students, including study, research, teaching, and extension. The chief justice is selected by a panel of graduate students, who then recommend the candidate for approval to the Graduate Student Assembly and the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies. The university president then makes the final appointment.

As chief justice, Freeman oversees the operations of the GHS, including presiding at all judicial panel hearings, where graduates make decisions on the

cases presented. One of Freeman's objectives as chief justice is to change the student body's current outlook of the GHS, which many view as an enforcer and punisher. Freeman, however, wants to raise awareness of how the system acts as an educational guide for individuals to achieve integrity as members of the university community and public society.

"I am excited for the opportunity to serve the graduate community and the college, which already has such a high level of respectability and integrity," Freeman remarked. "I hope to represent the college well at the university level."

## Students Assess Radford's Street Trees

The city of Radford, Va., underwent its first street tree assessment last spring as part of assistant professor Eric Wiseman's Urban Forest Management and Policy senior capstone course. The inventory of nearly 400 trees took the course's 13 students the entire semester and was the largest project the course has ever undertaken.

The inventory used physical characteristics of the trees to assess their function and value to the community. Using an innovative computer program called the Street Tree Resource Assessment Tool for Urban Forest Managers, or STRATUM, Wiseman and his students sampled 10 percent of the trees in the southwestern section of Radford. They focused on the trees' species, size, condition, relative age, placement, and maintenance needs.

The area assessed, roughly a third of the entire city, is primarily residential – 90 percent of the trees inventoried were adjacent to single-family residences. Wiseman's goal is to assess the rest of the city in successive years.

Once the inventory data were collected, STRATUM was used to calculate the monetary value of the trees' benefits to the community. The program focuses on the trees' carbon storage and sequestration, air pollution abatement, stormwater mitigation, and impact on real estate values. The team found that the city averages \$70 in benefits annually from each tree in the study area, primarily from the trees' impact on stormwater mitigation. Collectively, the trees in southwestern Radford provide over \$250,000 in annual benefits.

"The take-home message to the community is that this is a good investment," said Wiseman. "Not only do trees make our environment more beautiful and make it a happier place to be, but there are some tangible benefits that we can put dollar values on."

After analyzing the data, the students made recommendations to the city on improving maintenance of its street trees. A common problem in the study area was tree topping – inappropriate pruning to reduce tree size – by residents. In some neighborhoods, over 40 percent of trees had been topped. The students suggested strategies to avoid tree topping, such as choosing the right size tree for the landscape space.

The class presented their findings to the city in a report; a brochure and poster were also created. Several students presented the poster at Virginia Tech's 2008 Engagement Expo, a program showcasing student-initiated research and independent learning in a range of disciplines. This year's program featured 80 posters from six colleges.



*Forestry student Taylor Duke measures the trunk of a Siberian elm as part Radford's urban tree assessment.*



## Students Run a Business in an Academic Setting

The Wood Enterprise Institute (WEI) hosted an open house this summer to display this year's product offerings created by students who participated in the wood product "concept-to-market" business project. The product they have designed and marketed is an engraved bookshelf featuring the WEI or Virginia Tech logos. The student-run organization works in partnership with the forest products industry, creating a learning environment that allows students to engage in real-world experience and develop their entrepreneurial skills by running a wood products manufacturing business. In addition to learning how to improve, make, and market a product, students also learn how to organize a business to produce and sell their product, assess performance, and manage product quality while maintaining profits and adhering to a production schedule.

*Wood Enterprise Institute students learn how to run a business in an academic setting. Pictured (L-R): Tim Coplan, Matt Black, Sarah Hutchinson, Tim Stiess, Amy Jahnke, Gavin Wherry, Professor Earl Kline, and Daniel Fore.*



While in Switzerland, students (L-R) Jessica Homyack, Tom Gorman, Brad Miller, and Dan Catlin stayed at Virginia Tech's villa in Riva San Vitale.

## Students Chosen to Participate in Prestigious Global Perspectives Course

Four graduate students from the college were chosen to participate in the Graduate School's prestigious, university-wide Global Perspectives course. Dan Catlin, Jessica Homyack, Tom Gorman, and Brad Miller were accepted into the 13-person class, which met monthly and primarily focused on juxtaposing the higher education systems of the United States and other countries. The course culminated in a 10-day trip to Switzerland, where the students toured universities in such cities as Zurich and Basel, and met Swiss graduate students and administrators. The group also traveled briefly to Italy, where they toured Milan and explored other universities.

"The program was a big eye opener. All of the preconceived notions I had about the European education system were blown out of the water," Homyack observed. "Seeing what other leaders in your profession are doing well was a great opportunity," Miller added. "We visited many different universities and asked difficult questions about how they approach higher education. Just as important, I learned about how their cultures influence their world view."

Graduate students from any department who are nearing completion of their Future Professoriate graduate certificate may apply to the course, now in its third year. The Dean of the Graduate School selects the 13 students

based on their application essay, in which they describe their goals for the course as well as what they plan on pursuing after they graduate.

"One of the greatest experiences I had with the course was getting to interact with Virginia Tech students in other disciplines," Homyack said. "Courses like this help build contacts that we wouldn't have otherwise, which will be beneficial in any interdisciplinary studies that we might want to conduct in the future."

"The opportunity to learn about the strengths in European and Swiss education and meeting scientists in my own field of research will have a beneficial long-term impact on my career as a professor and a scientist," Miller said.

"When I went into this course, people kept saying how it was a life-changing experience. I absolutely agree with that statement now, as well as have a deeper understanding of how higher education works," Homyack said.

Virginia Tech's Future Professoriate graduate program is one of only a few of its kind and is geared towards graduate and doctoral students who are pursuing a career in academia as faculty.

## FACULTY BRIEFS

### NEW FACES

#### CHAD BOLDING

Chad Bolding has joined the Department of Forestry as an assistant professor of forest operations/engineering. Bolding will focus his research and teaching program on industrial forest operations and business while teaching courses in forest harvesting, timber procurement, and harvesting systems evaluation. In addition to serving as an assistant professor at Clemson University, Bolding has researched topics related to his varied areas of expertise and continues to hold leadership positions in multiple professional organizations.



Chad Bolding

#### HENRY QUESADA-PINEDA

With a wide array of expertise, particularly in manufacturing and business process management, Henry Quesada-Pineda has much to contribute to his new position as an assistant professor in the Department of Wood Science and Forest Products. He has a special interest in developing an active and dynamic engagement program with the wood products industry in Virginia and the region in order for the industry to achieve global competitiveness. Before coming to the college, he was an associate professor in the School of Industrial Production Engineering at the Costa Rica Institute of Technology.



Henry Quesada-Pineda

#### EVVOY ZANIBONI-FILHO AND SAMARA SILVA

Evoy Zaniboni-Filho and his wife, Samara Silva, have come from Brazil to join the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences for the upcoming year. Zaniboni-Filho's main focus is on fisheries management and aquaculture, particularly related to hydro-power impacts in the large rivers of Brazil. In 2007, he signed a memorandum of understanding to create exchange programs between the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Brazil, where he is a faculty member, and the college. Silva is a doctoral student at the same university, where she concentrates on interactions between fish and aquatic vegetation. They will be working with Brian Murphy, fisheries professor and director of the Conservation Management Institute, on various fisheries projects throughout the course of their stay at the college.



Evvoy Zaniboni-Filho (L) and Samara Silva



## Alavalapati Named Head of Forestry Department

Janaki R.R. Alavalapati, who has more than 30 years of experience dealing with forest and natural resource issues in the United States, Canada, and India, took over as head of the Department of Forestry in August. This past year, Alavalapati was a senior advisor for International Energy Affairs for the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., as a Jefferson Science Fellow, one of only eight members accepted in the

Janaki R.R. Alavalapati

country. Additionally, Alavalapati was a professor of forest resource economics and policy at the University of Florida, where he served as a faculty member for 10 years. As head of the forestry department, Alavalapati's responsibilities include managing faculty and staff, assisting in the future development of the department, and contributing to the consistent success and well-being of the department. Alavalapati took over as head of the Department of Forestry from Harold Burkhart, University Distinguished Professor, who served in that position since 1995.

## Forestry Faculty Promotions



Randolph Wynne has been promoted to full professor of forestry. He specializes in applications of remote sensing to forestry, natural resource management, ecological modeling, and earth system science.

Randolph Wynne



Steve Lawson, whose work focuses on the human dimensions of natural resources management, including indicator-based management and planning of visitor use and resource protection in protected natural areas, has been promoted to associate professor of natural resource recreation.

Steve Lawson

## FACULTY BRIEFS



### Hallerman Honored With Excellence in Education Award

Eric M. Hallerman, professor and head of the fisheries and wildlife sciences department, received the national Excellence in Education award from the American Fisheries Society (AFS). The society was organized in 1870 to promote the conservation, development, and wise utilization of fisheries.

"We are proud to recognize his dedication and excellence in fisheries education and student mentoring,"

*Eric Hallerman*

said Steve R. Chipps, president-elect of the education section of the AFS, in congratulating Hallerman. Hallerman teaches courses in principles of fisheries and wildlife sciences, the study of fishes, genetics for aquaculturists, and conservation genetics. His research, which has also involved his students, focuses on genetic improvement of aquaculture stocks, aquaculture biotechnology and related public policy, population genetics of fish and wildlife species, and genetics education.

### Audrey Zink-Sharp, 2008 Virginia Trapshooting Champion

Audrey Zink-Sharp, a professor in the wood science and forest products department, won High All Around Women's Resident Champion honors at the 2008 Virginia State Trapshooting Tournament in Winchester, Va., last summer. The tournament consists of 11 different shooting events; participants must have registered at least 1,500 targets to be eligible. Audrey had the highest

combined score in the three events required for high all around resident champion: the Old Dominion Clay Target Championship (singles), the Virginia Doubles Championship, and the Virginia Handicap Championship. She is also captain of the women's state trap team. Congratulations Audrey!

*Audrey Zink-Sharp*



### Murphy Helps Teach "Bridge-to-Business" Program

Fisheries and wildlife sciences professor Brian Murphy served as a faculty instructor for the Pamplin College of Business's post-doctoral "Bridge-to-Business" program, which aims to prepare individuals with doctorates in non-business, yet related, disciplines for new careers as business faculty members. The innovative program is one of only four in the nation developed to help alleviate the critical national shortage of business school faculty. Murphy's portion of the program, taught in conjunction with the Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, focused on the different ways to approach case-study teaching.

*Brian Murphy*

"While there is not much of a disciplinary link between the College of Natural Resources and the Pamplin College of Business, there is a shared interest in improving teaching. Recently our college has been conducting research about how case-study teaching helps to improve students' critical thinking skills. I was happy for the chance to share the results of our research," Murphy said. "Programs in natural resources face similar upcoming shortages of qualified personnel, as 'baby-boomers' begin to retire. Perhaps the Bridge-to-Business Program is an idea that we can somehow adapt to our field, as well."

## EXTENSION AND OUTREACH

### Multi-University Panel Recommends State Fresh Water Nutrient Standards



*Virginia's waterways will benefit from the establishment of fresh water nutrient standards.*

A group of faculty and researchers from Virginia Tech and three other universities are working with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to establish much-needed fresh water nutrient standards for the state. The multi-university panel, called the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC), is based at Virginia Tech's Water Resources Research Center. The AAC was formed in 1997 after the Virginia General Assembly asked the DEQ to develop water quality standards for the state according to the recommendations of the

Clean Water Act. Since 2005, the committee has studied the safe levels of nitrogen and phosphorous in streams, rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. "Nitrogen and phosphorous are chemicals essential to sustaining aquatic life in surface waters," explained Tamim Younos, associate director of the center and research professor of water resources. However, Younos said that too much of these two nutrients leads to the growth of undesirable levels of aquatic plants such as algae that can endanger the fragile aquatic ecosystems.

In 1996, 4 percent of Virginia's river and stream mileage, 15 percent of its lakes, and 22 percent of its estuary areas were reported as impaired. Ten years later, the numbers had increased alarmingly – to 19 percent of rivers and streams, 94 percent of lakes, and 98 percent of estuaries. The good news is that a long-term analysis of Virginia's surface waters shows improved levels of certain contaminants such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and bacteria. "The AAC is trying to put this information in context by helping the DEQ establish safe benchmarks for these contaminants," said Younos. For example, based on committee recommendations, the DEQ has recently amended the Virginia Water Quality Standards regulation to protect Virginia's reservoirs from nutrient harmful impacts.

Since 1997 the Virginia Water Resources Research Center has spearheaded several water quality standards projects and served as a liaison between the partnering universities and the DEQ. "The AAC-DEQ partnership is quite a unique initiative for establishing water quality standards," said Younos, who has served as the committee project leader since 2002. "It is one of the few such partnerships in the United States between research universities and a state agency. We are delighted by the Department of Environmental Quality's enthusiasm and support."

## Free Pine and Hardwood Seedlings Available

Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Virginia Department of Forestry are providing free pine and hardwood seedlings to students and youth groups such as 4-H clubs for the spring 2009 planting season. The purpose of this project is to improve water quality by restoring forest cover to residential and riparian lands. Up to 50 seedlings are available per classroom or club, while supplies last. The deadline for requests is January 10, 2009.

Students are encouraged to plant the seedlings at home, or they may plant seedlings as a group at a school or other location in need of reforestation. Last year, over 19,000 seedlings were planted through this program. Seedlings are grown by the Virginia Department of Forestry with the help of a small watersheds grant from the U.S. Forest Service and the Virginia Forestry Educational Foundation. For more information, select the Free Seedlings link at [www.watersheded.org](http://www.watersheded.org).



Free seedlings are available for youth group planting projects.

## ALUMNI UPDATE



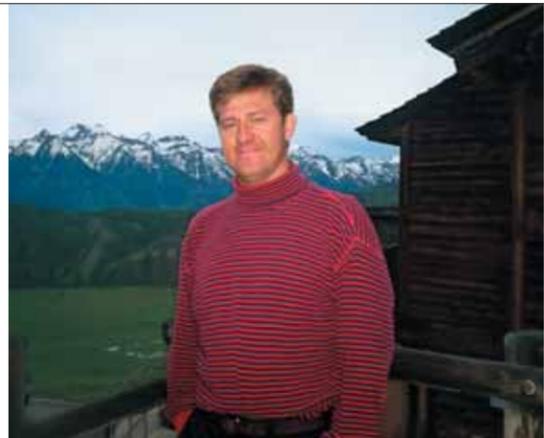
### Blair Awarded Paper of the Year

A paper by Mitch Blair, 2001 B.S. and 2004 M.S. in forestry, has been selected as Paper of the Year by Weed Technology magazine. Blair received assistance from forestry professors Shep Zedaker and John Seiler, along with senior research associate Perry Hipkins and product technology specialist Pat Burch, on the paper, entitled "Evaluation of rapid screening techniques for woody plant herbicide development."

As a vegetation management research specialist at the University of Kentucky's plant and soil sciences department, Blair continues his research on non-crop vegetation management and the development of methods to effectively and efficiently manage unwanted herbaceous, woody, and invasive plant species.

Mitch Blair

### McMahon New Iowa Nature Conservancy Director



Upon receiving his master's degree in natural resource science from the college this past spring, Sean McMahon was hired as the state director of The Nature Conservancy in Iowa. McMahon will be supervising Iowa's conservation efforts while working with the board of trustees to create philanthropic, conservation, and restoration programs, focusing on freshwater and grasslands.

Rob McKim, regional director of the Conservancy, said, "Sean is an ideal leader for us. His experience both in government relations and in partnerships with other

Sean McMahon  
Photo courtesy of The Nature Conservancy

conservation-based non-government organizations will be a great asset to our Iowa team in the context of local, regional, and global conservation goals."

McMahon commented, "The people of Iowa have a great commitment to conservation. My role is to expand our reach with local landowners, communities, government organizations, and other conservation partners and leverage our capacity to really make a difference on a large scale. We have a tremendous opportunity here in this state to restore our grasslands and watersheds and preserve our natural heritage for future generations of Iowans."

### Robertson Receives N.C. Commissioner's Award

Forestry alumna Debbie Robertson recently received the North Carolina Commissioner's Award for "Excellence in State Service." Robertson, a 19-year veteran of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) and assistant director of the Research Stations Division, was recognized for her involvement with the department's efforts to keep the state's 18 research stations under the operation of NCDA&CS. Robertson has been a master at multitasking, juggling her day-to-day responsibilities while also devoting a tremendous amount of time and energy to the effort.

Robertson was presented the award by Steve Troxler, the Agriculture Commissioner for NCDA&CS. "Debbie has kept a positive attitude in the midst of very trying circumstances, and she has worked hard organizing and overseeing multiple efforts to gather information, meet review committee deadlines and ensure operations on the stations continue as normal," Troxler commented.



Debbie Robertson  
Photo courtesy of NCDA&CS

#### Upcoming Alumni and Friends Receptions and Special Events

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2008**  
Homecoming and Tailgate  
Cheatham Hall, Blacksburg, Va.  
Details at [www.alumni.vt.edu/reunion/cnr](http://www.alumni.vt.edu/reunion/cnr)

**JANUARY 15-18, 2009**  
American Fisheries Society Spring Meeting  
Southern Division Conference  
Reception Date, Time, and Location: TBA  
New Orleans, LA

**TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009**  
CNR Annual Honors Banquet  
6:30 p.m., German Club  
Blacksburg, Va.

**MARCH/APRIL 2009**  
American Fisheries Society Student Chapter  
25th Annual Mudbass Tournament  
Details TBA  
Duck Pond, Blacksburg, Va.

# Passion for Nature Inspires Lasting Legacy

“As you get older, you realize you need to find a way to give that works for you,” declared Suzie Leslie, director for undergraduate advising for the college. “Nature means so much to me and I love to share it with people. I want to continue sharing my passion for nature, even when I’m gone. This is what made me realize the need for planning for the long term.”

Suzie and her husband Randy, a real estate appraiser, discussed their interest in leaving a nature legacy with the university and have decided to leave a percentage of their estate to Virginia Tech. “We don’t know how much we’ll have when we die, but we hope that it will be a significant enough amount to accomplish something substantial,” Randy said. “The university worked with us to develop and finely tune a plan that details what we would like to see happen. We are satisfied that the university understands our wishes and will follow them as outlined.”



*Suzie and Randy Leslie have decided to leave a nature legacy to Virginia Tech and its future generations of students.*

Suzie and Randy teamed up with an estate planning attorney and the University Development office to formalize their plan. “One of our major goals was to leave enough to build an outdoor environmental education center somewhere on campus,” Suzie explained. As part of the College of Natural Resources, the center would promote environmental awareness, understanding, appreciation, and responsible natural resources stewardship – a place for interns, students, and volunteers to get hands-on experience working with environmental programs. Suzie and Randy would like the center to offer students of all ages the opportunity to connect with nature and gain an appreciation for the interconnectedness of all living things. They hope it will promote understanding of the importance of human actions and the impact that those actions have on the ecosystem and the global environment. Another portion of the funds left by Suzie and Randy will be put towards scholarships to fund interns who will staff the center.

“Nature is my passion,” stated Suzie, a member of the Master Naturalist Program. “I have found that if you help someone see the wonders of nature for themselves, they get excited and want to share that experience with someone else.” Suzie is involved in a variety of environmental organizations – the New River Valley Bird Club, Blacksburg’s Greenway/Bikeway/Sidewalk/Corridor Committee, Friends of the New River, Whitewater Women’s Canoe Club, and the Native Plant Society. She leads hikes for the YMCA, identifies birds on rafting trips for the Mountain Lake Birding Festival, and gives educational programs on enhancing backyard diversity, such as landscaping for wildlife, especially butterflies and birds. The environmental center that Suzie and Randy envision is one more way that Suzie hopes to share her passion for the environment with generations to come.

*Suzie’s nature legacies will be lasting. One of her many personal touches has been the demonstration butterfly garden at the entrance of Cheatham Hall.*



*Suzie enjoys bird watching while gardening or kayaking. She also teaches programs on how to landscape your backyard to attract wildlife such as birds and butterflies.*



*One of Suzie’s passions is exploring the view sheds of Big Walker Creek, the Little River, and the New River. “In a kayak, you’re on your own. You can look at anything – go explore a plant, a bird, or whatever catches your eye,” Suzie observed.*



Suzie and Randy have designated additional scholarships that will be awarded to undergraduate students who are residents of Virginia studying wildlife, fisheries, natural resources conservation, or similar natural resource fields with an interest in environmental education.

The Leslies have also specified a scholarship for the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. “We had a dog, Zeke, who was very, very dear to both of us, but he was Randy’s sidekick,” Suzie recalled. “When we found out he had cancer, the vet college was just amazing. All the students and faculty there were just wonderful. They dedicated so much time to us and to Zeke.” Randy has requested that the scholarship be designated for a student who wants to work in a small animal practice and could not otherwise afford to go to the vet college. “For my buddy Zeke,” Randy added.

Suzie and Randy hope that their gifts to the university will render a long-term impact. “If we can help create an environmental education center, fund internships, and encourage students to intern at the center, down the road we are helping to educate many people,” Suzie noted. This is also true of the scholarships. By offering students with the desire to learn the opportunity for an education, she and her husband provide the means to equip them with the tools necessary to help others.

Suzie and Randy also hope that the funds they provide will create opportunities for others to contribute to this or a similar cause. “We hope that we are constructing a foundation on which others will build,” Randy emphasized.

