

An Introduction for the Symposium

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The Commonwealth of Virginia offers much diversity be it in the form of biota, topography, or habitat. Major rivers belong to Atlantic Ocean, Ohio River and Tennessee River drainages. The extreme southwestern part of the state is part of the Appalachian Plateau where elevations range from 2,700 to 3,000 feet. The highest mountain in Virginia, Mount Rogers (5,729 ft.), occurs in the Valley and Ridge Province. Along its eastern boarder lies the Atlantic coast with a series of barrier islands adjacent to the Eastern Shore. This 70-mile long region is part of the Delmarva Peninsula and is separated from the rest of Virginia by the Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the contiguous United States.

The Commonwealth has numerous environmental challenges with which to contend. Pressures on land-use, water quality, air quality, and impact of climate change exist. The Virginia Academy of Science took the lead to offer summaries on numerous related topics, presented at the 93rd Annual Meeting of the Academy which was held at James Madison University. On May 21, 2015, sixteen speakers presented on the State of Virginia's environment. The Academy requested all speakers submit manuscripts of their presentations for publication of symposium proceedings in the Virginia Journal of Science. This issue includes articles covering plants, freshwater mussels, freshwater fishes, amphibians, birds and mammals as well as overviews of forests, seal level rise and air quality. Our objective is that this will provide a baseline for future statewide assessments.

The following individuals served as referees for manuscripts for this publication: Mark Bushnell, CoastalObsTechServices, LLC; W. Mark Ford, Unit Leader, Virginia Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Virginia Tech; Jason Gibson, Virginia Herpetological Society; Jason R. Hill, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality; Rebecca V. LePrell, Div of Environmental Epidemiology, Virginia Department of Health; Stephen McIninch, Center for Environmental Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University; Conley McMullen, James Madison University; Molly Mitchell (Roggero), Center for Coastal Resources Management, Virginia Institute of Marine Science; Karen D. Patterson, Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage; Karen Powers, Radford University; Gene Sattler, Liberty University; Scott M. Smith, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries; Chris Zervas, Planning Monitoring & Analysis Branch, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Academy is grateful for their service by generously providing their expertise in the production of these proceedings. I wish to thank these individuals and the numerous others who have served as referees for articles in the Virginia Journal of Science while I (WW) was Editor. Without such contributions periodicals such as this could not function.