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# CAREER BOOK

# PREFACE

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This book is designed to help prospective students gain an understanding of the career options available through our academic programs. Our alumni go to work in various sectors of employment ranging from public, private, to not-for-profit entities.

By working for the sustainability of our forest and related environments, our alumni directly benefit public health because society relies on the environment not only for products and ecosystem services, but also for psychological & aesthetic benefits.

The management actions our graduates prescribe and implement in their professions have lasting effects for generations and are backed by sound science and a strong ethical base that are the foundation of our educational programs.

The Department is very proud to have so many outstanding alumni to highlight, and we look forward to adding new profiles very soon. As we move forward, we will continue our mission: to educate the next generation of foresters and natural resource managers, and to discover and disseminate the knowledge to sustainably manage and conserve forests and related environments.



**B.S. Environmental Resource Management 1997**

*"I enrolled as an ERM major because I thought I never wanted to work behind a desk (ha!). I realized, however, that my particular passion for natural resources and environmental issues could be fulfilled only that way. Take satisfaction in knowing that we all face constant challenges, but as a Virginia Tech grad you will be particularly suited and prepared to meet those challenges."*

## ANDREW C. BROUGHT

**Partner practicing environmental law with Spencer Fane Britt & Browne LLP**

To climb mountains, gaze and gaulk at trees, give out smiles all day to kind folks on trail, make maps, chop and saw anything in the trail.

Winter time: Scratching husky ears, running puppies through the forest, providing a truly unforgettable experience mushing through the backwoods of Northern America for clients from a different metropolitan world.

Some combination of managing large Wilderness Areas, working outside regularly and with my hands, helping people get outdoor seasonal jobs, found the next great American Outdoor Gear company, and finishing the Iditarod and Appalachian Trail.

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### **B. S. Environmental Resource Management 2012**

*“Work within the bounds of your major’s requirements to broaden your perspectives, build upon your current skills, and challenge yourself to stick to your core values along the way. Never sweat the small stuff - always have a good time!”*

## **KARA DODSON**

### ***Virginia Political Organizer at 350.org - international non-profit fighting climate change***

At the heart of my work I am a community organizer in Virginia working with citizens to hold elected officials accountable on climate change issues both locally and nationally. This may seem like a stretch from the ERM classes I took at Virginia Tech but I’ve found that the skills gained in college are instrumental to my work in the non-profit sector working to stop unnecessary environmental abuses. Courses in communication, scientific research, and evaluating the importance and health of natural resources prepared me for making the case for action to stop climate change using political action. Analyzing research into oil company carbon emissions data or facilitating a statewide network to discuss moving a Senator to defend natural resources requires a solid understanding of dynamic ecosystems, hard math, and what drives people to action. The College of Natural Resources and Environment prepared me very well for these challenges.

Career plans rarely follow the path you intend - but possessing the courage to follow your personal vision and stick to your values can lead you to an exciting and secure line of work. Case in point: in middle school I wanted to be a veterinarian, I came to Virginia Tech as an engineering student, graduated in ERM and forestry, and now I work in the non-profit sector on environmental and social justice campaigns. Ideally, I can mold all these interests into managing a permaculture business with my partner, Garrett Williams. No matter what, I aspire to maintain a respect for the land and living creatures and to harbor a respectful interaction between humans and the environment.

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**B.S. Forestry 2010**  
**Environmental Resource Management option**

**M.S. Forestry & Forest Products 2012**

*"I'm passionate about the sustainable use of our natural resources and the career possibilities supporting that are many."*

## SHANNON FOWLER

### ***Programs Coordinator with Virginia Forestry Association***

Opportunities for extracurricular involvement in both professional and social organizations with others sharing the same passion, the Department's small size, and faculty and staff dedication are wonderful aspects of the Department and the College that helped Shannon succeed in her undergraduate education. This led to her graduate education and set her up for success in her current and future careers.

Shannon's primary role as Programs Coordinator is to coordinate various forestry-related programs sponsored or supported by the Virginia Forestry Association (VFA) and allied organizations. She serves as the coordinator for the Virginia Sustainable Forestry Implementation Committee and provides assistance to the Virginia Tree Farm Committee. She also works with the Virginia Project Learning Tree Advisory Committee, Virginia Urban Forest Council, Southeast Virginia Logging Capacity Task Force, and other outreach activities of VFA.

Shannon's favorite thing about her position is the diverse activities in which she is involved. She interacts with a variety of people regarding many topics on any given day. "Each day holds something a little different, and that keeps it exciting."

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**B.S. Forestry 2011**  
**Environmental Resource Management option**

**M.S. Forestry & Forest Products 2012**

*"I also took to heart what my advisor and all the faculty kept repeating throughout the years to get 'experience, experience, and experience.'"*

## DAVID PASSAUER

### *Staff Forester-I with Texas A&M Forest Service*

David's current position as a Staff Forester-I involves locating national forest inventory plots and collecting data on understory vegetation, tree conditions, and coarse woody debris, as well as identifying non-forested conditions when present. He also assists in wildland fire suppression.

The College helped David by providing him with practical forestry applications through labs and the spring industry tours. He also took to heart what his advisors and faculty members kept repeating throughout the years to get "experience, experience, and experience." David worked jobs each summer in a forestry-related field and was able to answer job interview questions from the perspective of real experiences. This was very valuable.

David would like to continue working for a public agency doing sustainable forestry work in water resource conservation or Best Management Practices implementation.

David believes there are great opportunities in this major to go to some cool places and do awesome things that most people never get to do, as well as participate in great activities within the department such as wildland firefighting or timber sports.

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**B.S. Forestry 2011**  
**Watershed Management option**

*“The professors’ excitement for their research inspired me...”*

## A. J. LANG

### *Graduate Research Assistant at Virginia Tech*

A. J.’s current position as a Graduate Research Assistant allows him to conduct his research project and produce publications from it. A. J. aids other graduate students and faculty with their field work and research and has also had the opportunity to be a teaching assistant for some classes.

As an undergraduate, A. J. displayed an interest in research to his professors and was given an opportunity to conduct an undergraduate research project. Afterwards, it seemed logical to him to pursue a graduate degree. The College provided him with all of the resources to become successful. The professors’ excitement for their research inspired him to be part of the new and exciting world of exploring natural resources and environment concerns.

After graduate school, A.J. will seek a career that strongly relates to forestry BMPs and water quality management.

There are numerous opportunities on campus to join professional organizations, and A.J. feels that being a part of some of the clubs allowed him to learn and network with professionals in his field of study.

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**B.S. Forestry & Wildlife Management 1978**  
**Industrial Forest Operations option**

*"I never thought I would have been able to do things I have done or meet the fine people I have been associated with over the years. Forestry is a good honest profession."*

## DOUG DOMENECH

### *Secretary of Natural Resources, Commonwealth of Virginia*

Doug Domenech was appointed Virginia's Secretary of Natural Resources on January 17, 2010. The Secretary of Natural Resources advises the Governor on natural resources issues and works to advance the Governor's top environmental priorities.

Doug oversees six agencies that protect and restore the Commonwealth's natural and historic resources. The Secretary's office and all of the natural resources agencies work together to uphold the provisions of Article XI of the Virginia Constitution.

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**B.S. Forestry 2005**  
**Forest Resource Management option**

**M.S. Forestry & Forest Products 2009**

*“Take advantage of summer internships and local part-time work that will complement the knowledge acquired in the classroom.”*

## JOSEPH M. SECOGES

### *Forester & owner of Eastern Forest Consultants L.L.C*

Upon completing a B.S. in Forestry from Virginia Tech, Joe began his career working for a forest consultant in south central Virginia, where he gained 19 months of field work experience. He returned to Virginia Tech in 2007 to complete an M.S. in Forestry. During this time he also worked part-time as a contractor. Joe opened his forestry consulting business in Blacksburg after completing an M.S. in Forestry, and expanded his company's operations in the summer of 2011 by opening a second office in Pennsylvania.

Joe is a forester and the owner of Eastern Forest Consultants LLC, a private forest consulting firm with locations in Blacksburg and Fairview Village, Pennsylvania. Like many consulting firms, Eastern Forest Consultants offers a variety of services to its clients, including developing forest management plans, administering timber sales, conducting timber inventories, performing herbicide applications, and overseeing and planting reforestation projects. Eastern Forest Consultants has served non-industrial private forest landowners, industrial clients, and government agencies in a range of locations from Pennsylvania to Georgia.

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**B.S. Forestry 2005**  
**Forest Resource Management option**

**M.S. Forestry & Forest Products 2010**

*“The College gave me hands-on experience in the field but  
also provided excellent analytical skill sets.”*

## CHARLIE WADE

### ***Forester/Account Manager with Forest Resources Management in King William, VA***

In Charlie's current position, he focuses mainly on southside Virginia, where he manages large land holdings for a timber investment organization. The primary focus is timber production, with the intent of maximizing the client's investment now and in the future. He also works with hunt clubs to maintain and enhance wildlife habitat.

Charlie feels that the College provided him with a good overview of all aspects of forestry and natural resources. It gave him hands-on experience in the field, but also provided excellent analytical skill sets. He also thinks that Virginia Tech is strategically located to give good access to both hardwood and southern pine silviculture.

Charlie plans to stay in the consulting field, where he finds the work to be rewarding. In the future he hopes to work more in the emerging biomass/bioenergy field. Forestry is an ever-changing field. Even in a depressed job market, Charlie believes there are a lot of opportunities for an entrepreneurial person.

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**B. S. Forestry 2007  
Urban Forestry option**

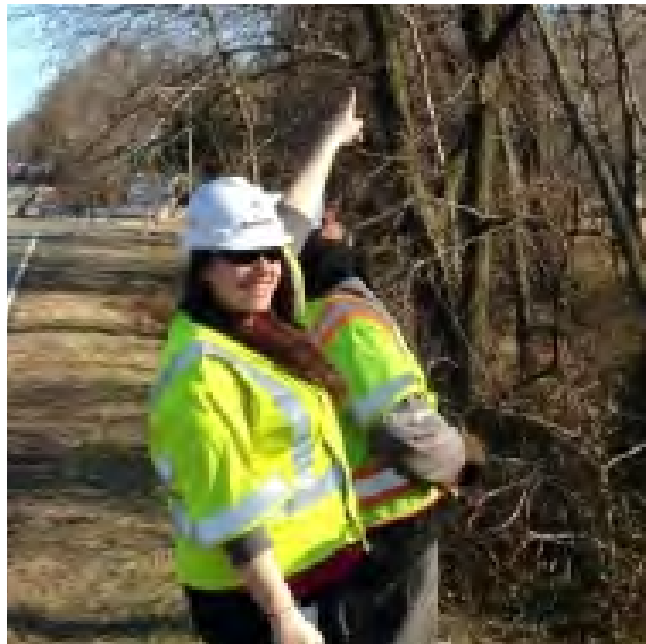
*“Most importantly is getting involved with at least one student organization and preferably having a seat or position of importance. For me this was the Urban forestry club/tree climbing team. It gives members a better understanding of how businesses and organizations are structured through the various roles: president, finance, etc. It also makes the member accountable for their responsibilities. These are valuable real world lessons.”*

## ROB BEIDEMAN

### *Commercial Arborist with Bartlett Tree Experts*

Today I am still with Bartlett. At the CNR career fair, I was introduced to Bartlett Tree Experts at the CNR workshop. They set me up with a summer internship. I am an arborist representative in Exton Pa just outside of Philadelphia. I meet with residential and commercial client (and prospective clients) to consult about their tree needs (pruning, plant healthcare, soil management, etc). I provide written proposals to meet these needs. I schedule the work and have crews and technicians complete the work. I share management responsibility of the office and employees. I am developing a networking partnership with quality professionals in similar industries (landscapers, developers, etc).

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**B.S. Forestry 2005**  
**Urban Forestry option**

**M.S. Forestry & Forest Products 2009**

*"The urban forestry option was perfect for me in that it allowed the flexibility I needed to customize my major."*

## ALYSSA MICHNICK

### ***Associate Distribution Forestry Coordinator with Dominion Virginia Power***

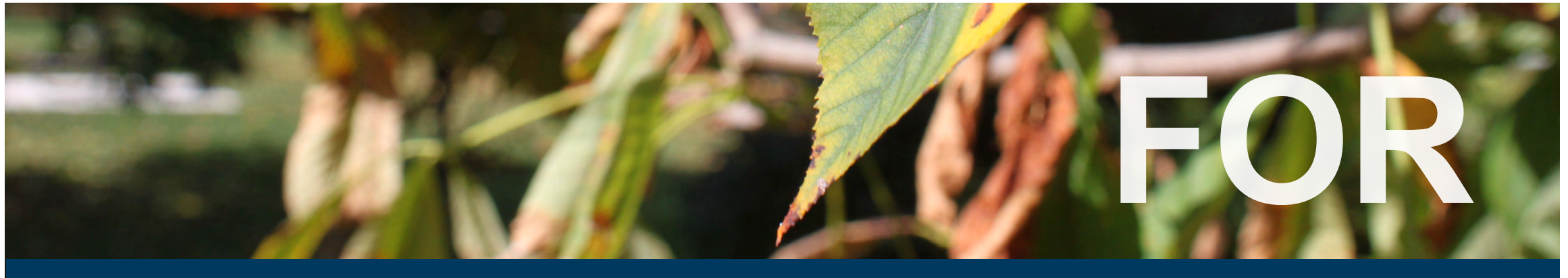
Alyssa was active in student organizations and served as a CNRE Ambassador. She interned with the House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture and Dominion Power while enrolled. Her summer forestry internship with Dominion Power helped her gain employment there upon graduation.

As a utility forester, Alyssa coordinates forestry and electrical right-of-way maintenance activities to ensure that Dominion provides safe and reliable service to its customers. Every day brings new, but exciting challenges. Her responsibilities include managing forestry contractors and ensuring that their work is complete and on schedule, and that they maintain proper clearance between trees, brush and electrical conductors.

She also tracks the forestry budget for her assigned district to meet goals for her maintenance and tree trimming crews to ensure that financial goals are met. She provides customer service by responding to customer inquiries and complaints. Other responsibilities include providing estimates, schedules, and right-of-way clearings for new construction projects. Alyssa enjoys working with customers and seeing her projects through from start to finish.

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**B.S. Forestry 2008**  
**Urban Forestry option**

*“The Urban Forestry option, as the name suggests, opened my eyes to the ever increasing need for environmental awareness in the urban landscape.”*

## MATTHEW S. RHOADS

### ***Account Manager with Arborwell Professional Tree Management***

I currently am working at Arborwell Professional Tree Management in the San Francisco Bay Area, CA and attending Notre Dame de Namur University seeking a MBA with an emphasis in Operations/Management. Arborwell is a full service commercial and residential tree care provider.

I started as an “Estimator” – responsible for tree inventories, administrative tasks, preparing bids, etc. I then advanced to “Production Manager” – responsible for regional operations: scheduling, purchasing, crew management, work order generation, preparing bids, safety and training, etc. I am currently an “Account Manager” – responsible for arboricultural sales in a commercial and residential tree care market, face-to-face client interactions, business development, etc.

I highly enjoyed the Urban Forestry option at Virginia Tech and I’m thankful for the guidance of Dr. Oderwald, as my freshman advisor, in helping me decide on which major to choose. I truly believe that Eric Wiseman, with the help of Susan Day and Roger Harris, has created one of the best programs within the College. Eric Wiseman is a wealth of knowledge and an overall wonderful individual who is both passionate about Urban Forestry and the success of his students.

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**B.S. Forestry & Wildlife Management 1982**

*“The old School of Forestry and Wildlife prepped me for this position by making me very familiar with the species native to this section of the state & by giving me the credentials needed to introduce a new level of professionalism to utility right-of-way vegetation management.”*

## KEVIN SIGMON

### ***Senior Utility Forester for Appalachian Power, Glade Spring, VA & Part-Time Town Arborist for Abingdon, VA***

Kevin co-oped with the Forest Service during his college years, but found his way to Appalachian Power (APCO). He oversees the vegetation management program on the distribution power line rights-of-way in southwest Virginia and Kingsport, Tennessee. On the job, he gets to work in neighborhoods and rural areas where he has been able to manage tree conditions associated with the power lines that have survived inclement weather with minimal outage problems. Foresters from Virginia Tech have been able to meet challenges and stay on the cutting edge of new technologies in the utility forestry industry.

While primarily employed by APCO, Kevin also works part-time as the Town Arborist for the town of Abingdon. He manages the tree care and maintenance program for trees on public land within town limits, including planting, pruning, and removals. Additionally, he offers advice to residents about their trees. A favorite part of his job is talking to schools and civic organizations about tree care and making the most of their properties.

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**B.S. Wildlife Science 1998**

**M.S. Forestry & Forest Products 2003**

*“Get GIS experience before you graduate. That was new technology that I had to adapt to.”*

## JEAN LORBER

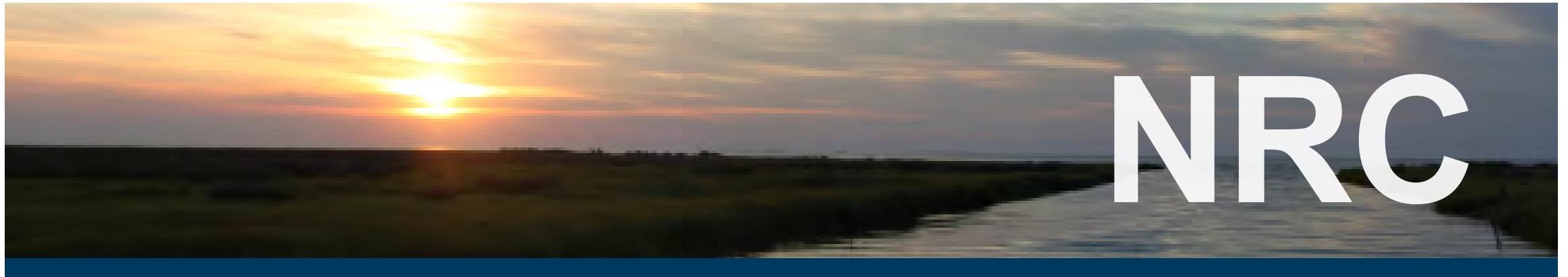
### *Land Protection Specialist with The Nature Conservancy*

During both his graduate and undergraduate years Jean’s professors helped him understand how ecosystems work, and how people have influenced those systems for quite a long time. After receiving his undergraduate degree, he worked in the Forest Inventory section of the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOT) and then decided to return to grad school. He then returned to the VDOT before moving to The Nature Conservancy, where he has been employed since 2005.

Jean works on a range of projects, from large-scale conservation planning to acquiring specific properties that harbor ecologically valuable plants, animals, or communities. He likes being part of an organization that is conservation-based and works to find a balance between using the earth’s resources and conserving them.

Jean would like to keep finding new ways for forest management to play a role in conserving and maintaining Virginia’s diverse forests. That could mean anything from directly managing large blocks of forest land to partnering with forest industry to create new forest certification incentives.

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**B.S. Natural Resource Recreation 2010**  
**Forestry Minor**

**M.S. Agricultural Education 2011**

*"I think the most important thing to consider when you're in college is that you have to like what you're doing. Virginia Tech and the college of Natural Resources is a great place that offers so many opportunities, choose what you love to do and everything will work out from there."*

## **ERIN EBERSTEIN**

***Environmental Educator with the Chesapeake Bay***

### ***Foundation***

During the spring and fall I work as an environmental educator on a mobile canoe program in the western reaches of the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Virginia. I take out students ranging from 3rd grade to adults on flat water and moving water river day trips. During the summer I plan and lead professional development and graduate course for formal and informal teachers hoping to incorporate the environment into their classrooms. I feel so blessed to not only have a job that I value as meaningful to students and participants, but also something that is fun and a new adventure everyday I wake up for work!

I was very involved in the Society of American Foresters as an undergraduate and the forestry club. These not only helped me make friends, but also allowed me to travel and meet a lot of new people. The support and guidance from passionate and great professors like John Munsell, Marc Stern, Jeff Kirwan, and Phil Radtke were what really made a difference in my decision to stay in the environmental field. I also did a lot of internships across the country, all of which helped me learn what I did and did not like about different aspects and careers choices in Natural Resources.

I hope to continue teaching environmental education and am looking for more ways to connect with the more like-minded individuals through community outreach.

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**B.S. Natural Resources Conservation 2011**  
**Conservation & Recreation Management option**  
**Minors in Forestry & Urban Forestry**

*“When it came time to take a position collecting data in the field you realize you’ve been doing it for years. You were ready to work with friends and peers and do it with a smile on your face.”*

## STEPHEN EREN

***Lead Wilderness Ranger for Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards***

***Dog Sledding Guide for Husky Work Mushing Company***

To climb mountains, gaze and gawk at trees, give out smiles all day to kind folks on trail, make maps, chop and saw anything in the trail. Winter time: Scratching husky ears, running puppies through the forest, providing a truly unforgettable experience mushing through the backwoods of Northern America for clients from a different metropolitan world. Some combination of managing large Wilderness Areas, working outside regularly and with my hands, helping people get outdoor seasonal jobs, found the next great American Outdoor Gear company, and finishing the Iditarod and Appalachian Trail.

CNRE kept me out of the classroom and in the field for my assignments. You see your classmates open up, stay better focused with more distractions, and all around happier. Yes the assignments were extremely difficult and challenging at times but at least you weren’t confined to a room. When it came time to take a position collecting data in the field you realize you’ve been doing it for years. You were ready to work with friends and peers and do it with a smile on your face.

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**B.S. Natural Resources Conservation 2005**  
**Conservation & Recreation Management option**  
**Minor in Forestry**

*“Volunteer early in your college career!”*

## CASEY DIETZEN

**Conservation Specialist with John Marshall Soil & Water  
Conservation District in Warrenton, VA**

In Casey’s current position she works with landowners and farmers to help educate and provide financial and technical assistance in order for them to be more environmentally friendly and for conservation cost share practices. She also provides education programs to elementary and high school age children.

Casey feels that the College gave her the foundation of knowledge that has helped her educate the public on the importance of conservation. It also helped give her the opportunity to mold her degree to fit this field.

Casey plans to continue on her current path in the conservation field and hopes to one day work for the Department of Agriculture as a Soil Conservationist.

Casey advises students to volunteer early in your college career! If you know the field you want to get into, start networking and get involved. In her opinion, the fastest way to get a job or move up in your career is all about networking and education.

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**B.S. Natural Resources Conservation 2011**  
**Conservation & Recreation Management option**

**B.A. English 2011**

*“Connect with professionals in the industry and schedule some phone appointments to talk to them about what they do.”*

## HOLLY KAYS

### Reporter for The Buffalo Bulletin in Buffalo, Wyoming

In Holly’s current position as a reporter, she covers environmental issues and education, and does some feature writing and miscellaneous articles. Holly spends her time doing interviews, attending public meetings and community events, and reading reports.

Holly feels that the College provided her with an area of expertise and contributed to helping her get hired in her current position. She uses her background in natural resources on a weekly and sometimes daily basis, providing in-depth reporting in areas in which people express gratitude for her understanding and basic knowledge of varied topics.

Holly would like to move back to Virginia and continue her career in journalism for an independent news organization. She is contemplating an eventual shift to magazines or freelance, but for now enjoys the freedom newspaper work gives her to explore a community, hone in on its needs, and pool her skills to address them.

If journalism appeals to you, Holly suggests you do research on publications you’re interested in working for. Maybe they have internships available, or maybe they’re hiring. Connect with professionals in the industry and schedule some phone appointments to talk to them about what they do.

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**B.S. Natural Resource Conservation 2012**  
**Conservation & Recreation Management option**  
**Minor in Forestry**

*“Apply for the CNRE Leadership Institute! I have had multiple employers mention how impressed they were with this experience on my resume. The Leadership Institute will help you to gain teamwork experience and develop relationships with CNRE faculty and students.”*

## KELLY MERKL

### **Green Community Schools Coordinator with MGR - *Empowering Youth, Changing Communities***

As MGR’s Green Community School’s coordinator, I provide students with environmental education and the tools they need to become environmental activists. My favorite thing about my job is that every day is different. While it can sometimes be very difficult to communicate to students who suffer from major issues such as poverty, violence, addiction, and obesity, the importance of environmental stewardship, the challenge is what motivates me on a daily basis. Providing urban youth with relatable, interesting environmental education is extremely rewarding and it is amazing to see the profound impact that we have been able to make in the Charlotte community.

. The first major stepping stone in my undergraduate career was applying to be a member of the inaugural class of the CNRE Leadership Institute. Being selected to be a part of the Leadership Institute provided me with invaluable leadership skills and professional development experiences. It was during this year that I took a course that helped me develop my passion for teaching, Dr. Stern’s Environmental Interpretation. This was the course that broke me out of my shell and sparked my passion for working with youth. The following year, I took his Environmental Education Service Learning course. I still use many of the skills and tools from this course on a weekly basis. Overall, my experiences in the CNRE lead to me discover a passion for teaching others about the environment and I could not be happier about the work that I am doing today.

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**B.S. Natural Resources Conservation 2012**  
**Conservation & Recreation Management option &**  
**Environmental Education option**  
**Minor in Forestry**

*"The Natural Resources Conservation and Environmental Education K-6 option allowed me to have at least one class a day outside! I want to be outside as much as possible."*

## ALEX CROOKS

### Naturalist at the Echo Hill Outdoor School, Worton, MD

Alex spent almost every summer in college interning for different outdoor education facilities. She interned at Echo Hill Outdoor School the summer after her junior year, which helped her gain employment there upon graduation.

As a naturalist, Alex is able to have an impact on the lives of students from all over the mid-Atlantic. Students come to Echo Hill for programs lasting from 1 to 5 days. It is a residential school, so the students are fully immersed in the environment. Echo Hill is all about experiential education. Instead of learning what a "watershed" or a "white perch" is through a presentation in the classroom, the students go outside. They can be in a boat seeing what a watershed is and touch a fish! Getting the inner-city kids to let go and get hands-on and dirty is probably the most satisfying part of Alex's job!

Alex has recently been accepted as a fellow with the DC Teaching Fellows through the New Teacher Project (TNTP) Academy, where she will be pursuing her teaching certificate. There is nothing she wants more than to teach the students who seem to have nothing to aspire to, and help them find something to be passionate about.

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**B.S. Natural Resources Conservation 2012  
Environmental Education Option**

*"It was great to take classes that specifically related to my future career while I was in college. Classes such as Environmental Education really helped me practice developing lessons that would be both fun and educational for children. All of the faculty and staff members advised me to get experience early in my college career and I really took that advice to heart."*

## ELIZABETH SIMKO

**Environmental Educator, Jekyll Island 4-H Center**

**Park Ranger - Interpretation, Assateague Island National Seashore**

I am one of 12 educators that work at a residential environmental education center. School groups from all over the state of Georgia and most of the southeast come for 2 days at a time and we teach them classes in beach, forest, and marsh ecology as well as a number of other elective classes that the school as picked for them. It's great working with kids because you never know what might excite them or spark their interest. The best thing about my job is that I get to take students into the natural environment where they're able to touch, see, smell, and experience the world around them.

As a park ranger, I prepare for and lead activities, guided hikes, guided kayak trips, and aquarium talks for the visiting public. I also staff the visitor center desk. This job is very similar with my environmental education job except that instead of working exclusively with children, I work with the general public. Most of the public that comes to my programs are families with school-aged children, but the audience can also include retired couples, young adults, and anyone else that might be visiting the park.

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**B.S. Natural Resources Conservation 2008 Natural  
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*"It is a dream to be able to bring the world of informal  
environmental education into the classroom where it is  
accessible to all grade levels every day of the year."*

## ERICA BAUGH

### Marine Science Teacher, Grades K-5, Sigsbee Charter School, Key West, Florida

Erica gained environmental education experience during college working for NOAA, the USDA Forest Service, and the North Carolina Natural Estuarine Research Reserve. In 2008, she earned her Open Water Dive Certification. From there, Erica moved on to teach marine science at Seacamp in the Florida Keys. She then went into formal education and became an assistant at the Montessori Elementary Charter School in Key West, Florida, followed by her present role at Sigsbee Charter School.

Erica finds teaching very rewarding, especially because she can become an influential piece of her students' lives by inspiring them every day. Utilizing hands-on marine science, she helps foster love and gratitude for nature in the students.

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