



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Marine Resources Commission  
Building 96  
380 Fenwick Road  
Fort Monroe, Virginia 23651

Matthew J. Strickler  
Secretary of Natural Resources

Steven G. Bowman  
Commissioner

## PRESS RELEASE

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**\*\*Virginia Marine Resources Commission Announces Recent Hires  
To the Habitat Management Division \*\***

**VMRC Habitat Management Division's Recent Hires**

Commissioner Steven G. Bowman

Lauren Pudvah: Sea Grant, WILLIAM & MARY

Ben Nettleton: The Nature Conservancy, VIRGINIA COASTAL RESILIENCE MASTER PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Tiffany Birge: Sea Grant, Old Dominion University Research Foundation

Claire Gorman: MBU, Old Dominion University Research Foundation

Logos: Sea Grant Virginia, VIRGINIA COASTAL RESILIENCE MASTER PLANNING FRAMEWORK, WILLIAM & MARY PUBLIC POLICY, The Nature Conservancy, MBU marine biodiversity unit Old Dominion University Research Foundation

Commissioner Steven G. Bowman is pleased to announce the following additions to VMRC’s Habitat Management Division necessary to backfill positions left vacant by a recent staff retirement and internal promotions. Beginning last fall Ben Nettleton and Tiffany Birge joined the Habitat Management Division Team, followed by Lauren Pudvah and Claire Gorman in August 2021. All four are collectively trained in marine science, public policy, and marine fisheries conservation and bring a highly skilled and diverse background to VMRC. “These candidates, combined with the Division’s collective years of regulatory experience, will ensure that the agency is staffed to handle the challenges of marine resource management in the face of climate change and sea level rise,” says Commissioner Bowman.

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Before joining VMRC, Ben Nettleton held a Virginia Sea Grant Marine Coastal Policy Fellowship with the Office of the Secretary of Natural Resources, where he assisted as a co-author in Virginia's Coastal Resilience Master Planning Framework. Ben also previously served as a Fellow with The Nature Conservancy on the Eastern Shore where he developed public engagement and outreach centered on climate change and adaptation to sea level rise.

Tiffany Birge joined VMRC last fall as an Environmental Engineer, transitioning from her initial start at VMRC as a Coastal Marine Policy Fellow. During her Master's Degree Program, she worked for Old Dominion University's (ODU) Marine Biodiversity Unit and the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. Established in 1964, the IUCN has evolved to become the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of animal, fungi and plant species. Tiffany also taught at the ODU Ichthyology Lab and worked as a field and research technician at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science where she assisted with the annual winter blue crab dredge survey.

Lauren Pudvah earned a Master's Degree in Public Policy from William & Mary's Public Policy Program. She next served as a Fellow at VMRC in 2019 where she developed and implemented a standardized procedure for coordinating agency review and scoping comments on environmental documents (Environmental Assessments, Environmental Impact Statements and Federal Coastal Zone Management Consistency Determinations) for projects potentially affecting marine fisheries and habitats. Lauren was recognized for the Division's improved and revamped review of documents by DEQ's Office of Environmental Impact Review.

Claire Gorman earned her Master's Degree at ODU. Her work with ODU's Marine Biodiversity Unit and IUCN Red List focused on sciaenids (spot, croaker, drum family) and how the international maw trade threatens croaker and drum stocks. Claire also worked for the Hampton Roads Sanitation District starting in 2016 where she monitored storm water throughout Hampton Roads and led several wastewater treatment studies as a Water Quality Specialist. Her combined work at ODU and HRSD provided her with the opportunity to work with local, state, federal and international governments and agencies. This allowed her to analyze water quality, ecological and fisheries data and to formulate conservation measures required to manage threats to marine fisheries and their habitats. Claire has also volunteered and participated with local coastal wetland restoration and dune restoration projects.

Lauren and Claire will report to work in mid-September.