



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Marine Resources Commission

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Matthew J. Strickler
Secretary of Natural Resources

Steven G. Bowman
Commissioner

PRESS RELEASE

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****Virginia Marine Resources Commission Hires New
Senior Advisor for Coastal Adaptation and Ecosystem Restoration ****

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission is pleased to announce that Rachael Peabody has accepted the position of Senior Advisor for Coastal Adaptation and Ecosystem Restoration. This new position will serve as the chief science and policy advisor to the Commissioner on matters of climate change, coastal resilience, and habitat restoration and represent the Commissioner on matters related to the Chesapeake Bay Program and Virginia Watershed Implementation Plan, the Coastal Master Plan Technical Advisory Committee and the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program Coastal Policy Team. “This a critical role to the agency’s mission to serve as stewards of Virginia’s marine and aquatic resources, and necessary to achieve Governor Northam’s goals to increase the resilience of Virginia’s coast,” said Commissioner Steven G. Bowman. “I look forward to working with Ms. Peabody to continue the Commission’s ongoing efforts to manage its coastal resources and shorelines which support our recreational and commercial fisheries by providing critical habitat and vital ecological services required for a healthy Chesapeake Bay.”

Rachael’s love for the marine environment and passion for conservation of its natural resources began at the University of West Alabama where she worked as a graduate student at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, after obtaining her Bachelor’s Degree in business at Baker University. Her Master’s research focused on the impact of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on intertidal fish communities in an Alabama salt marsh. Her work along the east coast on commercial fishing vessels and building relationships within the fishing and marine industries has engrained in Rachael the importance of balanced and sustainable management of our marine resources to sustain healthy coastal communities and economies. She currently serves as the Assistant Director of Restoration for the Elizabeth River Project in Norfolk, and spent six years (2014 – 2020) at VMRC working for both its Fisheries and Habitat Management Divisions. “Virginia’s coastal ecosystems support fisheries, wildlife, aquaculture, navigation, carbon storage and tourism, and provide significant natural defenses against coastal storms. For over 100 years the VMRC has worked tirelessly towards its mission of the balanced management and protection of these systems. Sea level rise and climate change is a key threat to the health of our marine environments, fisheries, and economy now and in the future. The new position of Senior Advisor

An Agency of the Natural Resources Secretariat

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for Coastal Adaptation & Ecosystem Restoration provides the VMRC the opportunity to develop an innovative program that will focus on improving marine habitat and waterways within Commonwealth, while also supporting projects and collaborations focused on nature-based coastal protection and adaptation. I am thrilled to take on this forward-thinking role!” said Ms. Peabody.