

**GENERAL J. H. BINFORD PEAY, III
SUPERINTENDENT**

**WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS
ENVIRONMENT VIRGINIA SYMPOSIUM**

4 April 2018

Governor Northam, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.
Good morning.

Welcome to the Virginia Military Institute for this, the 29th annual Environment Virginia Symposium. VMI is proud to be the host of this annual conference, along with our co-hosts, the Virginia Department of Environment Quality, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Virginia Environmental Endowment. We congratulate the DEQ on celebrating their 25th anniversary this year, and thank them for their support of this conference throughout these many years.

The Environment Virginia Symposium is known for inviting a free exchange of ideas and knowledge between individuals, businesses, government agencies, and non-profits for the greater environmental good. As in years past, this year's conference provides a useful forum to examine the relationship between environmental stewardship and economic development for the prosperity and well-being of all citizens of the Commonwealth.

We have titled this conference as **Where Leaders Meet**. For those who have attended this event for many years, you know that it has its own personality. We have been told many times that this is the one time each year where environmental leaders in government, industry and non-profits meet "face-to-face" for an extended period of time to strengthen existing relationships and create new ones. During this conference, you will have an opportunity to hear from and confer with experts on all aspects of environmental management, policy, education, advocacy and science. In addition to the more than forty breakout sessions over the three days, yesterday you heard from three top officials, Secretary of Natural Resources Matthew Strickler, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring, and Director of the DEQ, David

Paylor. Tomorrow you will hear from our plenary speaker, Dr. Ann Goodman, on the topic of Climate Resilience for Communities and Businesses. With Virginia's large area of water and shoreline, and mountains and plateaus, this is a topic of great interest to our state.

VMI has hosted this conference since its inception. Captain Ronald A. Erchul, USN (Retired), a professor of geology and civil engineering at VMI for 27 years, conceived of the Environment Virginia Symposium in 1990. He coordinated its annual meetings until his retirement. In his honor, VMI established the Erchul Environmental Leadership Award which is presented each year at this conference. Captain Erchul passed away in 2011...yet, this special award brings back the fondest of memories and respect for his service.

Captain Erchul envisioned a conference characterized by a strong sense of community. We have followed his vision by working closely each year with a program advisory committee of government, nonprofit, and industry environmental professionals who work with us to organize the conference. With the committee's help, we are proud to bring you a diversity of viewpoints through strong panels and presentations on environmental topics of great importance to our state. We are always working to improve this symposium from year to year, and this year we have some new offerings such as an "all-day drop-in" Think Tank led by alumni of the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute. This year's program advisory committee members' names are listed in your program, and we thank them for their service. In addition, many of our exhibitors and sponsors have been part of this conference for years, for which I extend to them warmest thanks; VMI is happy once-again for this reunion and your support.

At VMI, we are proud of our environmental programs in the sciences and engineering. These programs are part of a long tradition at the Institute of concern for the environment and the economy of the Commonwealth. On behalf of the faculty, staff, and cadets of VMI, I extend to all of you a very warm welcome. I hope you have a stimulating conference, and that you enjoy your time at VMI and in historic Lexington.

It now gives me great pleasure to welcome as our keynote speaker, the 73rd Governor of Virginia, the Honorable Ralph Northam. Actually, I

am welcoming Governor Northam “back” to VMI, not only as an alumnus of the VMI Class 1981, but because he paid an official visit to VMI in September of 2014 when he was Lieutenant Governor. He has been a great supporter of the Institute and the environment.

Originally from Onancock, on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology at the Institute and was President of our cherished VMI Honor Court in his first class (senior) year. He attended Eastern Virginia Medical School for his M.D. degree. As part of his residency requirement, he served at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and also served as chief neurological resident at Johns Hopkins Hospital. From 1984 to 1992, he served in the United States Army as a physician, attaining the rank of Major. During Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm he treated critically wounded evacuated casualties at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

Governor Northam and his wife Pamela settled in Hampton Roads where he practiced pediatric neurology at the Children’s Hospital of the King’s Daughters, in Norfolk. He also spent 18 years caring for terminally ill children at the Edmarc Hospice for Children, in Portsmouth. As a fiscal conservative, Dr. Northam was first elected to office in 2007, winning Virginia’s 6th Senate District seat, and was re-elected in 2011. In 2013, he won election for Lieutenant Governor. The rest, as they say, is history.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Governor Northam...