The Virginia Master Naturalist 2021 Statewide Conference and Volunteer Training is going virtual! This year’s event will be held October 1-3, 2021. As with our in-person conferences, this event aims to provide high-quality continuing education for VMN volunteers and to promote networking amongst volunteers and program partners.

Call for Presenters
The Virginia Master Naturalist Program welcomes your proposals as contributions to be considered for our virtual agenda! Individuals wishing to present are invited to submit their proposal using our online form by June 14, 2021.

We are seeking concurrent session presenters. Presenters may choose from the following options:

- A pre-recorded session (20 to 60 minutes in length) that conference attendees can watch online at any time starting October 1;
- A pre-recorded session (20 to 60 minutes in length) that conference attendees can watch online at any time starting several days before the conference, followed by a live, 1-hour Q&A time with the presenter the afternoon of Saturday, October 2, 2021;
- A live presentation of 1 hour in length given via Zoom the afternoon of Saturday, October 2, 2021.

The pre-recorded options offer an opportunity to show or demonstrate something outdoors, which is always appreciated by our audience. In all cases, the presentation recordings will be available to conference attendees for several months after the event.

Themes
We especially seek presenters for sessions that will relate to the following themes:

- **Connecting to New Communities**: Building volunteers’ knowledge and skills related to diversity and inclusion in natural resource education; building volunteers’ cultural awareness and competencies; building connections with populations typically underrepresented in natural resource programs;
- **Connecting to New Projects**: Building volunteers’ awareness of natural resource education, citizen science, and stewardship projects that are needed in Virginia and preparing them to participate in those projects;
- **Connecting to Natural Resources**: Building volunteers’ knowledge and skills relating to natural resources and natural resource management in Virginia and providing them with up-to-date information and tools that they can use in their service.

Submitting Your Presentation Proposal
Prospective presenters should submit their proposals through the online form at https://vce.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5A6ipMn6DqIbP1k by June 14, 2021.
On the form, you will be asked to provide a title for the session, a description of the session, a presenter bio statement, information on any co-presenters, and an indication of which presentation type is preferred.

About the Audience
Participants in this conference are primarily volunteers enrolled in the Virginia Master Naturalist program. They come from all over Virginia. Most of them will have completed the Virginia Master Naturalist basic training course, a 40-hour classroom and field training that includes basic ecology, natural history, natural resource management, interpretive skills, and citizen science skills. Virginia Master Naturalists do volunteer projects in their communities that fall into the broad categories of education, citizen science, and stewardship. Their volunteer work might include such activities as presentations on Virginia’s flora and fauna, doing bird or frog counts, building trails, and doing habitat restoration projects. Some of the volunteers are also very engaged in organizing and running their local Virginia Master Naturalist chapters.

With this background in mind, we are looking for our conference presenters to build upon the basic training that our volunteers have had and to provide more advanced information. Tying the information to possible volunteer projects and roles is ideal. We encourage our volunteers to be action-oriented, so we would like them to take the information they learn and put it to use in their home communities. Hands-on and interactive activities are also ideal, and we prefer these over straight lectures. Both are still possible, even in the virtual format! The more we can engage the participants in asking and answering questions and practicing skills, the better.

Technical Details
Presenters who are giving a live presentation or live Q&A will need to be able to join a Zoom meeting from a location with an adequate internet connection. Conference organizers will provide the Zoom hosting and will set up the meeting. For audio, presenters may call in by computer or by phone. Having the presenter’s video turned on is preferable so that the audience can see them, but it is not required.

For live sessions, presenters will be paired with two support volunteers – one technical aid and one content aid. The technical aid will help with pre-conference preparations and in-session technical support. The technical aid will manage the web conference platform, audio connections/issues and will provide the speaker with an opportunity for a pre-conference rehearsal to run through their slides and test equipment. The content aid volunteer will be ready to assist the speaker on the day of the session with an audience warm-up, speaker introduction, watching the chat room and engaging the audience in chat if needed.

Presenters who are providing a pre-recorded session will need to be able to record the session themselves (via Zoom or other means) and to place the video file into a shared Google Drive folder provided by conference organizers by September 15.

Registration
We will share registration information by early August. Presenters are encouraged to register for the entire event, but not required to if just presenting. Registration includes access to all the live sessions and recorded content, as well as special networking amenities provided throughout the event. Presenters will receive a discounted registration fee.

Visit our conference webpage, which will be updated as plans develop.

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