

GENERAL J. H. BINFORD PEAY, III
SUPERINTENDENT

Remarks at Environment Virginia Symposium
9-11 April 2013

Ladies and gentlemen. Good afternoon.

Welcome to the Virginia Military Institute for this, the 24th annual Environment Virginia Symposium. VMI is proud to be the home of this important annual event, and in that context we remember and pay tribute to the man who conceived the Environment Virginia Symposium, CAPT Ronald A. Erchul, who passed away in 2011. From a research project and a grant from the Virginia Environmental Endowment, this annual statewide event has grown in size and importance to the point where over 650 professionals representing diverse interests now typically attend.

We are fortunate to have with us a group of distinguished leaders who will address opportunities and possible solutions to the environmental challenges facing the Commonwealth. In a few moments, they will be introduced to you, but before we begin that part of the program, I would like to take this opportunity to make several acknowledgements.

First, I would like to thank Governor McDonnell, now in the last year of his administration, for his steadfast support of efforts to protect Virginia's environment and the appropriate development and use of Virginia's natural resources for the enjoyment and prosperity of the citizens of the Commonwealth. Governor McDonnell addressed this Symposium in April 2010, and members of his staff have participated in all the sessions since he took office. I would especially like to thank the Honorable Doug Domenech (DOM-i-netch), Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources, who was our principal speaker last year, and welcome him back to VMI. He will speak at the Plenary Session tomorrow along with Mr. David Paylor, Director of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

Another speaker who will participate in tomorrow's Plenary Session is the Honorable Paul D. Fraim, Mayor of the City of Norfolk. Mayor Fraim is no stranger to VMI as he is a graduate of the Class of 1971 and currently serves as the President of the VMI Board of Visitors.

I also want to acknowledge the significant accomplishments of Mr. Gerald McCarthy, who will retire shortly as Executive Director of the Virginia Environmental Endowment. His experience includes more than three decades of work, serving as the first executive director of the Governor's Council on the Environment, for Governor Linwood Holton, and later as chairman and administrator of the State Council on Environment, for Governor Mills Godwin. Subsequently he served as the first and only Executive Director of the Virginia Environmental Endowment. We thank him for his leadership and wish him well in retirement.

I also welcome his replacement, Mr. Joseph Maroon, who is no stranger to the Environment Virginia Symposium. He has participated here many times as the Virginia Director of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and as the Director of the Virginia Department of Conservation. He is a recipient of the Environment Virginia Environmental Leadership Award, which has since been named for Captain Erchul.

For two decades, this gathering has provided an important “forum” for examining the relationship between careful stewardship of the environment and Virginia’s natural resources... and economic development for the prosperity and well being of the citizens of the Commonwealth. This year’s theme, “Charting Our Future: New Tools for Complex Challenges,” sets the stage for sessions that will look into the future. At concurrent sessions on “Future Visioning,” led by the Department of Environmental Quality, attendees will be asked to identify critical challenges that lay ahead for the Commonwealth. Another session will see the introduction of the “UVA Bay Game,” a state-of-the-art tool that engages players in designing collaborative solutions.

There are always challenges when it comes to the environment. Notable among these are the effects of climate change, balancing the protection of the environment with the reasonable use of natural resources, and adequate funding for the job to be done. Today, because of the economic downturn we have sustained over the past five years, environmental stewardship has become even more challenging. Federal, state, and local budget reductions in Virginia have put pressure on funding for transportation, infrastructure, and K-12 public education. These constraints have forced the administration in Richmond and citizens in general to make tough choices about where limited taxpayer dollars should be directed. Sequestration has added to the challenge. This Symposium, as can be said for those that have preceded it, addresses the fiscal challenges that are shaping long-term environmental priorities.

I am especially glad to see that schools and colleges across our Commonwealth and across the nation are responding to the challenges facing us. Our colleges and universities are incorporating environmental concerns into many of their disciplines. The Virginia Military Institute prizes its strong environmental program in the sciences and engineering, and we are committed to the goal of educating leaders of character for the future. On behalf of the faculty, staff, and cadets of VMI, I extend to you a very warm welcome. I hope you have an enjoyable time at this symposium, and in historic Lexington.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Mr. William Gill, who will introduce this morning’s speaker. Mr. Gill is a Virginia Tech graduate and licensed professional engineer. He serves as a member of the symposium program advisory committee. He has worked for Smithfield Foods for more than 20 years, holding various project engineering and environmental positions, and is currently Assistant Vice President for Environmental Affairs at Smithfield Foods.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Mr. William Gill.