

Earth Day Heroes

In honor of Earth Day and the many people at ANR who have dedicated their lives to protecting our environment, we have profiled a handful of our outstanding staff members from across the agency. Each one of these state employees has played a part in helping Vermont move toward a healthy and sustainable environment. It is my hope that by learning more about the work that goes on every day at ANR you will be inspired to get involved and to rededicate yourself to doing more this year to make our world a better place.

Deb Markowitz, Secretary, Agency of Natural Resources



Alyssa Bennett & Scott Darling
Fish & Wildlife Department
Working to Save Endangered Bats

Saving endangered species can be rewarding but it is by no means easy. Scott Darling and Alyssa Bennett have been working to protect Vermont's remaining cave bats in a race against time. The recent

introduction from Europe of the white-nosed fungus has caused a precipitous decline of 3 of Vermont's once common native cave bats. In spite of their efforts both little brown bats and northern long-eared bats were listed as state endangered species in 2011 and tri-colored bats not long after that. Since then Scott and Alyssa have employed every possible and creative method for monitoring and restoring



these species and have become national leaders in the fight against white-nose syndrome. Although these three bat species have continued to decline in Vermont, there is a glimmer of hope. Most recent survey data suggests that the little brown bat population, at least, seems to be stabilizing at 10% of their historical levels. It may not seem like much but when it comes to endangered species restoration, you have to celebrate the small successes.



Elizabeth Lord
ANR Office of Planning and Legal Affairs
Land Use Attorney

Elizabeth Lord is the embodiment of an Earth Day Hero. She has represented the Agency before Act 250 district commissions, the environmental board and state's environmental court for more than 15 years, quietly establishing a lasting legacy of natural resource protection and legal precedent in Vermont land use and environmental law.

Elizabeth was a key part of the legal team in 2003 when the Vermont Supreme Court affirmed the District Commission and Environmental Board's decision to deny a project along the Roaring Branch River in Bennington County because of impacts under the floodway criterion of Act 250. This seminal case was the first to recognize the concept of fluvial geomorphology in regulatory decisions and is the underpinning of the great work the DEC Rivers Program is doing today to protect river corridors.

Outside of the courtroom, Elizabeth is always ready to share her knowledge and experience with colleagues. She has supported countless

ANR staff members as they develop positions and negotiate with applicants to appropriately maximize resource protection. Elizabeth exemplifies how intelligent, informed and consistent advocacy, coupled with dedication and passion for natural resource protection, can yield outstanding results.

Danielle Fitzko

Forest, Parks and Recreation, Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager

Danielle fondly remembers 2003 when she moved to Vermont to take on the role of coordinating the state's Urban and Community Forestry (VT UCF) program. Living in Maryland beforehand, she and her husband Mark made a pact on New Year's Eve to move to Vermont within the year to live the green mountain dream. What she didn't know was that not only would their dream come true, but she would actually land her dream job too. Danielle received her B.S. from Pennsylvania State University and her M.S. from the University of Maryland focusing on urban forestry. Her passion for urban forestry started in Maryland where she worked as a Horticulture Educator for the Extension Service coordinating a multi-county Master Gardner Program. There she spent her days helping Marylanders solve a range of plant problems from turf and houseplants to vegetables and trees. At night, she spent her time advocating for smart growth principles in her own community. One day an 'ah-ha' moment happened when she realized she could combine her passion for trees and smart growth with urban and community forestry. She now spends her days developing and supporting a program to help Vermont communities realize the value of trees in the heart of our communities. Danielle is perhaps best known for



her work in green infrastructure. Her passion and vision led to the development of a green infrastructure program within DEC, supported by FPR.



Bryan Redmond
Department of Environmental Science
Facilities Engineering Division

For nearly ten years Bryan has worked in various capacities with municipal officials and others with the goal of providing safe drinking water to Vermonters. Bryan has a lot to be proud of. Perhaps his most notable achievement was the 40+ drinking water projects that he helped get underway under an extremely tight timeframe, which enabled Vermont to fully utilize the federal 2009 American Investment Recovery Act funds. Bryan's environmental ethic is also revealed in his preference to spend his vacation time on treks through the Alaskan wilderness and the mountains of British Columbia, and in his participation on the Middlesex Town Forest Steward Committee. This environmental ethic and adventurous spirit has served the Facilities Engineering Division well, as exemplified by his development and implementation of the onsite loan program, which closed a donut hole in environmental and public health protection by providing loans to lower-middle income Vermonters to fix failing wastewater systems and water supplies. Most recently, Bryan has taken on the role of Lean Facilitator helping others in the ANR examine their business practices and make significant program improvements. Looking back, it is remarkable when one considers all the things Bryan has accomplished for ANR and Vermont as a whole – a classic example of an unsung Earth Day hero.

Megan O'Toole

Department of Environmental Science

**Associate General Counsel, Air Quality and
Climate Division**

At ANR we have a great legal team who focus on everything from environmental enforcement to the endangered species law. One of our newer attorneys is Megan O'Toole.

Megan provides legal support to our Air Quality and Climate Division of the Department of Environmental Conservation. As a long-time Vermonter and graduate of Vermont Law School, she knows how important clean air is to public health and to the wellbeing of our communities. She advises the division on legal issues, assists with revisions and interpretations of air quality regulations and statutes, advises the division on proposed EPA rules, and provides general legal expertise. Megan makes air quality law not only interesting, but fun! She balances her legal work with life on a horse powered vegetable farm, which she runs with her husband, young son and three horses. Megan is a tremendous asset to ANR and State of Vermont. We're lucky to have her on the team!



Rochelle Skinner

**Forest, Parks and Recreation
Parks Sales and Service Manager**

Vermont State Parks, like all other public parks, exist to provide an opportunity for people to relax, play in the outdoors and connect with the natural world. Doing so makes people physically, emotionally and spiritually healthier. It also fosters a basic

appreciation for the environment which is essential to our collective efforts to conserve natural resources for the benefit of future generations. Environmental conservation and stewardship would be unthinkable in a culture where people are disconnected from nature. So it stands to reason that the more people we can encourage to visit parks, the better we all are for it! Rochelle Skinner has been a driver of marketing, promotion and outreach efforts that have resulted in record attendance at state parks in recent years. Her passion for parks and the outdoors, her remarkable customer service skills, her creative juices and never-ending energy have created a buzz about state parks unlike ever before. Using virtually every contemporary communication tool, she is in regular contact with literally thousands of state park enthusiasts. She juggles staff supervision, customer issues, computer and phone glitches all while creating and managing outside partnerships and dreaming up more of our famous low-cost high-value promotional programs. Vermont State Parks and the people who love and visit them owe a huge dose of gratitude to Rochelle for all she does to make the system the success it is today.