

# 2025 MJRT Annual Meeting and Conference

Friday September 5, 2025

**“Environmental Education Best Practices”**

at the [James A Buzzard River Education Center in Richmond, VA](#)



**9:00: Welcome and introductions: Matt Scott Stone**

**9:10: Speaker 1: Tara Poelzing, Virginia Association of Environmental Education, Keynote Speaker**

What drives learning and relationship-building and why do we need both? When curiosity is our guide, engagement is the result. Its unexpected side effects—joy, wonder, understanding, and drive to learn more—are the very ingredients that we need to bring our learners from Awareness to Participation. Join me in asking “Why?”

**9:45: Speaker 2: Josh Bearman, Blue Sky Fund. “Facilitating Environmental Identity Through Data Collection”**

In the arena of EE, much focus is placed on fostering environmental stewardship in students. However, many students have nearly no relationship to the outdoors at all. Blue Sky Fund focuses on building a sense of environmental identity in students through simple qualitative and quantitative data collection that grounds them in place.

**10:10: Speaker 3: Anna Moreau, Hanover-Caroline Soil and Water Conservation District. “Your Soil and Water Conservation District’s Programs”**

What’s a Soil and Water Conservation District? Do you have one? What do they do? – Learn from an educator with a local SWCD about what SWCDs are and the education and outreach efforts happening with Districts across the Commonwealth.

**10:45: Speaker 4: Lori Schoenwiesner, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. “Support for Environmental Educators in Virginia”**

Even experienced experts need support. VA DCR Office of Environmental Education takes great pride in offering support to environmental educators across the Commonwealth with annual grants, professional learning series and a network of connections. Water-based environmental education can change a student's view and sense of responsibility towards the watershed they live in. Educators are the independent, never tiring, always inspired, agents of change that are inspiring Virginia's future citizens every day. Let us support you.

**11:20: MJRT business meeting: Matt Scott Stone, MJRT Steering Committee**

**11:30: Lunch and networking**  
Bottom's Up Pizza catered lunch

**12:15 - 1:05: Afternoon workshop session 1**

**1:15 - 2:05: Afternoon workshop session 2**

**2:15 - 3:05: Afternoon workshop session 3**

**3:10 - 3:30: Program shareouts and farewell!**

#### **Workshop sessions:**

A: Building Effective Activities with Matt Scott Stone, JRA Education Specialist

Participants will review basic concepts for effectively tying their outreach goals to state standards and teaching best practices, then work in small groups to share, develop, and improve an activity to showcase their organization's work.

B: Outdoor education with Lorne Fields, Chesterfield County, and Joanne Sims, JRA Program Coordinator

Participants will go on a guided hike and conduct land-based education activities to explore nature at Dock St. Park and Chapel Island Park! Afterwards, participants will share their ideas and successes in land-based nature education activities.

C: Water education with Catie McCarthy, Henrico Environmental Program Specialist, and Hannah Dahl, JRA Seasonal Educator

Participants will paddle canoes into the James River, exploring educational activities from the water! A brief paddle instruction and safety talk will precede the paddle, with a shareout of effective water-based education activities following the paddle.